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Essential elements of Business Transformation

Too many companies take on complex transformation projects and lose sight of the single most important player in their value-chain, the customer. **Focusing on the customer is the key to success, and to truly reach customers, companies need to go back to the basics and focus on three critical elements:**

A well-defined Vision based on Tangible Opportunity

Companies need to understand why their customers choose them. Identifying and then quantifying this value in a commercial transformation reminds customers why they do business with one company over another. Having a vision with quantifiable value also becomes the foundation from which salespeople can have meaningful conversations with customers. Because most customers buy from salespeople they trust, a transformation can be an opportunity—not a risk—for everyone involved, and that's when customers and salespeople get excited.

Trust that the Vision is Achievable

If people, especially the salespeople, don't believe the vision is achievable—even if it is—companies need to find out why and begin a trust-building campaign from within.

Here are some ideas to help build trust: -

- **Do what you say you're going to do:** Yes, easier said than done, but how many times have you promised something and not followed through? If you are going to give people resources, do it. A broken promise will always give people pause;
- **Make the vision real with simple data:** Complicated data that no one understands is a big turn-off and makes employees wonder if what they are doing has any bearing on company success. Keep it simple and track the progress often and religiously. This means holding people accountable, especially senior executives;
- **Reward the people who perform and exhibit the behaviour changes you desire;**
- **Root out the nay-sayers:** This is especially important when a new leader takes over. Be patient at first, but over time, you've got to recognize that nay-sayers are a cancer in a changing organisation; they hold the organisation back, make more work for leadership, and undermine a good leader's efforts. Sure, give them a chance to change, but if they don't, they need to be removed from the picture;

Focus on Customer Experience

It is important for companies to learn what it's like to be a consumer of their products and services. I'm not talking about doing reams of market research. Often companies waste big dollars on market research when understanding customers through personal interaction is straight-forward and more cost effective. Instead, the company should send internal teams—salespeople and even executives—out into the field to speak directly with their customers and listen, as opposed to sell.

Only two fundamental questions are necessary to start the conversation:

- *What's it like to do business with us? (probe for reasons good and bad)*
- *Why do you continue to do business with us?*

Teams should then have conversations with customers that don't buy from them to find out why. These conversations should not double as sales calls, but instead should try to get to the heart of why certain customers are not buying from them. **These three elements form the foundation of continuous growth and improvement.** They are like the three legs of the proverbial stool. Without one, the stool won't stand, and likely neither will a company's transformation. **But with all three, the stool becomes a solid step for reaching higher and achieving bigger goals.**

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