



The Key to Unlocking Change

When it comes to leading change, influence doesn't just come from the top of the organisation, it comes from across it, says **Andrew Woolf**, Managing Director and Global Human Capital Lead for Financial Services at Accenture



As a result of powerful digital disruption, organisations need strong leaders who will equip and inspire employees as they adapt to the new demands of their work.

These leaders, however, shouldn't just reside in the executive suite. They need to be present throughout the organisation.

One of the big obstacles to workforce transformation is the lack of understanding about culture change among senior executives. Because they're responsible for setting the organisation's vision and strategy, these executives often believe it's up to them to drive culture change. They adopt a strong top-down approach to transforming the culture of the organisation, and such approaches frequently fail.

Effective culture change occurs when it's championed by many leaders at various levels throughout the organisation. This is clear from our [studies](#) on change initiatives at more than 150 organisations. In the most

successful change initiatives, a wide range of leaders were involved. They included C-suite executives and business leaders, but also team leaders and team members. By contrast, only senior managers tended to be involved in change initiatives that performed poorly.

There's a simple reason why leaders throughout the organisation need to be involved in motivating culture change. It's because culture is created and sustained by every single member of the workforce. It's a combination of the mindsets, beliefs and behaviour of all employees. Culture can't be imposed on an organisation from the top.

For an organisation to successfully transform its culture, it needs to recognise that all of its employees are change agents. Leaders throughout the organisation have to engage with workers individually. They must personally communicate why the organisation needs to change, what's required to achieve this transformation, and what will be different once it has been accomplished.

Furthermore, they must demonstrate their own commitment to the change process.

Team leaders are crucial components of change initiatives. They're able to galvanise transformation throughout large sections of the workforce.

Leader interaction with employees during change processes is also particularly important among young workers. They often respond well to mentoring and coaching. They're also more likely to support change processes if they are able to participate in defining transformation goals and practices. ■

Andrew and David were speakers at the 2016 Criticaleye Asia Leadership Retreat. Find out more [here](#)



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Andrew is Accenture's Global Human Capital Lead for Financial Services, with over 20 years of experience running large scale business change and HR transformation programmes.

He is responsible for change, HR, and people and culture consulting engagements with banking, insurance and capital markets clients globally.

Andrew has extensive global experience from the UK and North America, to Asia and Africa, working with a broad range of local and multinational clients, such as Suncorp, Aegon, AXA, Aon and Marsh. He is based in Melbourne, Australia.

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LEADING ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE IN A GLOBAL COMPANY

David Comeau, Criticaleye Board Mentor and former President for Asia Pacific at Mondelēz International, says:

"Mondelēz transformed from a country focused set of independent operating units into a category-focused global organisation without borders.

I think a lot of people struggle with this pendulum swing between how centralised or de-centralised a company should be. It was critical to make changes as the rules and responsibilities were not clear and we had layers of decision-makers that were conflicting.

We worked with the countries to redesign the organisation and asked their opinion on the best way to accomplish what we were trying to do.

Collectively, we designed a structure that would allow us to operate globally but still be effective on a local basis.

As a leader you have to lead by example. You cannot encourage siloed behaviour; the risk is that a lot of the people who operate in silos are functional experts and that creates a barrier."