

Making Culture Change Stick: GoFast

General Motors(GM) sought culture change because of:

- The unrelenting pace of change in the automotive business;
- Intense industry competition for faster decision making;
- Perceptions of GM as slow and bureaucratic.

Planning for Change

GM wanted to transform its existing culture, which was hierarchical and slow to make decisions. Lack of trust, fear of risk and internal rivalries were common.

In 1998, led by the CEO, GM identified a sense of urgency as a key cultural priority: The company needed to 'operate at Internet, not automotive speed'. To create a culture that is fast, focused and fearless, GM launched the GoFast! Change process globally in January 2000.

Implementing Change

GoFast! Empowers people to solve problems in a faster, better way. It is intended to build a new culture of speed and urgency. Once GoFast! Has succeeded, the right people will be brought together to make the right decisions to accelerate and improve business results. GoFast! offers one day working sessions that focus on solving a business problem and deliver results. Sessions provide a 'public stage' for practicing new behaviours, and leaders are invited to make decisions based on the recommendations.

Implementation is tracked publicly on GM internal GoFast! Web site. The process of initiating GoFast! includes identifying a business problem, selecting workshop participants and coaching decision panels, conducting the workshop, and then implementing the ideas.

The types of problems that are often solved include:

- Reducing costs
- Reducing cycle time

- Simplifying business processes
- Eliminating unnecessary reports, approvals and meetings

In a GoFast! Sessions, employees who work on the workshop issue generate ideas, analyze the problems, make recommendations, and then present those recommendations to a decision panel of leaders, which acts on them immediately. The sessions allow leaders and employees to prioritise issues, identify the right problems, deciding what can be done, resolving conflict, communicating results and sharing learning.

Challenges:

As GM planned and then implemented GoFast!, several challenges were recognized and addressed, including:

- Positioning GoFast! As a problem solving tool, not a culture change process, to accelerate acceptance by employees and leaders.
- Allowing people to be resistant and cautious about embracing a new way of working until business results were clear and visible.
- Making the GoFast! Process accessible to different cultures across the globe. (GM does business in more than 200 countries). While the GoFast! Approach was the same everywhere, local adaptations was necessary on some dimensions. GoFast! Materials were translated into several languages and made available on the internal GoFast! Web site.
- Continuously improving on the GoFast! Approach, based on employees experiences, was critical to increase buy-in and acceptance.
- Quickly building an internal network of advocates was important to accelerate implementation. A "Hub" team, which defines strategy and direction for the GoFast! Process, invested considerable time in educating and coaching top leaders, developing GoFast! Project managers, and training and

certifying GoFast! Coaches. Learning is shared amongst all GoFast! Teams.

- Clarifying how GoFast! Fit into the company's overall strategy and how it connected to other current work was important to communicate to all employees _ early and often.

Outcomes

The GoFast! Process design allows real business problems to be solved with behavioral change. Leaders and employees can work together to build change capability. The design fosters success that gets rewarded, recognized and measured. Behavioral goals link to business goals. Regional project managers are assigned to each business unit and are held accountable for the success of GoFast! as are leaders. Coaches are trained in each business to facilitate workshops. The strategy to sustain their process is to build internal change capability to move fast. Currently, GM boasts over 3000 trained coaches, 32 global project managers and over 2500 leaders who have championed GoFast! Sessions and completed a two hour "Leading GoFast" e-course. The chairman is actively engaged in leading the cultural transformation. He is visibly supportive by delivering the annual company-wide communications, and talking about it in meetings, broadcasts and round tables. The Hub team also creates regular company wide communications.

He leads by example by dropping in on workshops, posting success stories to the GoFast! Web site, and modeling behaviors. The chairman also requires GoFast! Experience for promotion to senior levels and requires executives to champion two workshops. He personally rewards and recognizes GoFast results and provides positive reinforcement to leaders who demonstrate GoFast! behaviors.

Measurement techniques include:

- Global employee census
- Employee assessments
- Coach surveys

- Leader feedback
- Annual reviews
- Publicity on the GoFast! Web site

Some of the rewards and recognition include formal executive management plans, 360-degree feedback tools, and informal practices, such as awards and recognition events. GoFast! Is changing the way work gets done at GM. The company is working cross-functionally to achieve common goals. Employees at all levels are getting involved in solving problems. Leaders are learning to lead more visibly and are simplifying the way they work. Employees are challenging the way things get done. Decisions are being implemented more rapidly. GM processes are beginning to drive results as well as implement culture changes. To date, more than 15000 GoFast! Workshops have been held around the world and the top 100 have identified over \$ 1 billion in savings. GoFast! is becoming GM's way of doing business.

Lessons learnt:

To help make culture change stick:

- Integrate the change into the work
- Earn buy-in and leader engagement as results are delivered; accept that not everyone will get engaged.
- Be flexible and firm
- Continuously build change capacity
- Celebrate success a lot!
- Communicate, communicate, communicate!