



## **‘CHANGE’: CAN YOU MAKE IT HAPPEN?**

Regardless of the incentives offered or demands made on people, they will not change unless they want to. From this simple but abrupt observation we can conclude that workplaces don’t change, it’s the people that change.

When an executive is elevated from a management position to a leadership role his or her work context changes dramatically. Thinking about the new role and its incumbent responsibilities is easy from a theoretical perspective, but it offers many challenges once the title is conferred.

Why are people shocked when they discover what leadership entails?


For people to respect and want to follow leaders, the leaders have to exhibit a mix of qualities that endear them to their team or organisation. The less skilled leader may feel that the task can be likened to a popularity contest. Leaders with a greater appreciation of the complexities of group behaviour know the task is multi-dimensional.

As a leader it can be difficult to confide in colleagues as they expect you to have all the answers. They watch your behaviour to gauge how well you are connecting with stakeholders. They continually review your performance to check if you are true to your word, have you backed your narrative with action and whether your commitment is genuine.

***“Curiosity is one of the most permanent and certain characteristics of a vigorous intellect.”***

*Dr Samuel Johnson 1709-1784*

When organisational goals are determined and tough action is called for, the workforce takes its lead from the top. Leaders, like the rest of



the community, need support systems and this is where the benefit of coaching becomes apparent.

An executive coach will work with you to strengthen your self-awareness - when it's good, life is so much better. A coach will help you draw upon your experiences and help you determine when it's appropriate to push into new territory. Learning to behave in the many contexts you operate within can also be challenging. You will need to trust key players. But before that trust is conferred those key people will need to understand what you want to do, and why and how you plan to get where you want to go. Each of these tasks must be undertaken before they will reciprocate the trust. It also suggests that you need finely tuned communication skills.


***“Daring ideas are like chessmen moved forward; they may be beaten, but they may start a winning game.”***

*Johann Wolfgang Goethe 1749-1832*

It's clear that no leader can operate as an island. You need to understand others and package the right message before you will be understood. Performance pressures are significant and when you need help gaining a fresh perspective, coaching is an ideal tool.

The scale of organisational change required is a key determinant as to which strategies are the most appropriate. Can your corporate objectives be met with simple fine tuning or some incremental change? Is it time for a 'heavy-handed' approach where directives are handed out or coercive tactics adopted? Some leaders have the luxury of long lead times but in other cases the demand for dramatic change is suddenly thrust upon them. Each scenario places different demands on leaders and calls for different leadership behaviour, strategic management and people skills.

We can assume good leaders want more influence over their operations and teams than less. One way to promote this outcome is



to work with your executive coach to fine tune your environmental awareness. Determine how well you are connected to your environment. If change management strategies are to work for the longer term your approach has to match the desired outcome.

***“You must be the change you wish to see in the world”***

*Mahatma Ghandi*

Importantly, while most leaders accept that change is a constant in their market, not all leaders accept that there is a parallel need to continually fine-tune their leadership skills. Coaching is the ideal tool to satisfy this need. By staying one step ahead of the market, you give yourself that all-important competitive advantage.