Thriving in Budget Constrained Environments
Frequently Asked Questions from Customers: Part 3 of 4

Transitioning from Planning to Execution to Drive Results

Executive Summary
Part 1 of this four part series, "Thriving in Budget Constrained Environments," established the need to refocus the organization's strategy via a nine step process that focused on developing a more efficient and effective system to provide products and services to the organization's customer. Part 2 established the need to facilitate a shift in the culture of the organization, making the case that culture is about people and that their acceptance is the key to establishing a new culture of problem solving that is responsive to customer needs in light of restrained budgets.…Now what? In Part 3, MainStream addresses the question: "What can be done to ensure we move from planning to execution to drive results?"

Leaders Must Set the Example
Throughout Parts 1 and 2 of this series we have highlighted the effort required by the leaders; setting priorities, identifying the metrics, developing plans; not to mention the work of gaining acceptance and working to shift the culture. By now most leaders are tempted to step back and say "There, we made a plan, now go and execute!" If this happens, it will drive a stake straight through the heart of change. Change is more effectively led than directed. Leaders have to move from "planning" to "doing" if they expect the people they are leading to follow. Leaders must engage and find the necessary time and energy to be among the first to adopt their change roles and engage the new agenda in ways which not only allow change to happen, but cause change to happen. Leaders are accountable for change but they are also responsible to change (particularly in the early stages). Those who move out quickly in these roles exhibit their acceptance and demonstrate a bias for action, an appetite for results, and the willingness to change.

To transition from planning to execution, leaders must lead. MainStream defines the role of leadership as 1) creating clear goals and expectations, 2) providing the workforce with the tools, training and resources to do the job being asked, and 3) removing barriers. The Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory states that effective leadership styles must be based on the maturity of the people being led. When people lack the knowledge of what must be done or the confidence to do it, they must be told and directed what to do. When people are willing to do the task, but don't know what to do, leaders must provide direction and sell their message. When people are ready and willing to take on tasks but still lack knowledge of how to perform, leaders must participate, working with the team and sharing the decision making responsibility. It is only when people are confident, willing, and knowledgeable of the skill to perform that a leader can delegate tasks to them.

Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory	
Maturity Level	*Appropriate Leadership Style*
M1: Low maturity	S1: Telling / directing
M2: Medium maturity, limited skills	S2: Selling / coaching
M3: Medium maturity, higher skills, but lacking confidence	S3: Participating / supporting
M4: High maturity	S4: Delegating

Make Change
The majority of individuals (the fence sitters and active resistors) are watching to see which leaders will be among the first to show signs they don't fully subscribe to the new agenda. Many leaders find it easy to go with the flow of the new agenda as long as the changes are still something being planned and not actively being implemented. Commitment to the new agenda will not truly be tested until change strikes close to home, within the area of their direct control. When leaders intend to achieve strategic objectives by changing the way work is performed, they will be well served to translate their intent into actions they themselves will take today, this week and this month. This is when leaders demonstrate a shift from being supportive to being engaged. Some leaders see their role as setting expectations, then waiting to see results. For those leaders, given the level of change required and the nature of priorities, changes associated to the new agenda could be months or more away from taking place. Replace this wait and

see attitude with actions that demonstrate the willingness to change. We recommend every member of the top three tiers of leadership take swift and decisive action. That action is to identify multiple high profile targets within their own areas of control and quickly implement changes to reduce cost, increase productivity, or stop doing something which obviously impedes the organization's position with respect to the reduced budget realities.

Launch Support for Change

The road to results in any change circumstance is littered with stalled and failed change initiatives by organizations that underestimated the levels of effort, skill, and resources it would take overall to reach a sustainable improved end state. It is critical for leaders, even in these budget constrained environments, to set the stage for success. This can be accomplished by providing the best champions, making time available for those champions and others who must participate, providing learning opportunities to develop the necessary understanding and skills; and allocating modest budgets to accommodate the logistics, tools and material necessary. One of the most common forms of resistance to change is generated out of the paradigm that there is no time and there are no resources for change. This paradigm can only be broken if leaders place a high enough priority on change, help determine what resources will be allocated to the change agenda, and make the investment in the resources. By making this investment, leaders exhibit a sense of urgency and confidence in their people to deliver a return on that investment to meet the budget constraints. Individuals who have accepted the need for change will make it happen if they have the resources necessary to accomplish the work of change.

Initiate Governance of Change

With the elements above in place and change beginning to occur, the next active role leadership must adopt is that of upholding the expectation of results, also known as providing governance of the change agenda. This is done by executing responsibilities to monitor progress, make decisions or adjustments which enable change, and remove barriers to progress. Governance can be executed in two distinct forums in no less than the top two tiers of leadership. The first forums are those which are conducted within the normal oversight functions of the organization, like staff meetings or other scheduled accountability forums. The second is that of a joint forum conducted at the necessary intervals for the sole purpose of a deep dive review of progress, decision making and adjustments as necessary.

Maintaining an appetite for results requires the primary focus of governance to remain on the combination of metrics and goals. When results are not readily obvious as defined by the metrics, there may be a tendency to become satisfied with progress as defined by other measures, like progress against the planned projects or activities. Even though completing projects and implementing plans which do not result in the desired change in the metrics may be good for the overall morale of the organization and positively impact the momentum for change, it leaves the organization at risk of not achieving the necessary results. It is critical for leadership to stay focused on the metrics and recognize when adjustments are necessary, and make those adjustments.

"The world no longer belongs to 'managers'. It belongs to passionate, driven leaders - people who can energize those whom they lead."
Jack Welch, ex-CEO of General Electric

Wrap Up

Ensuring organizations move from planning to execution is a matter of leading the organization quickly into the necessary rhythm of engagement. This is accomplished by making high visibility changes, providing individuals with the resources necessary to execute the plans, and preventing progress from stalling through effective governance practices. It is by these early engagement practices that your organization will be better positioned to thrive in budget constrained environments. Leading change as opposed to directing change will unleash the collaborative power of your organization to remove barriers which are unnecessarily limiting productivity and consuming budget and other resources within your organization.

For more information about MainStream GS or to discuss this article further please email info@mainstreamgs.com or call 877.785.4888.

Alan Horowitz (alan.horowitz@mainstreamgs.com) leads MainStream GS, as President of the firm.

Tom Cluley (tom.cluley@mainstreamgs.com) is Chief Operations Partner of MainStream GS.

David Ringel (david.ringel@mainstreamgs.com) is Vice President, Operations of MainStream GS.

MainStream GS

877.785.4888 • www.mainstreamgs.com
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