

# Time to Transform | Part 2

## Creating the Conditions for Successful Change



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In our previous blog, [Time to Transform](#) we reflected on the challenges of leading in today's uncertain world and the urgent need for each of us, as transformation leaders, to grasp the nettle, take action and create the right conditions for successful change.

This is the leadership task each of us faces. And we must embrace our role if we are to ensure our organisations remain relevant, move forward and deliver improved outcomes for our people, customers and society.

Too often when we think about our role as transformation leaders, we think in terms of the tangible results we seek - like implementing a new technology solution, a new operating model, a major infrastructure project.

And we begin to manage the process, the risks, the results, losing sight of the universal truth that, in every case, this is a human endeavour.

# Leading for Outcomes

It is worth recognising here that the words 'transform' and 'transformation' provoke different reactions in the leaders we work with (some positive, some less so). Setting the label to one side, reflect on what you are seeking to achieve in your role.

What outcomes are you hoping to achieve? Do you want to leave your team, your programme, your organisation in a better place than you found it? When you move on from your role what do you want to leave behind?

Very few of us would be happy with stagnation. Leadership is, and always has been, about change, about transformation. Leadership is not about sitting still.

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As senior leaders we all recognise the importance of people and relationships yet where we prioritise our time and energy all too often tells a different story. Look at your diary, your meeting agendas, your emails – how are they helping you to create the conditions for success? How are they helping you to fulfil your role in creating the culture, ways of working, the behaviours that will ultimately deliver the transformation you seek?

# Leading for Outcomes

In a fast-changing hybrid world where teams are feeling increasingly disconnected, where the expectations of workforces, customers and stakeholders have changed dramatically, traditional approaches to leadership are no longer fit-for-purpose. An increasingly human centred approach is required.

And there is no simple solution. Transformation leadership today is not a linear endeavour. Traditional step-by-step approaches don't work in an environment where the context changes on an ongoing basis. It's messy and doing the 'right' things will not always produce the results we seek. For many of us, this ambiguity is unsettling, draining and, at times, overwhelming.

So what can we do?

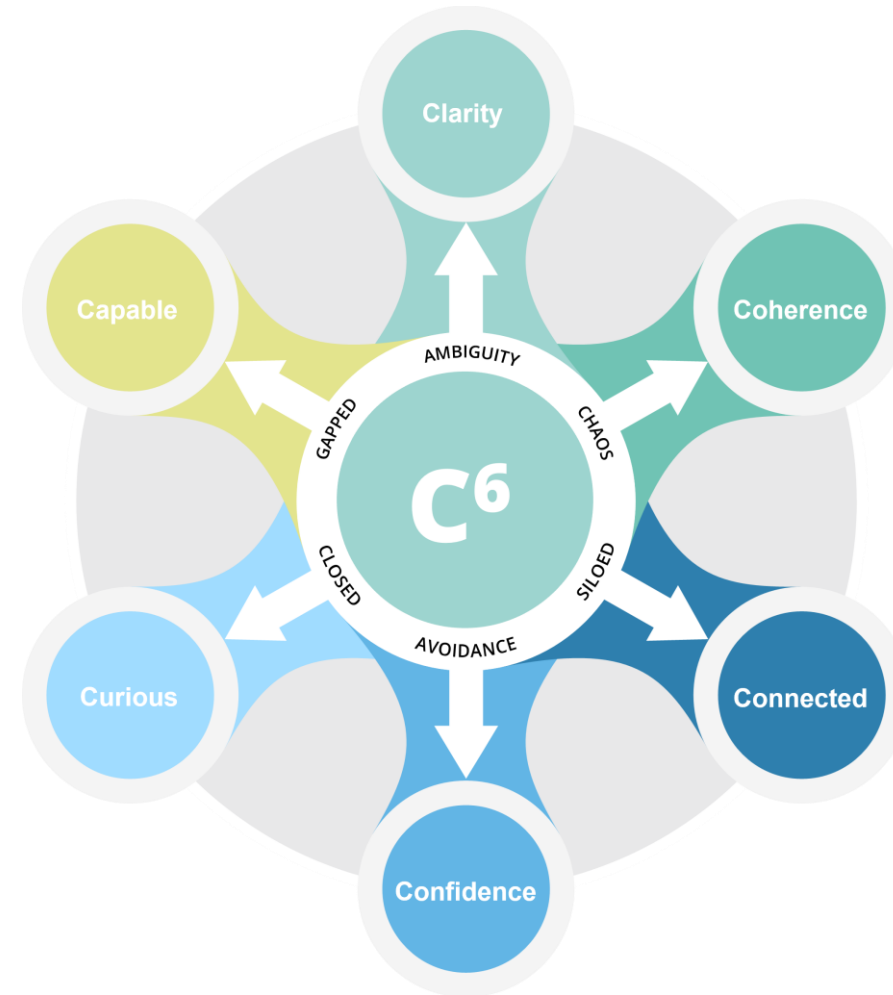


# Six conditions of success

The Leadership Code™ points to six conditions that can help leaders unlock successful transformation when strong. Unfortunately, and all too often, these same conditions are home to the leadership dysfunctions that undermine success.

By understanding where we are against these conditions we can respond with agility, focusing our leadership activity in the right places, where we need it at any point in time.

So think of the following six conditions as barometers that ebb and flow. Barometers that are moved by changes in the environment. Barometers that we can positively impact and influence, but that we can never fully control or fix.



# From Ambiguity to Clarity

A lack of clarity around the vision for change.

Leaders pursuing competing agendas.

Leaders' actions that are out of sync with stated values.

Strategic priorities and objectives that have failed to keep pace with circumstance.

These are just some of the common leadership failings that emerge on transformation journeys, slow progress and increase ambiguity.

Are you providing real clarity, at a team and organisational level, in areas such as purpose and ambition, priorities and objectives, values and behaviours, accountabilities and responsibilities?

You might be clear, but are others? Have you spent enough time ensuring messages are understood, internalised and embedded. Have you repeated them again and again until they are heard? Have you clarified any changes (or lack of change) following shifts in your team or environment?

Or are your fellow leaders each taking away slightly different views of the transformation? 'Lost in translation' differences become multiplied to dramatic effect when cascaded down through the wider organisation.

While we must accept ambiguity will always be present in transformation, are you doing all you can to bring the clarity people crave? What more do you need to do?

Ambiguity



Clarity

# From Siloed to Connected

In [Time to Transform](#) we highlighted that, when it comes to transformation, performance is in relationships. Indeed, as transformation leaders, it is our responsibility to connect people – our teams, stakeholders, customers – through communication that is honest, open and courageous.

All too often we find weak and/or misaligned team and stakeholder relationships undermining progress. Further, we find transformation work that is siloed, delegated to certain individuals or to a disconnected 'transformation team'.

Organisational barriers can have the greatest impact on transformation success and we will be diving into this topic in greater depth in a future blog to help you understand how to bridge silos and collaborate more effectively.

In the meantime, think about the relationships that are key to the transformation you are seeking. Are they where you need them to be? What conversations do you need to prioritise? Whose perspectives do you need to better understand?

Siloed



Connected



# From Gapped to Capable

**“I’m not convinced we have the right experience around the table or enough challenge and insight from others outside the organisation who have been through transformation on this scale.”**

Transformation Leader | Chair

Do these words, recently shared with us by one Chair, resonate? Do you have the capabilities you require? In our experience, it's not unusual to find transformation leaders that haven't 'done transformation' before. While they may have been exposed to it or 'know the theory', being in the trenches and delivering under pressure is a very different thing.

Understanding the size, shape and capabilities needed to transform is a key challenge. Who do you need? Where do you need them? And how will you ensure they have the development they need?

Insist on the best talent from within the organisation rather than the people that are available, and draw on external experts and critical friends to bring challenge and expand thinking. But take care. Use advisers and third parties in the right way so that the transformation remains firmly in leadership's hands and is not abdicated for convenience.

Gapped



Capable

# From Closed to Curious

As transformation leaders, it is our role to challenge the orthodoxies, assumptions and fixed perspectives that so often get in the way of change, to role model curiosity and a growth mindset. It is for us to ask why, to embrace and explore diverse ideas and perspectives, to harness the insights that data can bring and to ensure learning is both encouraged and actioned at every stage of the transformation journey.

In our experience, transformation outcomes are often linked to leaders' willingness to embrace true diversity of thought. What questions do you need to ask? Which 'sacred cows' do you need to challenge? Are you encouraging different views, opinions, and experiences to build a solution that is different?

Or are you at risk of Groupthink? Of sticking with the tried and tested? Of missing the insight that could flag the risk you've missed or unlock the outcomes you seek?

Closed



Curious

# From Avoidance to Confidence

**Transformation requires energy, resilience and perseverance. It demands courage, confidence and optimism.**

As leaders, we set the tone. Yet all too often, we find fellow leaders avoiding the difficult conversations, the really tough decisions required. Leaders who are tired, lacking trust, struggling with the busyness and close to burnout or worse.

If we are to build the confidence needed to take on the complex problems that need to be tackled we must nurture our own and our people's wellness and energy. Do you openly share your vulnerabilities, giving permission to others to do likewise? Do you visibly ring-fence time to maintain your well-being and energy so that others feel confident to follow suit?

Energy is one part of the confidence equation. We must also create an environment of trust and psychological safety where people can openly bring their views and honest opinions without fear of negative consequences.

Consider what happens when you enter the room. How do your title, your role, your behaviours impact on others? Do they feel safe to openly voice their thoughts or do they defer, nod along or remain quiet? What more can you do to build an inclusive environment that instils confidence and self-belief?

Avoidance



Confidence

# From Chaos to Coherence

“The scaffolding around the leadership team doesn’t set them up for success. The meetings don’t add value, there is a lack of data, people aren’t clear on their leadership roles. Sorting that out will be an essential first step.”

Transformation Leader | Newly appointed CEO

In [Time to Transform](#) we argued that the leadership ‘system’ is more influential than the capabilities and actions of individuals or teams. This was summed up by one newly appointed CEO in a recent conversation.

If your ambition is to deliver an agile initiative at pace yet your governance and sign-off processes are cumbersome and lengthy then coherence is absent. Or if you have set clear cross-cutting priorities then spend little time in your meetings debating them or if resources are not re-oriented toward them then alarm bells should be ringing.

All too often we blame the system. It’s time for us to change it. What will you need to do to better set yourself and your fellow transformation leaders up for success? Which cracks in the scaffolding will you need to resolve?

Chaos ●

● Coherence

# Your Call to Action: Scan, Act, Scan, Repeat

Start by assessing where you and your leadership team are in relation to each of the conditions by scanning the six barometers outlined above.

“We can be blind to the obvious, and we are also blind to our blindness” so be honest with yourself and also seek out the opinions of others.”

**Daniel Kahneman (Thinking, Fast and Slow, 2011)**

If there's a lack of clarity on your goals, invest time in getting on the same page. If you haven't got the right people on your transformation team, change it. As a leadership team these elements are within your control so take accountability and build the right conditions around you.

But don't stop there. The best transformation leaders we have worked with all share one powerful trait: the ability and discipline to step back, to reflect and to then focus their leadership energy in the right places at the right time.

The work of leadership is a constant through transformation journeys. It's never done. Your role in navigating the inevitable tensions, the challenges, the shifts in the wider environment all come with the territory.

So don't just scan today. Repeat the scan on an ongoing basis. And take action based on what you notice. Strengthen the conditions for transformation success.

This is your role. This is the work of transformation leadership.

If you would like to find out more, please do get in contact.



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