

# The HR NEWS

Your Authoritative HR Bulletin

ISSN 2704-4807 JUNE/JULY 2022

## Beware of Quick Fix HR Professional Certifications!

... President of the Chartered Institute of  
Human Resource Management, Ghana



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**CIHRM**

CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, GHANA

ISSN 2704-4807



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# SUPERPOWERS FOR FUTURE-FIT LEADERS

By Lesanne Brooke

Future fitness requires the capacity to navigate change. Change is happening everywhere and continuously. In our VUCA world, leaders are working hard to become more agile, adaptive, and nimble. Directing our teams and organisations requires skills and competencies that were seldom required in the old version of Business as Usual. For example: not so long ago, the words hybrid and virtual were for IT and gamers. Who knew we would all need to know how to utilise their value?

Innovative, visionary, experimental, flexible - the skills we need as leaders have evolved and continue to do so. However, there is a specific skillset that trumps many others and can really have impact: human-centred leadership. When done wisely and with vision, this is major Superpower.

Leading ourselves and others through transitioning times is a valuable skill (even without any more disruptions, we will continue to feel the after-effects of recent events for some time.)

Most people are change-resistant and perhaps even secretly change-averse - even those who love the challenge and stimulation. We're creatures of habit.

“In our current disrupted reality, change is a constant that cannot necessarily be managed as planned.”

How do we deal with its inevitability?

We need to be strategic, informed, and able to ensure that we and our teams are change-ready. Here are five tips for using our people-powers to lean into managing change effectively:

## 1. Focus on addressing feelings

I know this is hard for conventional business brains to accept, but people have feelings. Ignoring this will not

speed up the outcome, nor ensure it. Unacknowledged feelings can sabotage the process, stall it, be highly counter-productive and even prevent the change from fully integrating.

It is a basic human need to be acknowledged and sometimes just taking the time to listen to people's concerns gets buy-in. Feelings can be aired in a professional way by allowing more time at the beginning of meetings for a check in, or through quick one-on-ones to ask how people are doing and what support they need.

We all have feelings at work - decisions that affect us, uncertainty, office politics etc. On top of this, emotions are strong in our VUCA climate. It is important to note that giving feelings airtime, does not mean you need to turn your meetings into emotionally harrowing counselling sessions.

**Work related feelings can be aired as a way of removing obstacles, creating shared understanding and re-activating momentum.** If you encounter people who are dealing with overwhelming emotions, listen kindly and then refer them for professional support.

Lastly, show respect for the trust that caring leadership creates. Do not abuse what you know about people's feelings. Cherish and safeguard the sense of loyalty and team cohesion.

## 2. Change is a process

Change can be triggered by a single event, yet the change itself is not an event – it is a process that must be allowed its full course to be successful. Discomfort with the ambiguity can create bottlenecks or give people reason to give up or leave. Trying to jump or ignore the difficult bits, or even the parts that seem too banal, can prevent the outcome from being realised.

This means allowing time in schedules for errors and integration, communicating frequently and carefully to ensure that everyone is informed and explaining the Why for what you are doing. It also means being experimental with solutions, iterating in small responsive steps and allowing room for emergent factors.

Lastly, it requires recognising the emotions people ride as they journey through change. These vary from loss, doubt and confusion to uncertainty and resistance. If managed well, they can lead to creativity and solutions that enhance and innovate.

## 3. Trust the process

Know that change leadership is a process and plan for this. Again, create space for error and discussions. Vision the outcome you desire, map key points on the journey and identify measurables that define those points. Then let go.

Attaching dogmatically to specifics, logistics or technicalities may prevent you and your team from negotiating unexpected disruptions. If you're clear about the difference you want to make, your priorities and your muscles for riding change, you need to surrender and Trust The Process.

Make space for innovation, unexpected solutions, brilliant workarounds, and entirely new ways. Do not give up. (Remember, the moment when things seem the most disheartening, is often exactly when the process is about to shift towards resolution.)

## 4. You cannot communicate too much

Information sharing and discussions are vital to successful change – and this means more than a quick briefing. For people to overcome their fears and resistance, and for you to get complete buy-in, communication is key. Lots of it! Group sessions, one-on-ones, informal chats, quick updates, emails about minor changes, details about implications – all of these add up to a sense of safety and engagement – two critical aspects of effective change leadership.

It doesn't stop with your team. Communication is an essential way of positioning the work you are doing within the broader organisation.

Discuss your work, collaborate across silos, involve clients and users. Relevant, living information is valuable data and builds the must-have career advantage – a network. Client-centred solutions, whether internal or external, give you the loyalty, relationships, and capacity to sustain your impact.

Find your personal communication style and lean into it. You don't have to be a compelling extrovert. People want to work with others they trust, those that listen and care and make them feel as if their money or work hours are in safe hands. Be You.

## 5. When the going gets tough – pay attention

People, teams, projects and change processes cycle through a make-or-break point, the point of no return. To lead the process to this point takes focussed attention, ensuring everyone is on board. Then, just before you begin to see the light of day, everything may seem to go awry. The energy changes, everyone gets uncomfortable, perhaps there is criticism, in-fighting, or questioning – this is the moment to pay attention.

Be calm, trust the process, communicate, and bear witness. You are about to change gear and break-through to the creative stage of the change cycle. This is the point that many lose hope and give up, but it's also the moment that can lead you to the other side. Don't run, hide, or ignore the inevitable. Be brave, get engaged and ride the waves. Turn and face the change!

We are all in this changing reality together and leading others is a task that can have enormous impact.

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Finding your inner Superpower and paying attention to sharing information, leading with a sense of purpose, and collaborating around the many problems you may not know the answer to, is the key to building your core strength as a future-fit leader.

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### About the Author

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