

# Is Your Leadership Team Full of Change Agents?



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*Assessing Talent. Smart.*

# Industry Insight: Is Your Leadership Team Full of Change Agents?

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*The rules and requirements to remain competitive in today's marketplace are evolving so rapidly that leadership is struggling to stay ahead of the course. While change used to be slow and incremental, organizations today face a whole new breed of change – one that is fast, disruptive, and unpredictable. As such, businesses are acutely aware of the need to be agile. However, to be agile you need agile people because in the end, organizations don't change – people do.*

*Arguably, the ability to be an effective change agent is the new requirement for leadership success. Change management is no longer reserved for operational improvements or process reengineering, instead it is interwoven deep within the business fabric calling for every leader to be a change agent, regardless of hierarchy or rank. The reality is, any change initiative will fall short of its potential if it doesn't address the underlying mind-sets and capabilities of the people who will execute it.*

## Effective Change Agents in High Demand, but Short Supply

The demand for leadership that is willing and capable of helping people get to a place where they can understand the need for change, process it, and act on it, is in short supply. Meanwhile, the level of organizational readiness to adapt hinges greatly on leaders' ability to act as role models. In fact, research from McKinsey suggests that half of all effort to transform organizational performance fail either because senior managers don't act as role models for change, or because people in the organization defend the status quo.

The same research indicates that if companies can identify and address pervasive mindsets at the outset, they are four times more likely to succeed in organizational change efforts than are companies that overlook this stage.

## The Evidence-Based Profile of Effective Change Agents

Fortunately, as the demand for effective change agents has evolved, so too has the ability to identify the key competencies, behaviors and values of these leaders through evidence-based talent assessments and analytics. As a pioneer in the talent assessment industry, XBInsight has collected and analyzed extensive data on Fortune 1000 executive leaders across a wide spectrum of industries to develop five key competencies that correlate with effective change management.

### ***Demonstrates Flexibility and Resilience***

Exceptional change agents embrace complexity, and become more energized when the requirements of a situation change. They manage pressure well, and cope with setbacks effectively rather than flee from challenges. Motivated to build a diverse array of social networks and connections, great change agents cross cultural, gender, geographic, structural and professional boundaries to mobilize connected groups.

### ***Recognizes and Communicates Growth Opportunities***

In order to create alignment, change agent leaders must demonstrate the opportunity that change will provide and stay focused on the future. They ignite the commitment of others by creating an answer to the "what's in it for me" question. And, they are adept at removing or minimizing others' resistance to change. Competency in helping people leave the safety and confines of their current situation and stay focused on an exciting future is crucial.

### **Strives for Results**

For top change agents, striving for results fuels their motivation. They focus on improving performance and instilling accountability, recognizing that when change takes longer to implement it can be frustrating and de-motivating. They also understand the importance of highlighting key milestones or progress when it is made, while incentivizing employees to improve on performance measurements.

### **Leads Courageously**

Higher performing change agents take charge of initiatives and situations. They take responsibility for making difficult decisions, but also consistently demonstrate the ability to articulate compelling reasons for change. Effective change managers carefully craft and customize their messages with clarity and share them with conviction to inspire action.

### **Gains Buy-In**

Building bridges to create a shared sense of purpose, and accomplishment, among individuals and groups is paramount. Key change agents explore alternative perspectives and ideas, establishing trust and understanding to avoid lack of collaboration or even intentional sabotage. They have the ability to exert their power and influence through both formal and informal authority.

In addition to these five key competencies, we identified what behaviors and values were common among top performing change agents. Interestingly, even though leaders with “impacting” behavior styles such as, being talkative, social, and emotional were effective change agents, the more task-oriented “driving” executives are even better at it. These leaders score the highest on all five change competencies, and have a strong need to dominate, are decisive, and results-focused.

Finally, we uncovered the values that motivate high performing change agents and that must be present to sustain their satisfaction and performance – a strong desire for achievement, power, adventure, and creativity.

### **Change is Difficult. Not Changing is Fatal.**

Despite the difficulty in managing change, it is a reality facing every organization today. Restructurings, turnarounds, and strategic shifts are now commonplace, making it essential to understand what successful change agents do differently. Utilizing science-backed, evidence-based talent assessments, the ability to identify potential change agents and/or develop these competencies within existing leadership is not only possible, but necessary. By closely examining the type of leadership that has the mindset and the competencies to move the company forward successfully, the process of change will become less disruptive and instead become a strategic, competitive differentiator.

*Contact XBI Insight to learn more about how to identify change agents in your organization, and why the world’s leading brands choose us as their talent management partner.*

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