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Organizational Change

4 Strategies to Guide Your Team Through a Departmental Transition

by Susan Peppercorn and Tony Martignetti

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Summary. Whether initiated by strategic realignment, leadership changes, or market demands, departmental transitions test a leader's mettle. In this article, the authors offer four strategies to guide your team through a departmental transition while maintaining morale,... [more](#)

Organizational change is constant in an era marked by rapid technological advancements, shifting market dynamics, and the lingering effects of a global pandemic. A survey by McKinsey & Company found that 80% of organizations have experienced some form of transformation in the past five years, yet only a third of these initiatives have been successful.

Departmental transitions — whether due to restructuring, leadership changes, or strategic shifts — present leaders with one of the most challenging change circumstances because of the real hit they can take to morale, productivity, and cohesion.

Here are four strategies to help guide your team through this type of transition.

Communicate the “why” clearly and authentically

Clear, transparent communication is the foundation of successfully navigating departmental transitions. Leaders must articulate the “why” behind changes, providing context and outlining the anticipated impact on the team. This must involve more than a one-time, one-way shout out. As a leader, you should listen to your team's thoughts on the transition to address their

immediate concerns, confirm each individual's understanding, and create opportunities for the message to truly resonate with everyone.

For example, in a recent departmental transition at a software development company, the CEO leveraged multi-channel communication — including regular town hall meetings and personalized messages — to communicate openly with the entire team about the need to restructure departments in alignment with the company's new strategic goals. These meetings served as interactive sessions for addressing concerns, answering questions, and providing updates, fostering a sense of unity and purpose among employees.

The CEO's approach incorporated visual explanations and clear stories to further clarify the transition's goals and processes, which helped alleviate uncertainty and anxiety among team members. By taking this approach, the CEO was able to maintain employee trust by anchoring leadership around core values and principles, since these remain stable even when the environment isn't. This transparent communication strategy, underpinned by a commitment to two-way dialogue and regular updates, exemplifies effective leadership in times of change.

Acknowledge the emotional impact

Corporate transitions can have a massive psychological impact on employees, and to address this reality, leaders must focus on empathy and support. In the context of the software development company's departmental transition, the changes in reporting structures and job roles stirred apprehension among team members. Supported by the CEO's multi-channel communication, department heads organized one-on-one meetings to openly discuss concerns, offer reassurance, and assist people in adapting to new processes. The company also offered support mechanisms to help employees through the transition, including access to counseling services and professional development opportunities. This approach not only helped address employees' immediate emotional distress but also turned these challenges into growth potential, illustrating the profound impact of emotionally intelligent leadership during periods of change.

Cultivate ownership and involvement

Empowering team members to actively contribute to the transition process can significantly boost employee engagement while instilling a sense of ownership. To facilitate this process, leaders should involve employees in decision-making, solicit their input on implementation strategies, and delegate responsibilities accordingly during a departmental transition. Leaders can drive innovation and increase the chance of a successful outcome by leveraging the team's collective wisdom, rather than taking a top-

down leadership approach. By prioritizing their team's psychological safety, leaders can create an environment where team members feel empowered to take risks, knowing it's okay that not every decision will succeed.

During the restructuring at the software development company, the CEO formed cross-functional teams of employees to collaborate on the creation of new organizational structures, rather than simply dictating what the changes would be. By regularly brainstorming, evaluating a range of potential solutions, and providing feedback to leadership on their preferences, these employee teams contributed to the innovation process, bolstering a culture of collaboration and empowerment. This collective involvement ensured that employees felt valued, had greater clarity about their roles, experienced a degree of control over their work, built stronger relationships through teamwork, and were more likely to perceive the transition as equitable.

Prepare your team for future changes

Leading through change isn't just about managing the transition — it requires empowering and preparing your team for a future that embraces continuous evolution and collective achievement. By championing continuous learning and adaptation for your employees, you can help everyone navigate transitions more smoothly while positioning the organization for future success. The concept of a learning organization emphasizes the importance of systems thinking, shared vision, and team learning

in adapting to all types of change. By investing in the development of their team members, leaders equip staff with the tools and confidence to continue thriving even when new organizational changes arise.

Circling back to the software development company example, the leadership team recognized the need to upskill all employees to align team members with new technologies and methodologies. Leaders organized workshops, seminars, and online courses on agile development, cloud computing, and data analytics tailored to the specific needs of different departments. By prioritizing continuous learning, the company helped to ensure its teams remained competitive and adaptable in the rapidly evolving tech industry.

Navigating departmental transitions demands that leaders champion clear communication, emotional intelligence, ownership, and a culture of continuous learning. By focusing on these four priorities, leaders can turn potential disruptions into opportunities for growth and renewal.

Susan Peppercorn is an executive career transition coach and speaker. She is the author of *Ditch Your Inner Critic at Work: Evidence-Based Strategies to Thrive in Your Career*. Numerous publications including the New York

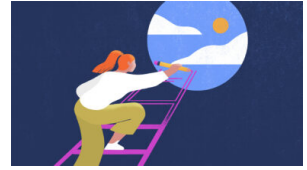
Times, Wall Street Journal, Fast Company, the Boston Globe, and SELF Magazine have tapped her for career advice. You can download her free Career Fit Self-Assessment and 25 Steps to a Successful Career Transition.

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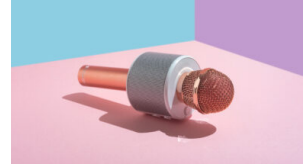
Tony Martignetti is the chief inspiration officer at Inspired Purpose Partners, where he advises leaders to stay grounded in chaotic times. He is the best-selling author of *Climbing the Right Mountain: Navigating the Journey to An Inspired Life* and *Campfire Lessons for Leaders: How Uncovering Our Past Can Propel Us Forward*.

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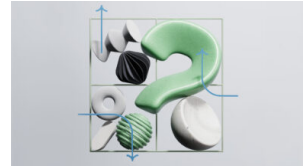
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