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## **Forget Sink or Swim! 4 Ways to Help Your Team Thrive**

Budget cuts and hiring freezes. Regulatory headaches, stalled initiatives, or the loss of a well-loved leader.

Sound familiar? If so, rest assured, you are not alone. In over a decade's work with top executives, I've yet to meet a leader who hasn't been dealt any number of setbacks and challenges.

Challenges that make leading difficult. Challenges that strain even high performing teams and put an executive's skills, resourcefulness and adaptability to the test.

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### **What Clients Are Saying**



*"When our organization, Newton Medical Center, merged with the Atlantic Health System, Liz Bywater, PhD, served as my consultant and*

Of course, if you're like my most successful clients, you aren't easily intimidated. You embrace any opportunity to step up your game – and you are ready and willing to help your team excel, no matter the obstacle or diversion. This is what energizes you. You are a leader – and this is precisely why you're here.

Yet even the very best of leaders can become distracted by the fire of the day and inadvertently neglect their teams. Worse yet, they can "turn off" their leadership efforts, assuming the team must sink or swim. But tough times are when the team needs you most. Here are 4 ways to keep performance, engagement and spirits high in the face of adversity.

**Use the upheaval to build bonds.** There's nothing so powerful as a crisis or the threat of looming danger to create lifelong war buddies. In difficult times, teams can develop stronger relationships by demonstrating their commitment and loyalty to one another. A great leader will help his team work together rather than at odds with one another. She will insist on communication, collaboration and mutual support. She will have zero tolerance for infighting or unproductive competition among team members.

**Revisit your vision.** "Do you want to spend the rest of your life selling sugared water or do you want a chance to change the world?" (Steve Jobs to John Scully, enticing him to step away from a successful career at PepsiCo in order to join a struggling Apple in 1984.)

Jobs was known for his vision and his passionate and compelling language. He instilled a sense of purpose that

*coach.*

*Our areas of focus included establishing credibility and trust, building relationships and achieving early wins, while concentrating on organizational and individual goals.*

*Our work was of great assistance in my becoming acclimated to the new organization as well as being welcomed into the executive ranks.*

*Dr. Bywater's expertise in focusing on specific behaviors and actions to achieve the desired outcomes was both essential and very much appreciated.*

*Her professional demeanor, pleasant personality and incredible listening skills assisted me in making a successful transition.*

others simply could not resist.

When you convey an extraordinary vision for your team, you provide the inspiration and energy needed to ride the waves of short-term setbacks in pursuit of a greater goal. Does your vision do that? If the answer is no, it's time to step back, reflect and reformulate your vision – and ensure everyone gets on board.

**Don't let change take you by surprise.** Even when it's unclear what's coming down the pike, savvy leaders anticipate when significant change is on the way. They acknowledge it and they work with their teams to prepare for any number of possibilities.

I've seen it time and again. When leaders ignore, deny or sugar coat what's coming, they lose the trust and confidence of their teams. So keep your eyes open, scan the environment, make educated predictions and keep your team in the loop. Convey your unshakable confidence that no matter what the future brings, you will successfully navigate the path together.

**Get in front of your people.** There's no getting around it. Regardless of how busy or stretched for time you may be, you must remain visible and available to your team. When you are out of sight and out of touch, you lose visibility into how your people are coping. You don't have a clear line of sight into the mounting anxiety, overwhelm or stress. And you aren't there to field the questions, concerns or misunderstandings that invariably arise in difficult times.

So be present for your team. Make them your top priority.

*As a satisfied client, I'm extremely pleased with the results and thankful and appreciative to have been afforded this opportunity."*

*- Thomas J. Senker, FACHE, President, Retired, Newton Medical Center*

**Forward to a Friend**

Learn from them, share information quickly and honestly, and help your people feel emboldened by your confidence and unwavering leadership.

Take my word for it. If you lose sight of the foundations of leadership, your team will pay the price. It's a pretty straightforward formula. Support your team. Be visible, accessible and approachable. Help the team anticipate what's to come and communicate your vision with candor, clarity, confidence and purpose. You and your team will emerge stronger, more trusting, better performing – and remarkably well-prepared for whatever the future may bring.

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## **Leading Change: Why Efforts Fail (and How to Succeed!)**

Leading Change. It's one of the biggest challenges faced by today's top executives. If you are now, or ever have been, at the helm of a change initiative, I would imagine this is uncomfortably familiar. Large scale organizational change is a process rife with larger-than-expected challenges, obstacles around every corner, and the occasional solid brick wall.

Resistance emerges, confusion reigns, misalignment and miscommunication are par for the course. And they can absolutely stop your change efforts in their tracks.

It doesn't have to be this way. So let's dig deep and ask, why does change so often falter and fail?

Let's start on positive footing. We will assume that yes, change truly makes sense for your organization. That it's the right kind of change, introduced at the right time. Even so, your initiative may falter. Here are three problems to look out for. Change fails when:

**There is no clear Why.** Do you remember what it was like when you were a child, and your mother or father told you what to do and you asked, *But why?* And your mom or dad told you, *Because I said so, that's why!*

It's not all that different for us as adults. The fact is, no one likes to be given a mandate without a reason. What's the rationale? What's the context? Without these, you are simply insisting on a new strategy or process and saying, *"Do it because I said so."* And you are setting yourself up for resistance.

Tell people WHY things need to change. Give them context and share your vision.

*Is change needed to adapt to changing market conditions?*

*To take advantage of a merger? To bring profitable new products to market? To create shifts in the marketplace that ensure future growth?*

**There was nothing beyond Why.** Ok, so let's assume the organization gets the 'Why'. For sure, that's important and a good start. But it may not be enough.

Change efforts can fail when leaders don't demonstrate what will happen if *nothing changes*. Make it abundantly clear and compelling that something must change. Answer the following

questions:

*What's wrong with the status quo? What's the cost of doing nothing? Will the company miss an important window of opportunity? Will you lose marketshare? Will the business fail to meet changing customer needs and preferences? Are you at risk of losing your most talented workers to the competition?*

Identify and communicate the very real risks in continuing to do business as usual. It will help the organization understand and embrace the need for change.

**Objections were not anticipated.** Successful leaders know that part of their job is to be a great salesperson. They must authentically sell their vision and strategy to the people who will be at the forefront of implementation.

Change can fail when leaders don't pause long enough to thoughtfully consider the objections that will arise across the organization. They get blindsided and, as a result, they are unprepared to deal with the resistance that hits them from those they'd always considered most loyal and dedicated.

So put yourself in their shoes. But don't try to have all the answers yourself. Talk with your key stakeholders. Go to those influential people in your organization who will ultimately roll out change across their departments.

Test your ideas with them and ask the questions,  
*"What can go wrong here? What am I missing? Who is going to have the greatest difficulty embracing this new direction?"*

*How can we address their concerns and create champions instead of resistors?"*

It is said that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. So be proactive in your change efforts. Start by building the case for change. Develop support before you dive in. Then go ahead and lead your organization to a better, brighter, more extraordinary future.

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### **Exceptional Leadership Tip #36**

#### ***Slow Down to Speed Up!***

As summer winds down, it's the perfect time for a strategic pause to reflect and plan.

Determine your priorities for the fall, set direction, and create a plan to help you and your team get there fast.

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### **On the Air**

Tune in this Sunday 8/21/16 to hear Liz on the air with Brad Segall for CBS Philly's *Philadelphia Agenda*. The 30-minute segment can be heard at 6am on WOGL 98.1FM and AMP 96.5FM and at 7am on WXTU 92.5FM.

If you miss it, don't worry, the interview will appear on the WOGL website as a podcast next week.

Liz and Brad will be talking about Liz's forthcoming book, *Slow Down to Speed Up!* You will also get Liz's key insights on the top traits of successful leaders. Enjoy!

## About Liz Bywater

For over a decade, top global organizations have requested Liz's help in resolving issues such as creating extraordinary client relationships, increasing market persuasion, and driving productive collaborations in an increasingly complex world.

Liz advises senior leaders at some of the world's most successful companies, such as Johnson & Johnson, Thomson Reuters, Bristol-Myers Squibb and AmerisourceBergen Corporation, among others. She uses her expertise in human behavior to drive commercial success. She helps her clients drive innovation, exert influence and lead their organizations through change.

A thought leader in organizational excellence, Liz provides expert commentary for such publications as the Wall Street Journal, NY Times, Fast Company, and USA Today. She earned her PhD in Psychology at the Derner Institute for Advanced Psychological Studies. Her undergraduate degree is from Cornell University. Liz graduated Cornell Phi Beta Kappa and Cum Laude.

She is a member of the American Psychological Association and the Society for the Advancement of Consulting. She is a constant and author of the eagerly awaited forthcoming book,

***Slow Down to Speed Up: How to Make the Best Decisions and Get the Right Things Done!***

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