



ECLC Executive Brief

Addressing Internal Resistance to Change

The Executive Council for Leading Change (ECLC) assembled a roundtable of seasoned executives to dig into the topic of *Shifting the Cultural Mindset of Your Organization*

The Executive Council for Leading Change (ECLC) convened for a roundtable discussion focusing on addressing internal resistance to change in workplace settings. The executives shared insights, challenges, and strategies related to leading organizational change despite various forms of resistance. The conversation delved into various aspects of change, including stakeholder engagement, leadership buy-in, communication strategies, talent retention, and the role of metrics in measuring change progress.

Date of Roundtable

March 14, 2024

Roundtable Participants

Led by **Nellie Wartoft**
CEO of Tigerhall & Chair of ECLC



Farrar Frazee
SVP, Transformation
Assured Partners



Ani Shehigian
Global Head of Transformation
Condé Nast



Adam Schreiber
Global Director, Change
Management, Enterprise
Transformation Office
Johnson & Johnson



Mary Beech
Chief Marketing &
Transformation Officer
Scholastic



Bruce Ableson
Senior Director, Field
Readiness & Enablement
Adobe



Sarah Machin
VP, Global Head of Talent
Management
Chubb



Yannic Schroeder
Chief Transformation Officer
BPG USA



Akita Somani
Senior Vice President,
BNPL/ POS Lending
U.S. Bank

Key Questions Answered

? What **internal resistance** are you currently encountering in your change initiatives, and is it specific to certain groups within the organization?

? What **factors** contribute, in your opinion, to this resistance?

5 Key Strategies for Addressing Internal Resistance to Change:

The discussion at the roundtable brought to light several key strategies that can help organizations effectively manage change while fostering a resilient corporate culture.

Transparent Communication

Fostering transparency in communications helps to **alleviate fear and uncertainty among employees**. Adam pointed out that, even if the message needs to change over time, it's better to maintain communication throughout the organization than to leave employees in the dark, as consistent updates enable them to adapt and align their efforts more effectively.

Early Stakeholder Engagement

Proactively involving stakeholders from the outset helps in gaining buy-in and mitigating resistance early on. It helps to **foster an environment that feels more collaborative** and, ultimately, more conducive to overall organizational change.

Storytelling

Storytelling helps to convey the impact of change initiatives and rally employees around such initiatives. Farrar pointed out that storytelling that is rooted in the culture of your company can help everyone adapt to change, as it **cements what is new into the DNA of your organization**.

Leadership Buy-In

Securing commitment and sponsorship from senior leadership is crucial for driving change effectively. Yannic expressed that, without buy-in from other senior executives, it's **hard to justify the costs and effort that will go into a large-scale transformation initiative as well as its longevity**.

Performance Metrics

Implementing performance metrics and adoption dashboards helps to track progress and measure the impact of change initiatives over time. By using a platform like Tigerhall, abstract concepts like **employee sentiment and the adoption of change become measurable data points**. This data can then be transmitted to important stakeholders, to keep them engaged through long-term, large-scale initiatives.

4 Quotes on Internal Resistance to Change:

Drawing from diverse industries, ECLC executives shared pivotal strategies for audience segmentation and change positioning:



“ It’s important to frame organizational change with what we will miss out on as a company if we don’t make this change.

Bruce Ableson Senior Director, Field Readiness & Enablement, **Adobe**



“ “When working on long-term, large-scale change initiatives, it’s important to celebrate those quick wins along the way; it keeps everyone engaged in the change and coming back for more.

Adam Schreiber Global Director, Change Management, Enterprise Transformation Office **Johnson & Johnson**



“ Storytelling can really help you overcome organizational resistance to change. It can be really helpful to frame the need to change with a question like ‘if we don’t do this, how will it impact our client?’

Farrar Frazee SVP, Transformation, **Assured Partners**



“ Organizational resistance to change can be more easily overcome by segmenting and personalizing your approach to each group of stakeholders.

Yannic Schroeder Chief Transformation Officer, **BPG USA**

4 Successful Approaches and Tactics:

The executives also shared successful approaches and tactics that contributed to effective change adoption:

Proactive Talent Retention

Developing proactive talent retention strategies helps to retain critical roles and high-performing talent during times of change. Ani pointed out that **talent retention should be proactive instead of reactive**, so that your top performers feel like they are a part of the change. This reduces friction while avoiding costly turnover, ultimately ensuring stability and continuity within the organization's workforce.

Leadership Coaching

Providing coaching and support for leaders helps them effectively drive change within their teams. Bruce explained that there is a difference between senior executives understanding a change initiative and knowing **how to promote it amongst their departments**. They might be sold on the need to change but they in turn need to sell the change to others.

Honest Communication

Practicing honesty and transparency in communication helps to address both ongoing successes and challenges openly. Yannic expressed that, even if the direction changes slightly over time, more people are on board with change initiatives if they feel like they are **given the opportunity to understand what is going on and the opportunity to ask questions**.

Individual Goal Alignment

Aligning individual goals with change objectives makes the change more tangible and relevant to employees. Bruce presented that **incorporating change initiatives within a department's or employee's KPIs or quarterly goals** makes it easier for the change to be incorporated into everyday work.

2 Common Challenges Faced

The discussion also touched on overcoming challenges like resistance to change and effectively ensuring change messages reach the target audience.

Ambivalence of Leadership

Dealing with leadership ambivalence or apathy towards change initiatives is crucial as it hinders the progress and support of these initiatives.

Leadership ambivalence can occur when there are too many changes happening at once. That's where **prioritizing and refocusing on key initiatives might be necessary.**

Neutral Stakeholder Engagement

Engaging neutral stakeholders directly might be necessary as silence does not always translate to acquiescence.

They might remain **passive or skeptical** towards the change which will in turn slow it down.

Conclusion

In summary, the ECLC roundtable highlighted the importance of **proactive stakeholder engagement, transparent communication, leadership commitment, storytelling, and performance metrics** in navigating organizational change.

Where challenges such as leadership ambivalence and neutral stakeholder engagement persist, tackling these issues head on can help organizations drive change effectively and achieve desired outcomes.



The Executive Council for Leading Change

The Executive Council for Leading Change (ECLC) is a global organization that brings executives together to redefine the landscape of organizational change and transformation. Our council's aim is to advance strategic leadership expertise in the realm of corporate change by connecting visionary leaders. It's a place where leaders responsible for significant change initiatives can collaborate, plan, and create practical solutions for intricate challenges in leading major shifts in large organizations.

In a world where change is constant, we recognize its crucial role in driving business success.

ECLC's mission is to create a community where leaders can excel in guiding their organizations through these dynamic times.

Interested in joining ECLC?

Learn the membership criteria and sign-up here



Drive Change from Within

www.tigerhall.com

Learn how Tigerhall offers the knowledge infrastructure necessary for organizations to effectively drive internal change at both speed and scale.