

CASE STUDY READY FOR THE FUTURE

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER -
USING STILL MOVING CAPACITIES TO
ADDRESS EXISTENTIAL CHALLENGES OF
THE FUTURE



IMAGINE THIS SCENARIO...

You have recently been appointed Group CEO of a 100-year-old company facing unprecedented disruptive change, where there will be no revival of the business model that has built its success. Whatever change you bring in needs to have both, immediate impact but also an on-going sustainable character. There is significant pressure on you to come up with a rescue plan that will provide future certainty and continued financial returns without causing discomfort, sacrifice or betrayal to what has come before. This is roughly what a client of us faced a few years ago.

Fast forward three years: The Board and the Top Leaders took a courageous decision to split the company and bring one part to the stock market. This decision was supported across the whole of the organisation and the IPO executed in record time with excellent results. Now, what did it take to make this happen?

Relying on your Inner Capacities

Firstly, the CEO courageously withstood the enormous pressure to come up with “the” new strategy but used the inner capacity of Curious & Intentional Responding to make a conscious choice on how to respond to the pressure.

Choosing the Change Approach Wisely

Secondly, he convinced his board colleagues to abandon formerly used directive forms of change but trust in the organisation to have or develop the capabilities needed to find answers. They started to create a new change language and build tools that rapidly spread through the organisation because people saw the success of new ways of working and asked for more.

The Systemic Lens

The third conviction for the setup was that systemic change was needed – trying to drive success through the current underlying system that produced the results was doomed to fail. So simple measures like different formats for meetings, less power point, a different way of sharing information, started to crack intact routines and open possibilities for the new.

Developing Still Moving Capacities

And finally, he was deeply convinced that he could only do this if every leader at the top of this organisation would lead from their best place personally – with regards to physical and mental or inner fitness as well as a heightened sense of their leadership and systemic skill.

Together with a team of external faculty, internal HR and Change experts, an intervention for - in the end - the top 360 leaders was set up, using the Still Moving capacities both in how the intervention was created as well as what participants focused on in their development.

This started by co-creating the design that proved sustainable over time (ten waves with a total of 360 participants in three years during which the company faced numerous external and internal shifts) with future participants, not as “we know it best” recipe from OD experts or top management ([LINK](#) to figure with Programme architecture here).

The Leadership Practices in the Programme

The living laboratory aspect of the programme enabled things to move which were seen as unmovable in the “real world” of the business – drawing on the pull of “Attractor” by connecting senior leaders from across all reaches of the organisation into a non-agenda filled and emotionally charged space,

the experience tapped into a collective and heart-felt desire to move more in tune with the times.

In the safe harbour of this intervention, people dared to exercise Edge and Tension; by making it permissible, indeed, expected, to voice what was difficult, to amplify disturbance and be comfortable with not being comfortable and eventually this translated into the wider system outside this learning environment.

With the faculty, able to individually and collectively hold their own anxiety in disturbance and seek its systemic source, the programme modelled to participants a capacity for non-reactivity and a staying open to all of the experience, often powerfully turning initial participant scepticism into full engagement with the learning. Moreover, the participant networks set up in this programme helped the top leadership team of this organisation stay united under fire. This provided the Container needed to keep moving despite anxieties and disturbance.

The Inner Capacities in the Programme

A key foundation for the inner capacities is mindfulness which was integrated in the programme not as something to be taught but caught through experiencing how it can positively impact the ability to

.deal with whatever is thrown at you during a period of unprecedented change and seeing how bosses and colleagues become more calm, self-aware, attentive, less controlling and judgmental.

The programme entailed both, scientific input on e.g. the neuronal impacts of mindfulness to appeal to the academic rigorous minds of leaders as well as ample opportunities to try and test different ways of cultivating mindfulness through meditation, nature walks, yoga, and providing space for reflection through the rhythm of the days.

Beyond this level of individual mindfulness, the programme emerged as a place in the system where the shadow of the change could be examined. Far from pretending it wasn't there, or casting judgments (tempting to do), the faculty learned to Acknowledge The Whole and bring the difficulty in by different ways of making explicit what was in the room.

Key Design Elements

While it was the programme's holistic nature that left its mark on participants (and faculty), here are the experiences that addressed both the shadow as well as the upside of the organisation's turbulent change journey:

Peer groups – throughout the programme (and in many cases well beyond) participants were grouped in small teams across Business Units, hierarchy and functions to support each other in their learning and growth. Facilitated through faculty, people truly connected as human beings and in the best sense challenged each other to be the best version of their true self.

Foraging – participants teamed up to visit afar places inside or outside their organisation to return inspired and intrigued why what is possible elsewhere should not work for them or pre-warned about shortfalls they could more easily see in a context different from their own.

Prototyping – applying all the insights gained by rapidly designing something new, creating a human-centered innovation. This rapid experimentation approach was an extremely system changing one and had great impact in the wider culture. The experience of prototyping built radically new capacities in the leaders and their business that felt the change they were planning to do.

While the jury is still out whether the strategic move this programme helped generate is fully successful, there is clearly major impact visible in recent strategic decisions, the way leaders interact with each other and how major projects are carried out. At the level of the whole it clearly has built the skills of this organisation's leaders to face an ending and create a new beginning – this is movement, not just action.

