

**Innovator
Insights**

**Disruptive
Innovators
Network**

Handling Resistance and Getting Buy-in

Your Questions Answered

**Innovators
Assemble**



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Leadership buy-in

Leadership buy-in

Q1. How do you handle situations where resistance to change is coming from senior leadership or key stakeholders?

Digital transformation with leadership buy-in is three and a half times more likely to succeed than without. So how do you handle resistance from senior leaders? I believe in six key things:

One: Understand their reasons for the resistance. Often the presenting concern is underpinned by a fear, a misunderstanding, a perceived loss of control. Understand the source of the resistance and you can work with it. You can only challenge what you understand, not what you assume to be the case.

Two: Speak their language, be empathetic and show you can solve their problem. You may need to play up to egos and show how you can make someone look better or perform better.

Three: Leverage allies and influencers. For example, on social media, Gymshark built a multi-million-pound brand by getting influencers to do its selling. You can do that in organisations; find the people with the social power.

Four: Use evidence-based arguments and numbers to tell the story. Use facts and statistics and not the dream. Talk about incremental improvements, the risks associated with data, customer satisfaction figures.

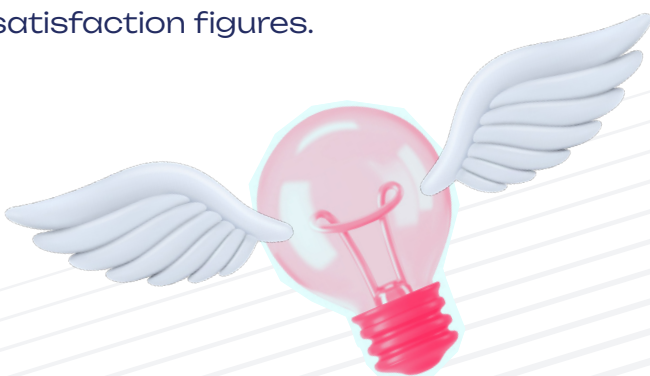
Five: Quick wins. Yes, you need to prioritise transformation efforts around risk and compliance but it doesn't hurt to have a visible win up front, especially when it's visible across the organisation. In Raven we got the CRM and CRM pop-up working well and people saw the difference in call speed, call handling etc. - and that could be seen across the organisation.

Six: Think external assurance; audit can be your friend. Use risk registers and audit actions as a strong driver for the need to change. Execs will have to sit in committees and board meetings, so use that as a lever for supporting business cases.

Q2. How do you get agreement on who should sponsor your change, such as one individual rather than multiple execs?

The more execs you have with an investment in a change, the better. Change rarely affects one function. Exec leaders all bring different skills; some will be brilliant sponsors, so get your best one to do the first big piece of change, so others can see how they do it - because they all want to be better, so you get ever-increasing improvement.

There's a risk with just one sponsor because it allows other exec directors to carry on as if nothing is happening and not be aligned to the change programme. If more than one wants to sponsor the change, be clear who's accountable for what.



Leadership buy-in

Q3. Sometimes leaders sound as if they are on board with a change but revert back to how they used to work. What are your tips for preventing this?

Usually this happens because the transformation hasn't shifted their mindset and they see it as an optional add-on. Be brave and don't be afraid to call it out. In a highly regulated world where transformation usually happens because there are underlying issues with data and processes that can affect customer outcomes and safety, we all have a duty to call out bad behaviour.

Think about Grenfell and the warning signals. You don't want that on your conscience because a member of the exec team thinks they know better. If you feel safe to escalate it internally, then do that. If not, then fact check and if you're certain the effects of their behaviours could be serious, it's our duty to whistleblow.

Life is short and in ten years' time, I'm not going to care if I've ruffled feathers; it's more important that I've been authentic to my values and been committed to resident safety.

If it's about just getting people to commit to more optional things, it's got a lot to do with the CEO holding the execs to account and embedding transformation goals in BAU.

Report RAG ratings honestly and put your savings and benefits realisation into your main budget reporting. You may need to invest in leadership coaching because many may be going through transformation for the first time. Also showcase success; celebrate loudly and celebrate the leaders who've embraced the change.

Q4. When organisational structures determine who comes up with ideas, how do you get past 'that's very nice, but it's not your job'?

If you work in a company where people tell you not to have good ideas because it's not your job, you need to question whether you're working for the right company at all. Innovation doesn't happen in a fear culture, it happens when people see something and think about how they can apply it in their own situation. If I stayed in HR and only listened to HR people for solutions, I'd probably never have made any step changes in how I did my job.

