

# “REINVENTION – LEADERSHIP’S GREATEST CHALLENGE”

by Gary Neat

Reinventing an organisation is no longer a one-off event. Instead, for our new age leaders, the process has assumed a continuous, loop-like form where the quest for advantageous change must be never-ending.

It’s no coincidence that the lateral thinking applied to reinventing individual careers today differs little from the organisational model. Change is the norm – the only difference being that the speed of change in organisations can be greater. Complexity and uncertainty are here to stay.

I’ve counselled more than 40 organisational transformations/reinventions in recent years. The lessons are simple. There is no organisational nirvana, no perfect organisational model and no one size fits all scenario which is where many of our self anointed gurus come unstuck.

Reinventions’ greatest opponent is almost always the subtle and pernicious hand of the anti-change individual who fears that continuous innovation will rob them of status. Agents of change, usually CEO’s are quick to identify organisational recalcitrants whose worst fears are inevitably realised – yet continue to blame others for their professional demise. They learn nothing.

Why do some see change as an opportunity whilst others see it as a threat ? And, why do some defend the indefensible whilst those more sensible seek to expand horizons ?

The reality is that successfully assembling a reinvention strategy depends as much on understanding human traits and attitudes as it does on sound business modeling.

In our global economy, for a CEO or change champion to enthuse and take people with them on the reinvention journey, they to need remind themselves of the following human certainties:

- Enhancement of self-esteem underpins all relationships.
- Communications are often filtered and hence subjective.
- The need for acceptance is a basic workplace trait.
- What’s important to the individual ?
- People follow those they respect.

Locked within these understandings is the key to unraveling the myriad of human-related barriers that our change champions must identify and overcome in order to crystalise the process of continuous innovation.

In order to unlock closed minds, many of our more enlightened CEO's are increasingly turning to executive coaches to ensure that reinvention is imbued as a core organisational pathway.

One of the great challenges for leaders in today's knowledge economies is how to develop within their organisations both the fortitude and perspicacity to keep staff adapting to constant change. Many are failing the test as evidenced by the continuing high turnover of CEO's worldwide.

Whereas the sign of a healthy organisation is its ability to re-work itself, for some highly troubled organisations it can mean total reinvention. Only by radical organisational surgery can they unveil new products and develop new and distinctive competencies.

The ability to empower management has become one of the great yardsticks of a good leader. Remember, that increasingly CEO's are faced with staff who are more demanding, more savvy, mobile, less loyal and less trusting of their leaders.

The situation is exacerbated by the fact that with increasing international labour shortages, competition for the best workers is intensifying in many countries. Clearly, a more flexible and enlightened approach to staff rewards will be needed in the next decade particularly as the process of continuous innovation gains momentum.

More and more organisations are experiencing a shorter existence. Obviously, that doesn't build staff goodwill and it creates havoc with corporate memory and mentoring – not to mention the everyday lives of workers.

It's one of the reasons that conventional management structures are becoming obsolete. Increasingly, the organisational landscape of continuous reinvention requires a greater emphasis on self management techniques whereby managers and staff alike are imbued with knowledge economy methodologies.

Today's leader must understand that conventional structures do not lend themselves to continuous reinvention whereas empowering staff to create "*ideas*", learn new "*skills*", engender "*linkages*" and energize through "*rewards*" will create a dynamic platform to metamorphose their organisation.

**GARY NEAT**