

## The Excitement of Purposeful Change

*By Charlie Lang, Managing Partner and Founder of Progress-U Asia*



Jerry, founder and CEO of a mid-sized electronics trading firm was progressing through the fifth and final module of Progress-U's Professional Corporate Coach Certification Program and one of the topics was 'systems approach' to coaching and the importance of considering organizational systems when coaching anyone inside an organization. Somehow, we came to discuss the organizational dynamics at his organization and how they helped the firm

from succeeding and how sometimes it hindered it from doing so.

I shared Progress-U's systematic eight-phase process towards corporate culture transformation, and Jerry got interested and urged me to share more details of this approach so he could discuss it with his executive team.

Then, to give me a better sense of the current culture and leadership in his firm, we conducted a one-day team coaching event with his team in January 2016. This step is actually a prerequisite to the journey towards corporate culture transformation.

### The Kick-Off

Eventually, in April 2016 we conducted a kick-off workshop to get the project started, define the key direction, and to come up with a draft framework of the new corporate culture. The workshop was also intended to help all executive team members to buy into this transformation initiative. It was clear that this would not be a short-term project, but actually an ongoing one. Of course, the biggest efforts would need to be made in the first one to two years, after which there would be less efforts needed. However, continuous review, adjustment, fine-tuning are needed to keep any corporate culture burning and to help it to evolve with the organization's ambitions, the challenges of the market environment and global trends.

Why are we excited about this initiative? Progress-U's mission is 'Passionately Caring About Your Progress'. We know from past experience of doing similar work, that the greatest progress can be achieved if an organization manages to make a purposeful transformation of its corporate culture. That's why we were (and still are) excited when Jerry agreed to engage us to support the transformation of his company's corporate culture.

### The 8-Phase Approach



In the above chart, we first put aside the current situation and identify the ideal state independent of the current reality and then see how we can transform from the current situation to the ideal state. Peter Senge, one of the top experts globally on organizational learning, calls this approach the Double Loop learning. He distinguishes it from Single Loop learning whereby we look at the current organization, what works well, what doesn't and then try to improve what doesn't work so well.

However, the eight phases in above chart need not happen in the above sequence, as the exact approach and sequence (as certain activities could happen concurrently) need to be tailored to each organization.

But the first question is always, why in the first place should anyone engage in this kind of project that requires resources and effort? Jerry's company, like any other organization ultimately wants and needs to achieve business success to sustain itself and to be able to fulfill its mission. Business success is the result of successful execution of an organization's strategy. Execution happens through behaviors and behaviors are strongly influenced by the culture of an organization. That means, corporate culture is an enabler of success and not a purpose in itself.

### WIIFM? (What's In It For Me?)

From our past experience of supporting other organizations in corporate culture transformation, we found that it is critical to help all stakeholders understand how a corporate culture transformation could benefit them. This list is not to be considered exhaustive, but should give a sense of what's in it for your employees:

- The organization's growth tends to accelerate and therefore **more career opportunities** emerge for ambitious and successful talents;

- The organization develops a stronger level of groupness (= sense of belonging to the organization), leading to **employees feeling more connected and proud** to be part of that organization;
- Most employees reported that it was **more enjoyable to work** at their organization as a result of the cultural transformation;
- The organization's growth also requires **individual growth** and the majority of employees find it very satisfying if they grow as a professional and as a person;
- The transformation typically leads to a more **purposeful organization**, and purpose is at the heart of deeper motivation and engagement.

While corporate culture transformation is likely to require some sacrifices and additional efforts from all stakeholders, it tends to be one of the most rewarding experiences in any employee's life.

Let's keep progressing with purpose!

Charlie Lang