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Demystifying the Change Agent



From the Editor's Desk

“The success of any kind of social epidemic is heavily dependent on the involvement of people with a particular and rare set of social gifts.”

- Malcom Gladwell, “The Tipping Point”

In this edition of our U&I we try to breakdown the bare bones or DNA of people with the kind of rare gifts that Malcom Gladwell describes. We call them, Change Agents!

You might wonder that with continued emphasis on High Potential leaders in your organization, why should you now begin to think about Change Agents.

Many organizations with a stellar reputation in their own industry are going through a period of massive transformation. Take IT for example. The technology industry has, in recent years undergone (and still undergoing) an evolution in its product portfolio – switching from hardware to software; from servers to Software as a Service (SaaS) and cloud based offerings.



What kind of Change Agents would IT organizations need to steer them during this transition phase? How would organizations equip its high potential leaders to become the agents to drive this change?

We attempt to build some specifics on the topic of a Change Agent and also test or question some assumptions; such as “are all leaders also Change Agents” or “are all change agents also high potentials?”

We also present a perspective of a large global bank and how our Malaysia team worked with them to bring about a change in the customer experience for the Bank's customers.

Our Product Showcase section welcomes you to the “Assessment City” wherein you can explore multiple areas around which our assessments can support your Talent Acquisition and Talent Management objectives.

Finally, there's a note on employee engagements and what contexts, from the macro to the micro level, can affect employee engagement. In the news, we share an update about Certification on the PEQM Tool.

Hope you enjoy reading this edition of the U&I and as always, we welcome your feedback and inputs to continue to make our U&I meaningful and engaging.

Demystifying the Change Agent

Change Agents have existed formally and informally since times immemorial or since the need to effect change has existed. Any successful change historic, political, societal, organizational and even familial has been effected by “Change Agents” – some visible and some working behind the scenes.

Let's look closer home aka organizational context! The organizational capability to be flexible and to anticipate the market is more crucial today than a few years ago. Organizations that can't cope with such conditions and undergo difficulties with change management will have a hard time surviving the today's biz environment.



Change could be defined as everything from re-engineering, right sizing, new technology, restructuring to cultural change, and companies have valid reasons i.e of enhancing competitiveness, of why they are willing to spend a huge deal of effort (money, time, resource etc.) on such initiatives.

Empirical studies show that major change implementations' failure rates are approximately 70% and considering that change projects have a big impact on the individuals participating, the role of the Change Agent becomes pivotal to the success of change initiatives.

Much of the theory related to Change Agents is underpinned by a two-step model of communication of information. This two-step model was originally proposed by *Karl and Lazarsfeld in 1955* to describe how media messages are diffused through opinion leaders. Although primitive it is still relevant as it covers the fundamentals of change. In the first step the innovations / changes are promoted to ***opinion leaders who are likely to be receptive to new ideas and the rationale of the change. Once the change is accepted the second step commences where the opinion leaders encourage others to adopt them.***

Characteristics of a Change Agent

Experts globally have agreed that characteristics of a successful Change Agent include:

The ability to interact with and influence many groups beyond the Change Agents.

Envisioning the desired state and articulating the end goals.

Enjoying high status – formal or informal. High status does not mean a formal title.

Having a recognised area of expertise.

Displaying high level behaviours of proactivity and problem solving.

Being role models possessing the ability to coach.

Role of a Change Agent

These characteristics enable the Change Agent to perform roles that are pivotal and enabling. The canvass can be large including but not being limited to:

Evangelizing the change

Role modeling – show casing what looks ‘great’.

Influencing and nudging the fence sitters and resisters to try out the change

Coaching to enable

Problem Solving

Proactively foreseeing obstacles and recommending work around

The raison d'etre of change and of Change Agents being established, now let's **explore some finer but indubitable predicaments of the Change Agent canvas**. Some have definitive solutions and others prove to be elusive even now.

Let's ponder on the amenable ones before we consider the formidable ones!

Selecting Change Agents

How should we select change agents? Do High performers and High Potentials automatically qualify as Change Agents? How can Change Agents be enabled?

Change Agent selection can be fashioned on the selection process of any other critical role.

Have a clear job purpose and person specification.

Ensure that it is positioned as aspirational and meaning.

Devise a selection process that comprises a tool that assesses for the “Desired Change Agent Behaviours and Attributes”, interviews past performance indicators and finally inputs from stakeholders who can certify the “Influencing ability” of the aspirant.

A logistics organisation working toward creating a Customer-Centric culture actually put in place a selection process and had it's employees apply for the Change Agent role and undergo the selection process.

High Potentials and Change Agents

High-Potentials and High-performers, contrary to popular belief do not automatically qualify for the office of the Change Agent excepting when the High-Potentials or a High-Performer also qualifies the laid down selection criteria and process for the Change Agents. Going a step further wherever organisations have had the vision to have mandated that the Change Agent behaviors, skills and attributes are essential to being a High Performer or a High-Potential, they have been able to create pipelines / bench strengths of change agents across levels and functions. This approach is visionary and further bolsters the “natural, informally established Change Agent” bench strength.

Enabling Change Agents

Enabling Change Agents comprises in the first instance - structured development inputs on the role, the skills required and the processes and mechanisms through which they will deliver the expected role. This is the easier part of enablement. Then comes the part that makes them “battle ready” i.e. creating problem solving forums and mechanisms, leaders visibly supporting and positioning Change Agents by implementing recommendations and taking quick decisions, leaders being accessible to Change Agents and treating them like the “VOICE of the Employee” and leaders ensuring appropriate empowerment matrix for the Change Agents.

The logistics firm mentioned earlier created a formal **Leader- Change Agent forum**, that engaged on a monthly basis to take decisions, problem solve and review improvement projects. The viability of this forum lent huge credibility to the Change Agents.

Now the tricky ones !

The fact that the Change Agent's role cannot be effectively performed along-with the day job of the person is not palatable to most organizations. In the absence of that possibility most change agents have to stretch beyond their day jobs. Which then leads to two more thorny challenges:

1. Providing a worthwhile WIIFM for people to stretch and perform equally well on both of their roles .
2. Dealing with the possibility of one of the roles being underperformed

“

Without changing our pattern of thought, we will not be able to solve the problems we created with our current patterns of thought

Albert Einstein

”

The solutions will lie in answers to tough questions like:

✍ *Does the organisation have the appetite, the vision and the courage to create Change Agent roles that are aspirational, add value to the individual, contribute to his growth potential and are full time roles for the duration of the project?*

How to Reward a Change Agent ?

Providing the right short term and long term reward and recognition to Change Agents. Some organizations argue that being selected as a Change Agent should be recognition enough. True, but what about the reward or the recognition for performing a Change Agent role well? This could vary on the level of Change Agents and what they aspire for, culturally what is coveted as R&R and also the criticality of the Change Agents to the success of the initiative.

All this being said, finally what matters is that *having performed a Change Agent role successfully should be a big asset in the person's performance scorecard*. In conclusion then, the role of a change agent is to change the “perspective” of stakeholders towards an attractive but unknown future as well as to support the management of required changes towards such a future. No mean task by any standards and certainly not one to be taken lightly by any stakeholder.

References:

1. Bruce J Reid and William Foster – *The change agent* by Matt Holland
2. Albert A Angehrn and Jill E M Atherton, *Conceptual Framework for Assessing Development Programmers for Change Agents*

Case Study

The Effective Use of Change Agents: A Case Study from Malaysia

By George Aveling, CEO, TMI Malaysia

We were approached by a major international bank. “We have a big brand, but we have not defined our customer experience,” they told us.

So, the challenge was set – to work with the client to design and engage the organization to deliver the bank's unique branded customer experience. The TMI Branded Customer Service model, developed by TMI senior partners, was the ideal vehicle to achieve this.

Fast-forwarding to 3 years from commencement, the project was a great success. This was achieved through a combination of top-down and bottom-up change – with the bottom up change being driven by Change Agents.

Let me explain some of the key elements of the process to you..

Getting the change structure in place

An important part of the planning of a change process is develop an implementation structure that will ensure effective strategic and operational deployment. The players in this structure were all part of the Change Agent team.

We set up a change implementation structure for this 3,800 employee organisation. It consisted of the following.

1. Steering Committee

The Steering Committee consisted of key Business Heads. This Committee met monthly. The role of this Committee was, as the name suggests, to strategically steer and navigate the change process. This included addressing barriers and allocating budget and resources.

2. Brand Leaders

We had 50 Brand Leaders. The number was based on the ratio of 1 Brand Leader to 5 Brand Managers (see below). Brand Leaders were selected from the senior manager group, typically two levels below senior leadership team. Their role was to coach and energise the next level of change agents – the Brand Managers the next level in the change structure. It is important that the Brand Managers feel that they have people showing interest and supporting their efforts. This is critical. We initially spent three days training the Brand Leaders to play their roles.

3.Brand Managers

We had 250 Brand Managers. The number selected is based on the ratio of 1 Brand Manager to 15 team members, as a rule of thumb. This group was the “arms and legs” of the change deployment process.

These were middle managers who were on-the-job service coaches. A key role was to run weekly Team Talks with their teams. These 30 minute sessions were around set topics, developed by TMI in conjunction with the client. Over a 4 week cycle, ideas to improve the customer experience were gathered, trialled and implemented.

Over 10,000 new ideas were implemented over a 15 month period!

We spent 3 days training this group to play its role. This group of people needed to be positive role models. And they needed to be at manager level, as it would not have worked in this organisation to have lower level employees running the Team Talk process with managers as participants.

4.Brand Champions

We later trained a group of 250 Brand Champions. These were team members who worked under the Brand Managers. Their role was to take some of the workload from the Brand Managers, including collating and processing ideas, and even running the Team Talk sessions as stand-ins. There was one Brand Champion under each Brand Manager. These were positive team members, who could be relied on to fulfil their daily duties as well as that of Brand Champions.

5.Implementation Team

The client allocated a very strong team of 4 people who were dedicated to implementing and supporting this service initiative. This group was our key liaison point on a daily basis. The people on this team came from operations. Their strong operational knowledge ensured that the process was kept practical. This group played an important lynch pin role.

Changing cultures by changing the nature of conversations in the organization

How do we change organizational cultures? One key element is to change the nature of the conversations that are held in the workplace. The weekly Team Talks certainly built up a wave of branded customer service conversations around the customer experience.

The conversations need to happen at all levels. TMI developed Team Talk materials to help Brand Managers run the sessions. We ran one day sessions every quarter with the Brand Leaders, with the aim of introducing them to the themes for the coming quarter, and to get them ready to brief their Brand Managers. The Brand Leaders would, in turn, spend half a day a month discussing the upcoming monthly theme, and reviewing the past month's Team Talk results with their Brand Managers.

The Many Contexts of Employee Engagement

Exploring the contextual layers that directly or indirectly influence employee engagement

The WorkTrends™ Survey

Employee responses to the four Employee Engagement Index questions presented in this report were gathered as part of the WorkTrends™ survey by IBM which has been administered annually or biannually since 1984. In 2012, the WorkTrends survey was taken online by approximately 33,000 employees in 28 different countries who work full-time for an organization of 100 staff members or more.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is defined as **“The extent to which employees are motivated to contribute to organizational success, and are willing to apply discretionary effort to accomplishing tasks important to the achievement of organizational goals.”** To help organizations use employee engagement to drive organizational performance, IBM created the Employee Engagement Index (EEI). In the EEI, employee engagement is measured by asking employees the extent to which they agree with the following four items:

1. I am proud to tell people I work for my organization (Pride).
2. Overall, I am extremely satisfied with my organization as a place to work (Satisfaction).
3. I would gladly refer a good friend or family member to my organization for employment (Advocacy).
4. I rarely think about looking for a new job with another

Numerous studies have demonstrated that an engaged workforce can have a profound effect on an organization's bottom line. Organizations with highly engaged employees not only see higher customer satisfaction, they also outperform organizations with low levels of employee engagement on a whole range of financial metrics

The Many Contexts of Employee Engagement

The employee exists in a multi-layered context: nested in jobs, the characteristics of which impact the employee (and subsequently employee engagement); jobs are nested in teams of coworkers, which are nested under a direct manager; who is nested under a senior leadership team; in an organization; in a certain industry; in a specific country; at some point in time (see *Figure 1*).

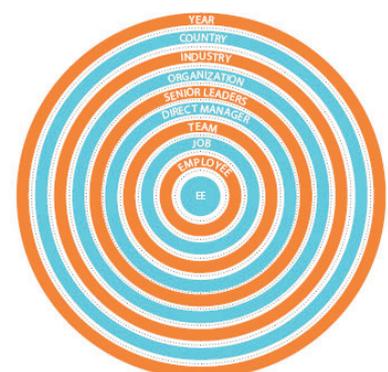


Figure 1. The many context of employee engagement

Key Highlights:

Global Employee Engagement Index scores rose slightly in 2012 to 57 percent, but remain below the peak of 60 percent reached in 2009 and 2010.

India topped the global employee engagement ranking in 2012, with the US, China, Canada and Australia all performing strongly, while Japan was the lowest of the 28 countries surveyed in 2012.

All industries surveyed fall in a 9 percentage point range for 2012 Employee Engagement Index scores, with the public sector (government) at the bottom and electronics and computer manufacturing at the top.

Employee Engagement Index scores drop 40 percentage points when a direct manager is unable to effectively tackle work tasks or people problems.

The most engaged employees are senior leaders, those at the top of the organization (76 percent).

Millennials have slightly higher Employee Engagement Index scores than baby boomers or Generation Xers.

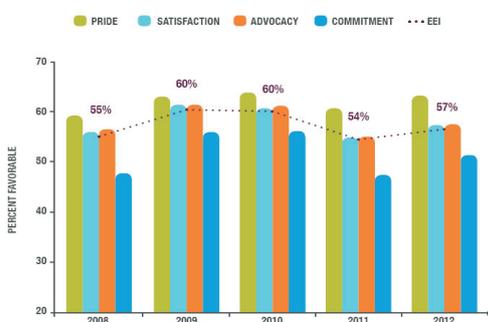


Figure 2. Five year global employee engagement trends

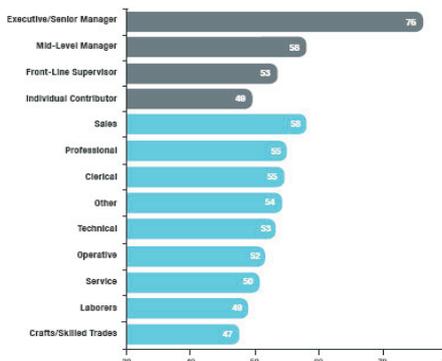


Figure 3. Employee engagement by job level and type.

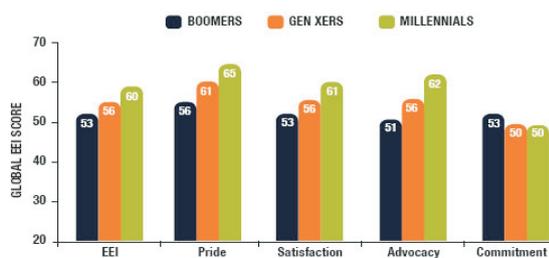


Figure 4. Employee engagement by generation.

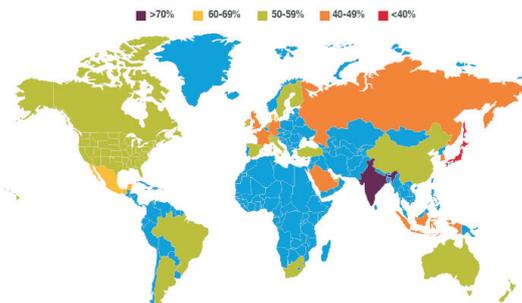


Figure 5. Employee engagement by country.

Welcome to Assessment City



1. Leadership Orientation Questionnaire
2. Sentio
3. Prove It!
4. Computer Adaptive Test
5. Personal Emotional Quotient Meter

6. Sales Selector
7. Job Competency Library
8. Culture Match Assessment
9. Motivation Questionnaire
10. Manager 2.1

About Assessment City

In partnership with IBM, the Assessment City is the largest metropolis of assessments in the world with a portfolio spanning **over 1,500 ready to use assessments** for Functional & Cognitive Skills, Personality, Behavior, Leadership & Culture.

Additionally, we have created **customized assessments for over 1,000 organizations** globally. Our global team of **100 Business Psychologists** ensure continuous innovation and product development in talent assessments. Coupled with the **world's largest Competency Library** and a structured **Interview Builder platform**, we provide an end to end talent acquisition and development solution to ensure that you

"Hire and Develop like your very best!"

40 million Assessments annually	2x Assess World's largest content library and assessment delivery platform	Computer Adaptive Testing Technology	4,000+ Clients
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- 1. LEADERSHIP ORIENTATION QUESTIONNAIRE** helps individuals and organizations identify the best fit by assessing a person's preference for leadership oriented roles.
- 2. SENTIO** is a situational judgment test which helps to understand what makes a successful leader by assessing a leader across 12 researched leadership behaviors.
- 3. PROVE IT!** platform contains an exhaustive portfolio of over 1,500 tools used to assess various skills across several industries.
- 4. COMPUTER ADAPTIVE TESTS** help in assessing the numerical, verbal and / or logical abilities of an individual.
- 5. PERSONAL EMOTIONAL QUOTIENT METER** is an online assessment that measures an individual on 15 critical components of Emotional Intelligence.
- 6. SALES SELECTOR** is a useful tool for selection and development to assess a sales person vis a vis a global benchmark on 6 key sales related competencies.
- 7. JOB COMPETENCY LIBRARY** has an extensive set of 1,700 competencies across job roles in 18 different industries.
- 8. CULTURE MATCH ASSESSMENT** helps an organization to identify the key skills, behaviors and values typical to the organization and assess the extent to which an individual is a good fit for the organization.
- 9. MOTIVATION QUESTIONNAIRE** is instrumental in gauging what motivates an individual across 3 broad categories – Interpersonal, Intrapersonal and Environmental.
- 10. MANAGER 2.1** is a useful tool which helps to assess the Managerial skills of an individual across 8 competencies. The tool is available for general managers as well as managers in sales, retail, restaurant, manufacturing, hotel, healthcare and call centre roles.

Tool Certification

Personal Emotional Quotient Meter™

To be aware of and understand oneself means knowing who one is and understanding why one thinks, feels and behaves the way one does.

Designed by Reuven Bar-On and Claus Moller, the **Personal EQ Meter** is TMI's renowned international tool designed to accurately assess and develop an individual's Emotional Intelligence (EI). PEQM assess individuals across 15 critical components of EI and 5 main areas - Self Awareness, Self Management, Self Motivation, Social Awareness and Social Skills.

We had successfully organized two PEQM Certification Workshops in Mumbai and New Delhi in June - July 2014.

This Certification helps an individual to become qualified to use the Personal EQ Meter Tool. Certified participants are able to assist business leaders, teams and clients become more efficient in giving feedback for any people interface situation. In India, this tool has been used extensively by over 4,000 employees across varied industries.

Contact us to know more about the PEQM Tool and for details on Certification.
011-41272700 | info@inspireone.in | www.inspireone.in

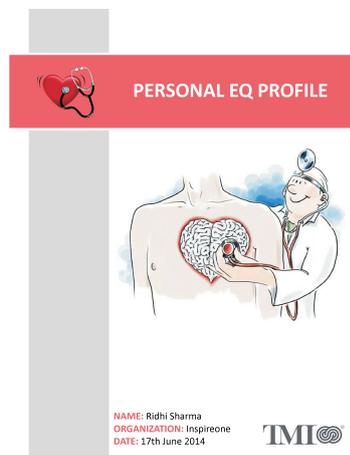


Figure1. PEQM Too Report



Figure2. Snapshot of PEQM Output

Unwind with Dilbert

DILBERT

SCOTT ADAMS





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