10 TIPS
FOR GUIDING CULTURE CHANGE

1

Set your sights on long-term success, not just quick wins.

Start with a vision for the future that explains what's changing and, most importantly, why it needs to change. Ensure there is a clear and compelling story, delivered by a visible sponsor for the change, so employees have a road map of where the company is headed, what has been accomplished and what's coming next.

2

Have clear and visible sponsorship for the change.

Identify a sponsor who is committed to making culture change happen and ultimately accountable to bring it to completion. This person is typically a high-level executive who advocates for alignment and engagement by other leaders, oversees the change process, and addresses risks and barriers to achieving the overall vision. It is important that the sponsor is a visible champion for the change, engaging other leaders to participate and continuously communicating why change is necessary and what it means for all levels of the organization.

3

Understand the current state, the goal, and where you are at all times.

You need to know where you are before you can move forward, so take time to assess the current state of the organization. Assess what employee groups will be most affected by the planned change, what risks could get in the way of success and what external factors may influence the process. Understand employees' prior experiences with change and how the current culture and values influence their behavior. Plan how you'll measure success based on clear business and communications objectives. Employee attitudes and adoption are key to tracking progress, so "take their temperature" with pulse surveys and other touchpoints along the way.

4

Know your employee stakeholders.

To change for the future, you first need to fully understand what employee behavior looks like at present. Research can help you identify the root issues and better understand employee mindsets relative to the company's vision and expected outcomes of the change. Interview key employees and hold focus groups with people impacted by the change to deepen your understanding of their needs. These insights will help shape a sound change strategy and communications and engagement plans that have greater potential for real impact.

5

Ensure leaders are able, ready and accountable.

Leadership alignment and commitment are essential because employees look to their leaders to understand a change and decide if they want to get on board. Managers are critical messengers who must not only communicate information but also model new behaviors. Help them succeed by providing the training and communication tools they need to share information, ask questions and drive change. Leaders must be confident facilitating employee conversations, answering questions, understanding employee perceptions and needs, and ensuring those perspectives are shared with "corporate" so they are woven into the overall plan.

6   Create a guiding coalition of "change agents."

Engage and partner with key executives and influential employees at all levels to communicate and champion the change throughout the organization. These "change agents" can offer insights for planning, communicate and advocate with their teams and peers, and be a resource as change is rolling out. Their encouragement and support can have a positive influence and ease the transition as employees are asked to adopt new ways of working.

7   Develop and deliver communications through the most effective channels.

Build a communications plan that is specific, pragmatic, measurable and validated by the people responsible for bringing the plan to life. Assess existing communication channels and use only what works (based on employee feedback and usage data). Ensure all external messages—such as what's reported through the media, to analysts and other third parties—are consistent with the messages delivered to employees. And, make sure employees hear the news first.

8   Listen carefully and respond religiously.

Create informal and formal feedback channels designed to elicit employee views and perceptions of the change effort. Assign responsibility for personal, timely and transparent responses to employee concerns to demonstrate that employee input is valued. When you see trends in feedback, use its direction to adapt your plans and respond to the expressed needs.

9   Remember, one size does not fit all.

Understand and tailor messages to meet the diverse needs of your stakeholders, especially employees. When you connect with them and respond to their needs, you'll be more likely to be heard and understood. Front-line employees are an important bridge to customers, competitors and other important audiences. Do they believe in and live the culture? Are they communicating the key messages in a credible way? Are they effective ambassadors for the Brand?

10   Communications isn't the fix-all.

Time and again, great companies have learned that no matter how good the communication, culture can't change if operating policies and practices aren't in place to support the change effort. Assess what's working, what should be changed, and what can be eliminated for greater acceptance of the change and a more engaged workforce.