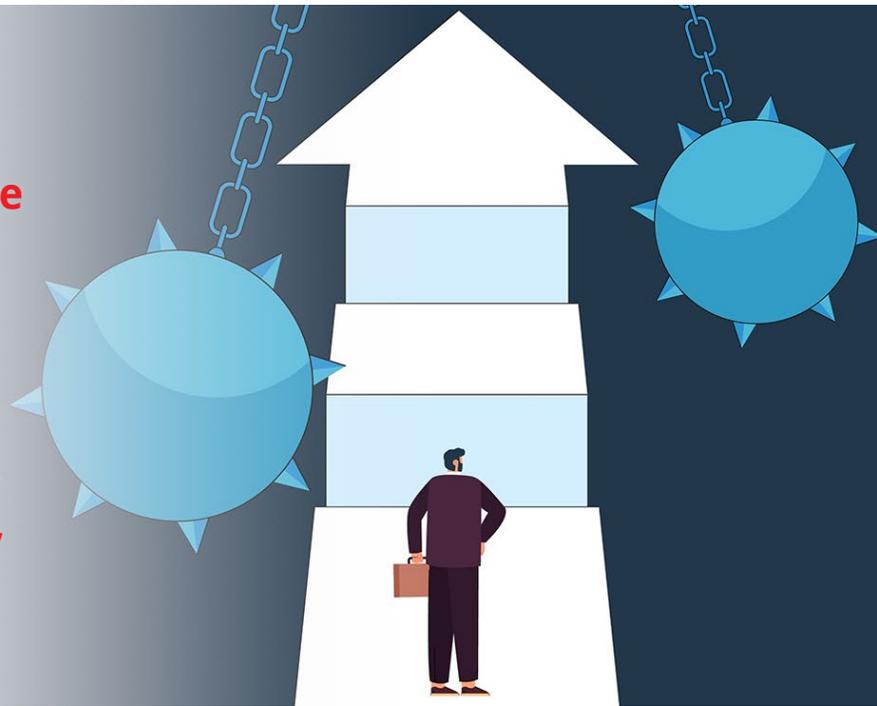


THE COMPELLING JOURNEY™

A PLAYBOOK™ FOR SUSTAINABLE PERFORMANCE GROWTH

- ▲ Strategic Planning is easy:
Executing is the real challenge
- ▲ Most plans naturally default to examining organizational barriers
- ▲ Uncovering personal barriers among leaders leads to trust, higher commitment



*“Regardless of what barriers confront you,
it is in your power to free yourselves;
you have only to want to.”*

– Olympe de Gouges

The Barriers to Responding to the “Call to Action

Imagine that you are watching outtakes from a Monty Python-like movie. It is set in the Middle Ages. It is early in March, on a Tuesday, and a storm is raging outside. It’s cold and wet and miserable. All of the knights are gathered in the great hall and are warming themselves in from to a roaring fire. **Suddenly, a page runs in from the wind and rain and cries out, “There’s a DRAGON out there!” All of the St. George wannabes look at each other and, in turn, say,**

“Sorry, I don’t do dragons on Tuesday”

“My sword seems to be stuck on the stone. I can’t go out and face the dragon without it.”

“It’s specifically written in my contract that I only fight dragons in sunny weather!”

And so on...

Most leaders love strategic planning. It’s fun figuring out what it takes to slay the dragon. Lots of charts and graphs and arrows pointing where and what to attack and when. It all gets bound up into a nice presentation folder and promptly gathers dust up on a shelf somewhere in the office.

The problem begins when the process has launched and the major issues connected to the Call-to-Action, expected or unexpected, appear on the horizon. **The difficult decisions must happen and confronting the “dragon” is part of the process.** People manufacture all sorts of reasons to avoid the tough challenges and critical conversations. Leaders are no different. Consequently, it is important to anticipate the Barriers to Action individuals may experience before it occurs.

In traditional planning sessions, leaders often examine organizational barriers and debate their threat level. We believe that it is more important for the leaders to examine their personal barriers first.

There are two reasons for this: A leader who hesitates to confront anything connected with the Call-to-Action signals to others that commitment is lacking, and team members will take their cue from that.

This unwillingness to deal with the personal barriers represents a major contributor to the failure of most transformation initiatives. I once spoke with a senior leader of a major insurance concern. Their leader wanted to improve performance in the

organization and settled on an experiential leadership development course. Every leader dutifully went to the course. And nothing happened. **When I asked him why, he told me that the leader had been so impressed with the company that he actually bought it. The problem was that he never went through the program himself.** The senior leader I spoke to told me that everyone would go down, spend the week, jump through the hoops, come home and promptly forget everything they learned.

The second reason to examine personal barriers to action is that it requires a level of vulnerability to address these kinds of issues among the team members. We have previously discussed the importance of vulnerability in developing high functioning teams. **That vulnerability leads to trust and, ultimately, increases the commitment to the Call-to-Action on the part of the leadership team.**

The discussion of the Call-to-Action must not be taken lightly or glossed over too quickly. It sets the tone for the entire Compelling Journey. Leaders must be very clear on it and must also be prepared to explain thoroughly to their folks what it is and why it is essential to the organization. Consequently, the participants need to be equally committed to ensuring that they examine reasons why they might potentially hesitate to lean into the effort.

Next, we will discuss what we need to overcome these personal barriers.

