

There are no Miracles

By David Huggins

A significant threat to businesses today is a belief in miracles. We've become conditioned to the idea that management 'gurus' and technology, between them, will search out and deliver sure-fire solutions for all that ails us. It isn't going to happen.

It's true, there have been some remarkable developments in both areas, over the past twenty-five years especially – but no miracles. Gurus do offer enlightenment, but more often they serve us with fads (stands for 'forget any durable solution!'). Technology has also served us well as a provider of tools, but tools alone do not make a craftsman.

There are countless myths surrounding the concept of change and its impact on our businesses. There are no miracles here either, as many organizations will attest. The promises of 'radical revitalization through deliberate intervention' melt with the morning mists. There is little evidence to support claims of a 'miraculous turn-around' in any sector.

Having said all this, I do not see myself as a cynic, just as a realist. There's been a phenomenal expansion in data, a remarkable improvement in technology, a substantial increase in business systems and processes, but only a very small change in related behaviors. Throwing more information at people hasn't made them better decision makers. Speeding up communication hasn't led to higher productivity – it may even have slowed it down!

Behaviors are a product of perceptions. Perceptions, the way people interpret the world around them, change very slowly. Perceptions are also influenced mainly by personal experiences rather than by external messages. We learn by 'doing', and we change our perceptions in much the same way. The bottom line is that people are the limiting *and* liberating factor in business today, exactly as they were decades ago and always have been.

Change – read ‘progress’ – is probably going to occur at the ‘speed of people’. It needs to start by having the right people on the team. Before anything productive can happen, a group of people who respect, accept, want to understand and work with one another, must agree to come together ‘with focused intent’.

This intent is going to be vitalized when this same group has focused and energized it - through their actions. Groups will assume accountability for their owned, planned actions much more readily than for the planning of others. Besides, if you bring people together by means of a pre-planned intention, and market conditions later force you to amend that intention, how can you be sure they’ll hold together? On the other hand, if the planned intention is theirs at the outset, they will do all the amending necessary to keep it on track.

It was demonstrated many years ago that those who take action together to create something of value, or to overcome a significant challenge, will bond with one another. They will act as a ‘spontaneous team’, producing remarkable results even under extremely difficult circumstances. *This* is the key to successful change. There’s no need for miracles, simply for focused, consistent, resilient effort, producing visible outcomes that tell all members that they are a valued part of a winning team. Success is to be found in people, not in ideas or technology, both of which are just tools. Success breeds success!

The ‘secret’ of surviving and mastering change is simple. First, find the ‘right’ people. Second, share and implant your vision of success in those people, allowing them to define strategy for themselves. Thereafter, support and encourage them with ideas and technology - but only on demand.

This has been a common strategy of most really great organizations – those that have out-performed, substantially, their competition in the market. It’s worth thinking about.

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