

Rapid Results

Change approach

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Are you fed up with sophisticated change concepts, new organizational charts, or complex change programs? Have you also experienced announcements from top management that sound great but are followed by no changes or only incremental ones in the behavior of leaders and people? We recognize a real need to boost change initiatives towards more impact and actual behavior change. With the following four articles, we would like to show you one powerful approach that has proven to change behavior and culture. This concept is called Rapid Results Change.

by Manfred Höfler

There are three main reasons why change gets stuck:

1. People concentrate too much on concept work and too little on acting/doing. After a long period of analyzing, designing and planning change projects, people are exhausted and lack the energy for the crucial part of learning the new way of working.
2. Most of the change programs (especially in larger corporations) work against the energy of operational leaders and operatives. They are often told what to do differently from people who do not know their daily routine in practice.
3. Changes threaten success factors of the past. This could get uncomfortable and therefore, change only touches the surface. The unwritten rule is to »keep the system stable,« so people pretend to change without actually changing their mindset and behavior.

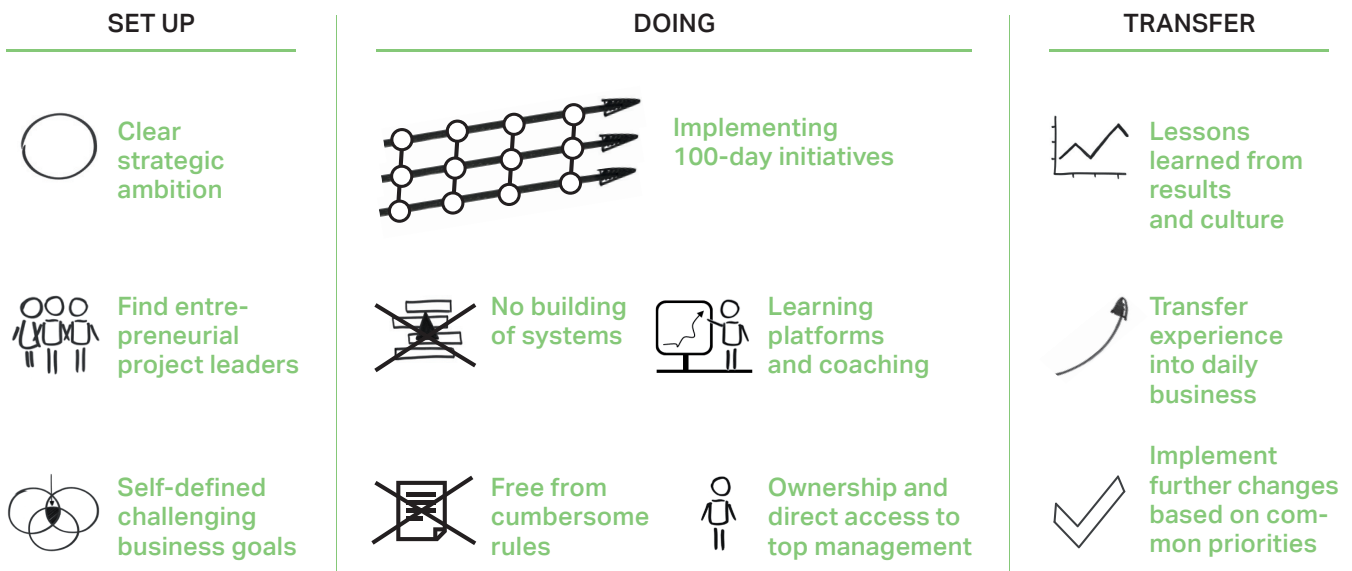
We all know how it works

Just remember a situation (in your private or professional life) where really great things happened: situations where nearly impossible, brilliant results were achieved, where positive energy was high and people felt some kind of flow. What happened? Typically, people describe it like this: »We had a clear, challenging goal to which we all were committed. We felt trust in our team, and each of us acted out of our own personal judgments for success. It was easy to find the right person for the task without any power games. The processes were smooth, without bureaucracy. The focus was on short planning, doing, short reflection, easy adoption and doing again. And at the end, we were proud of our success and were not the same as at the beginning. Our culture, the way we do things, has changed.«

Ingredients for real change

To begin with, the top management defines a meaningful and real challenging ambition. This ambition requires a guiding idea that makes sense for the people on the shop-floor. The operational project leaders themselves are then responsible for breaking the top management ambition down into challenging business-related goals, which need to be so challenging that they could not be achieved in a regular way or with just a bit of extra effort. ►

The elements of the rapid results approach



Top management staffs project teams with people they trust and gives them extra space, frees them from useless limiting rules (in a defined environment), and offers to coach them instead of commanding and controlling them. The project team receives learning spaces and supportive resources so that they can interact, exchange experiences and focus their energy on results. These conditions help people to create short-term successes which are the basis for an upward spiral, meaning the success creates success creates success, and so on (see illustration). The project time is limited to 100 days, which helps to focus people's energy and get rid of useless »flourish.« The challenging goals help kick you out of your comfort zone and create a need to free your thinking and action from – quite often self-made – limitations.

Changes close to business

Letting go of some traditional change management principles and taking the ingredients for Rapid Results Change could help you in many change initiatives. Be aware, though, that this is not an approach which fits in every context.

You can use the Rapid Results Change approach most effectively if you drive changes close to business. Typical circumstances are: A boost of sales is needed and traditional change interventions like CRM, new tools, trainings or new structures have no impact. Or a merge process, in which the merged units should prove that they can achieve better results together than they had separately, in the past. The approach also works for efficiency improvement ambitions such as process simplification, lead time reductions or the speed-up of new product introductions. In all cases, you need real challenging goals that can only be achieved by acting along the new Rapid Results mindset. The following articles will show you some examples where the Rapid Results approach was used to drive sustainable change.

By the way: Rapid Results successes will change the organizational culture, meaning that culture (unwritten rules, real values, how people behave and what is perceived as right or wrong) is the result of creating success with a new way of working. So being successful and achieving challenging goals by new ways of working influences the culture and creates new beliefs about what kind of behavior drives success. ●