

# Avoiding the Dip!

**“Delivering continued growth depends upon tackling organisational resistance and taking facts-based reality checks; a three-step approach details how...”**

In fast-growing companies, the key challenge is how to deliver continued growth, whilst avoiding stalling. One of the important considerations when delivering continued growth is in taking risks and making change happen to seize opportunities. Yet sometimes growth can blind us to the things we could do better – it can breed hubris and dull the organisation’s appetite for risk taking.

The approach proposed here is based upon overcoming the three most cumbersome obstacles against doing something new in organisations today. These are ‘*the frozen status quo*’, ‘*the fear of the unknown*’ and ‘*delusion*’. The first two are encountered as enormous resistance to change and the latter confuses us into thinking we don’t need to change at all.

## Status Quo

We all aim to pack our organisations full of talented people and to empower them with responsibility to deliver operational excellence. It should not come as a surprise, then, that these people are diligent in maintaining their positions of power. The natural momentum of the organisation is to maintain the status quo; the natural momentum is to reject the ‘new’.

To change the status quo, we must provide our new initiatives with the power to engage those affected and to disarm any rejection.

## Fear of the Unknown

We all have experiences of falling flat on our faces in new circumstances; it is not so common that our business culture also promotes helping us back onto our feet again and considers it a learning experience. The more usual pattern is that we are perceived as having failed and consequently we learn that the best approach is to ‘stick to the knitting’, play it safe and not to take the risk of trying something new.

To overcome the fear of the unknown, we must provide a compelling and credible vision to encourage a move in that direction. We also need to avoid losing momentum through early failures in our change initiatives by building options into our plans to make them flexible to adapt to changes in external circumstances.

## Delusion

Success naturally breeds failure. This may appear a counter-intuitive statement – after all, we are introduced at an early age to the mantra of “success breeds success”. However, without care and attention, success can lead to overconfidence, because achieving great results without refocusing our teams can encourage to sit on their laurels and continue to do what was successful. Without a check on our hubris, bad news from the marketplace can be dismissed as invalid – our successes are showing that it isn’t affecting us - and our culture can become disconnected from reality. This is a slippery slope which can quickly neutralise any justification for change, as the internal perception is that things are fine and all we have to do is crank the handle of our operations.

Preventing our organisation succumbing to its own ‘group-think’ requires a self-imposed directive to take a reality check by gulping in the fresh air of regular conversation with customers.

## Approach

So how do we put together an approach that avoids the pitfalls and adopts the tactics for success? By asking this very question of a number of our clients, we put together the following three step approach.

1. Vision & Context – where we are going & its validation
2. Blueprint – what to put in place and by the right ‘who’
3. Plan & Implement – how to put it in place... and then put it in place

## Vision & Context

We need some form of statement of where we want to go. We want to avoid fooling ourselves with hubris and setting things in stone but some direction is needed.

Together with the vision, we need some form of basic scenario planning to set out the boundary conditions of the next few years – what might happen, what will be our boundaries. We need to provide our vision with flexibility to cope with the frequent changes in our marketplace and to avoid implementing an outdated strategy.

To our keep our vision and boundaries valid, we need to maintain frequent checks on our business context, employing a facts-based reality check on where we are. Rather than doing a rear-view mirror financial assessment, the greater value is obtained through the regular, frank conversations we have with our customers, our only true leading indicator.

Through the vision and its communication, we can convey a compelling image to our people to calm the fear of the unknown.

Through scenario planning we provide the flexibility necessary to avoid any early failure through external circumstances changing.

## Blueprint

Given our vision, what capabilities do we need to put in place to be successful? Furthermore, how will these need to change across our scenarios? To answer these questions, we need to provide a blueprint of options for each of the likely scenarios. Through this we are effectively building our maps to success under different external conditions.

## Plan & Implement

Making change happen requires careful surgery on current operations. You will have a series of operations that are committed to strategies playing out over the next six months to a year and those strategies will have to be changed in a relevant way in order to be successful under your blueprint.

Plans need to be drawn up to exercise the right options and to take into consideration the context of the area of operations to change. To implement

effectively we also need to assign our change plans to the right people with the right amount of power to drive the change home.

Once set up, the implementation of our plans is a case of careful project management whilst running the portfolio of options, exercising those whose scenarios remain sufficiently plausible and abandoning those whose scenarios become irrelevant.

## Conclusion

Making change happen in growing companies is a tough challenge.

Overcoming organisational resistance and avoiding deluding ourselves is no easy task. This approach outlines how to build a toolkit to encourage the right appetite for risk taking, trying something new and delivering continued growth through the following steps:

- Build a compelling vision to allow us to overcome the fear of the unknown;
- Set up the most likely and flexible plan for success to avoid early change failure;
- Assign the right amount of power behind the change to overcome the status quo;
- Regularly check our vision and status with the marketplace to ensure that our delusion is held in check.

Remember the words of Machiavelli '*There is nothing so difficult as to try to change the order of things*'