



When “business-as-usual” is inadequate for the type of change your organization needs to make, you may be operating in transformation territory. This resource will help you make that transformation a reality.

Thirty Days to Transformation

Reinventing Yourself and Your Organization

by Ollie Malone, Jr., Ph.D.

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Thirty Days to Transformation

Reinventing Yourself and Your Organization

The Idea in Summary

As corporations face the demands of a challenging economy, leaders are coming to grips with the fact that the ways in which work has been accomplished in the past are no longer adequate for current demands. New ways of thinking, acting, leading, and managing are required.

The required shifts are not only for those who are in the organization, but they are for organization’s leaders as well. After all, it was the leaders’ work that contributed to the present reality with its associated challenges.

In order to create the needed transformation, leaders will need to:

- **Clarify and refine the focus.** If new results will occur, it will be because new expectations are established.
- **Reinforce what is wanted,** not what is not wanted. Leaders will need to doggedly pursue those outcomes that are seen as most critical and allow the momentary distractions to fall to the side.
- **Refocus,** where needed, to ensure that the outcomes achieved are the outcomes that are most highly sought.

All three of these actions should occur on multiple levels—not just on the employee level.

The Idea in Reality

In order to achieve successful transformation that lasts, leaders will need to do the following:

1. **Recognize that you are a part of the problem.** Whether through your direct action or dictates, or those of your predecessor, “management” is often seen as the primary reasons things are the way they are. Rather than pointing fingers at others, start by pointing fingers at yourself.
2. **Know where you want to go.** Clear focus is essential for any change effort. That focus provides clarity of scope, direction, and a sense of the effort required to achieve the desired outcome.
3. **Know where you are today.**
4. **Ask some tough questions.** Having a sense of destination, combined with a focus on present reality, raises difficult issues:

Focus on...	Move from...	To...
Yourself as the primary mover and shaker	Doing that which is habitual or familiar	Focusing on achieving the desired outcome
The leaders who work with or for you	Leadership as a familiar task	Leadership as creating new ways of thinking
Organizational Systems	“Necessary evils” and impossible to change	Modifiable for sake of the outcome needed
Employees	Pieces of machinery to get the job done	Creative resources for potential transformation

Example:

Despite being number one in her industry for years, Pam’s review of her organization’s results revealed a consistent decline over the past few months. Rather than seeing this as an opportunity to “lash the slaves harder,” Pam used this as an opportunity to question everything about the way she and the leaders working for her achieved their results.

Examining each of the areas indicated in the chart above revealed opportunities for change and refocus on her part, on the part of the leaders working for her, and on the part of the organizational systems supporting her work. This change is producing positive results.

Leaders of the 21st century can no longer content themselves with the type of change that was characteristic of centuries past. The rapid pace of current markets, the blindingly fast shifts in technology, and the demands of a very different workforce are creating a new set of requirements for the leaders of today's organization. Transformation has to be a part of the leader's skill set and it must come quickly.

Thirty Days to Transformation

Reinventing Yourself and Your Organization

by Ollie Malone, Jr., Ph.D.

To suggest that the leader's work in the twenty-first is undergoing significant change is a gross understatement. Organizations are requiring greater levels of change with regard to the results that leaders are producing. Small scale, incremental change is no longer adequate; you, the leader, have to create and manage an organizational transformation.

Historical research around the personality types of leaders in corporate America indicates that more than 55% of those in leadership roles hold personality characteristics that could be describe as structured, ordered, predictable, logical, analytical, and much more likely to prefer order and predictability.

Today's leaders are the ones who created the structures that define the business world of today: the rules, the systems, the "how-tos," the methods, and the procedures. They are, for the most part, the architects of current business realities. Yet the requirement for these leaders is that they also create the *new* realities. In short, they must be the ones who

metaphorically, "call their babies ugly," and come forth with new babies, new ideas, and new approaches to new challenges the new organizational demands. Such an effort is not an easy one.

In truth, this work is gut-wrenching. It can be likened to tearing down the house that you designed and constructed—with your own hands. It requires the leader to become his or her worst critic in an effort to define and refine the future with its uncertain expectations and demands.

But the leader's work is not focused on him or herself alone. In addition to dealing with the dismantling of his or her work, the leader must also be willing to challenge other parts of the organization to join in this demolition in order that a new order may emerge. Such an effort requires that the leader work on multiple levels—the level of his or her own needs and requirements; the level of attending to the needs and requirements of other leaders in the organization; and the level of attending to employees—their needs.

The leader, then, is the first order of

business. He or she must see the work of transformation as beginning with him or her. Self-deception is not a useful device at this stage. Whether the leader sees the need for his or her transformation or not, others do—and others will be raising questions of the credibility of the transformation if it somehow includes everyone with the exception of the leader.

The Challenge of Transformation: Lessons from the Research

Over the past several years, much research has been generated that explores the response of the brain during periods of transformation. This research reflects what has been known by many: the brains of those who have performed tasks repetitively have well-worn grooves in them—reflecting the fact that these are frequently-trodden paths of action and learning. Much like well-traveled roads, these paths in the individuals mind are familiar, comfortable ways of being. They require no challenge to traverse; in fact, the individual is often able to travel these familiar roads without conscious thought.

Think about time when you may have attempted to master a new skill—whether it be learning to drive, learning to play golf or tennis, or learning to cook. The initial learning period of mastering that task was slow and laborious. Everything seemed to require a significant amount of effort, if you wanted to ensure proper performance of the task at-hand. You were slow, laborious, and attentive to all of the details in an effort to ensure that you were executing the tasks in the most appropriate manner.

Having mastered the skill (in whatever time period “mastery” required), you moved away from this laborious performance. You were able to put your brain on “automatic pilot” and move through the tasks without think-

ing. This is the reason that many of us are able to drive from home to work without very much conscious thought of the conditions in which we were driving, the scenery that may have surrounded the drive, or any other factors associated with that routine activity. The brain was able to “do its thing” and you or I, the performer, allowed it to do so with very little (if any) conscious intervention.

At the point that the conditions of performance change, however, you may have moved from the unconscious reality into a conscious reality—and this new reality would likely have created a need to think differently about the performance of the task than you may have thought about it in the past.

Suppose, for example, that your familiar route to work was no longer available. Street repair and/or accidents on the road may have required you to take a different route than the one with which you are most familiar. What did you do? If you are like most individuals, you went from unconscious, automatic performance into a much more conscious, perhaps labored performance, as you considered the options that were available to you, how you might reroute your travels, and which of the available options might get you to your destination in the most efficient manner.

If you have experienced such a shift in realities, regardless of context, you will have experienced a transformation of sorts. The change may not have been as monumental as the transformation you are charged with leading in your organization, but it is a transformation nonetheless.

Let’s extend the example further and suppose that your transformational driving experience was extended by an additional day. Instead of being able to return to your familiar driving route, you would, once again, have to use the less-familiar route to get to

The leader’s first order of business is him or herself. Without a clear sense of vision, direction, and timing he or she has little to communicate to others.

And without a clear sense of the personal transformation in which he or she must engage, any attempt at transformation will be seen as hollow, superficial and insincere.

The stretch of transformation must be felt by all—beginning with the leader.

your place of work and to return home. Could you do it? More than likely you would, if you have adequate recall, but, once again, it would not be as familiar as your regular route. You might have to slow down and check your GPS device to ensure that you are following the turn-by-turn instructions accurately. Or, you might have to look at the detour signs carefully in order to ensure that you're following them accurately, thereby minimizing the likelihood of getting lost.

If this scenario repeated itself multiple times, you would likely become as comfortable with the new route as you had been with the old route. Your brain, then, would have created new, familiar grooves to help guide you on your way.

Such is the challenge of the familiarity of mental programming—and the associated challenge of changing that programming.

Implications of the Research

The implications of this research should be quite clear: although your brain is quite able to create new pathways, it does not do so quickly and it may not do so readily. Creating transformations in the brain is hard work and requires a concerted effort if it is to be done well and with a degree of reliability.

And even after your brain has created new cognitive pathways a second challenge remains—that involves accessing these new pathways with sufficient regularity that change occurs.

Returning to the roadway detour example—imagine for a moment that your traditional route to the office is still available but not as efficient as a new route you may have discovered. The new route, however, is not familiar. It is accessible, in that you know the direction, the starts, stops, and turns—these are not, however, sufficiently practiced in your brain that they are familiar, comfortable and reli-

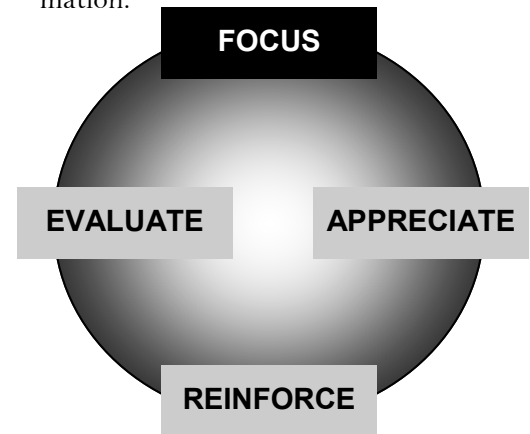
able.

Imagine how easy it is to return to the route that you know—the one that is well-worn in your brain as a result of years of practice. If you can understand the challenge of this, rather pedestrian example, then the greater challenge of personal and organizational transformation may be clear to you.

Despite the change, countless leaders have made the change and have, along with those around them, benefited from the change. The next section will identify four key strategies used by these individuals to create and maintain the desired transformation.

Transformation: Paying the FARE

Among those who have been able to create and sustain personal and organizational transformation, several factors stand out. These factors, we have determined, underlie any successful transformation effort and, to the degree that they are sustained, provide the ongoing support for the transformation.



Each of the four elements contained in the model above are essential to a well-constructed transformation effort at whatever level the transformation is attempted. The significance of each element, how that element is achieved, and how that element can make a difference in the overall transformation direction and outcome will be dis-

cussed in the paragraphs that follow.

FOCUS—In 1988, the author had an opportunity to attend a workshop conducted by noted author and leadership guru, Dr. Warren Bennis. At that workshop, Dr. Bennis made a statement that has been proven to be true on countless occasions since the author's initial hearing. Dr. Bennis stated, "The next few years of organizational life will be years of frantic learning—where leaders and executives are working as diligently as they can to obtain the information they need in order to lead their organizations successfully." He went on to say, "With these years of frantic learning as a backdrop, one of the biggest challenges that any of us will have will be *the management of the leader's attention.*" This statement has been proven true countless times—and the current advancements of technology, information, and competition would appear to be making the statement even more true.

Following the dialogue held with Dr. Bennis, the author spent a significant amount of time with the Sprint organization which was, at that time, unprofitable despite the relatively deep pockets of its then-parents, GTE and United Telecom. The fledgling organization, then a year old, had a myriad of problems and challenges that prevented it from operating in the black and as quickly as one challenge would be resolved, another would appear in its place. The company had established a track record of changing presidents annually, and, for several years running, tended to have an annual layoff—typically in October of the year. Despite a great deal of organizational dust flying, the company did not seem to be able to get off the ground.

A company-wide goal setting program, FOCUS, was put in place within the 1989 performance cycle. Unlike previous goal sessions, the theme of

the year (Countdown to Profitability) was determined by senior executives with the intent that every employee's goals aligned with the organization's direction. The goals of subordinates would dovetail those of their bosses throughout the organization ensuring a level of alignment.

What is the primary focus of those in your organization? If you were to survey those who work for you, would there be consistency in their response to the question—or would some number of employees identify a different focus? To the degree that inconsistency exists in the area of focus, efforts are short-circuited. "Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint," according to an old proverb. When your organization has clear, laser-like focus decisions are made more clearly, more quickly, and with far fewer questions, for less confusion, and far less negative ramifications.

To find focus: identify the ONE thing that you believe to be essential for you, your team, or your organization to accomplish this year. Your initial tendency may be to identify twenty different things, but work diligently to narrow down the list to ONE. Think of this ONE as "If we do nothing else this year, we must do _____."

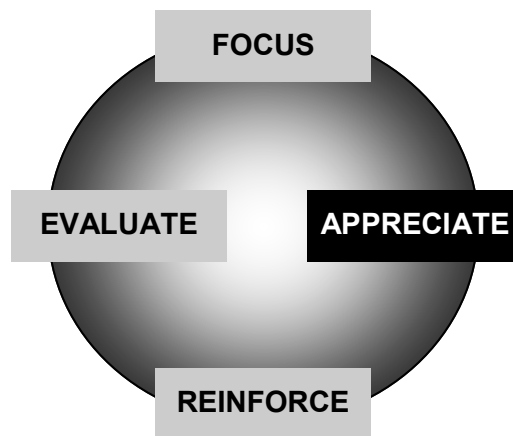
A clearly crafted focus will save you and the people of your organization countless hours of wrong focus, peripheral focus, or totally distracted focus, by identifying what needs to be done (and, by association) identifying what can be left on the sidelines.

The clarity of your focus should also energize you and your team to identify ways in which this focus can be maintained.

Distraction, the lack of focus, is the primary reason goals are not accomplished. Noted quality consultant, W. Edwards Demming, states that the primary reason for the absence of qual-

ity in much of current business efforts. Focus, then, is key. It must be obtained and it must be maintained.

The Thirty Day Transformation Plan, mentioned later in this article, will challenge you to identify the most critical area of organizational focus and to build a plan to support that focus.



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PRECIATE—The second phase of this transformation plan requires you to explore the focus in greater detail—to understand its ins and outs, and to incorporate that appreciative view into the work that you do.

Individuals and organizations who begin an effort with a well-honed focus often discover that the focus loses steam, loses interest, becomes ho hum or is no longer able to capture the minds and hearts of those who must maintain it.

One common definition of “appreciate” is “to increase in value,” as in the case of one’s investments. Appreciation in the transformation process does just that—it enhances the perceived value of the chosen focus by identifying aspects of the focus that contain unrealized value, unrealized potential, or unrealized impact.

Appreciation adds significantly to the focus, since it highlights dimensions of the focus that might be overlooked or trivialized.

The signs of the absence of appreciation include:

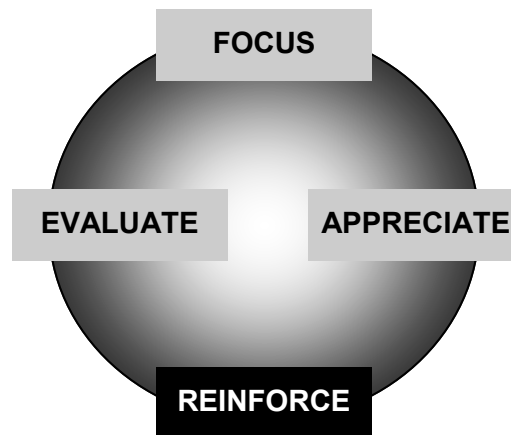
- Mindless repetition on the part of the organizations leaders—in an almost “Stepford Wife”-like trance, as if meaningless repetition of the focus were all that was required to bring about the change.
- A sense of “second-verse-same-as-the-first,” where the leaders’ focus may include some slightly variant of the already-stated information, but not enough to capture the minds and the hearts of the listeners.
- An individual and/or corporate sense of deflation, as if the idea no longer has enough vibrancy or lift to stand on its own.

Think of the APPRECIATE phase of this process as the one of the two booster rockets that will propel your efforts to the desired destination.

Returning to the example of the work done at Sprint, the company’s initial introductory efforts were followed up with regular dialogue on the implications of the focus chosen. The then-CEO talked about the impact of profitability on the perceived competence of Sprint’s leaders, the company’s ability obtain and retain customers who believed in the products and services Sprint provided, and the impact on Sprint’s ability to hire and retain the best and brightest employees.

These messages were cascaded at all levels of the organization, allowing every individual to obtain significant “line-of-sight” between his or her efforts and the company goals being sought.

The APPRECIATE phase allows the organization to gain a fuller, richer view of the focus and how that focus can, potentially, be of benefit to the company, to customers, to employees, and any other constituents.



REINFORCE, the third phase of this transformation process, requires that you, the leader, consider the type of “shot-in-the-arm” that will provide a needed boost to yourself and to the organization. As was mentioned previously, it is quite common to discover that organizational efforts lose focus, other issues emerge that require time, money, and attention, and that some of the greatest champions of a given focus have been moved away to champion other efforts.

All of these organizational realities suggest that if the **FOCUS** is worthy of time and attention, it is also worthy of reinforcement.

Throughout the process of transformation, you have undoubtedly noticed things that are going well and that provide great living examples of how individuals should conduct the transformation. These examples, whether large or small, are the “stuff” that reinforcement is made of. By focusing on items of seemingly-trivial importance, you will underscore the importance of the transformation in every area of the business and you will reinforce that every individual has a potential role in the transformation and should take that role seriously.

A well-organized search mission can identify those things in your organization that are going well. The focus at this stage is not to scrutinize the organization with a fine-toothed

comb, but to find people doing something right and to provide the necessary recognition for their efforts as a way of reinforcing what is expected and as a way of sending a clear message to others with regard to the behaviors and type of actions that are seen as useful in moving the organization forward.

For many leaders, the notion of reinforcement may suggest that there be some sort of financial incentive associated with transformation efforts. In general, this is not a great idea, since it sets up a potential law of diminishing returns—where more and more money is required to generate fewer and fewer results.

Research around the use of financial rewards in transformational efforts also underscore the limited shelf life these rewards tend to have. Further, the management of financial rewards in some organizational settings has clearly shown that individuals have received awards and not known the reason or the purpose of the award, while others who may be deserving of rewards, receive nothing. Any likelihood of repeated behavior in this situation is minimized, if not eliminated.

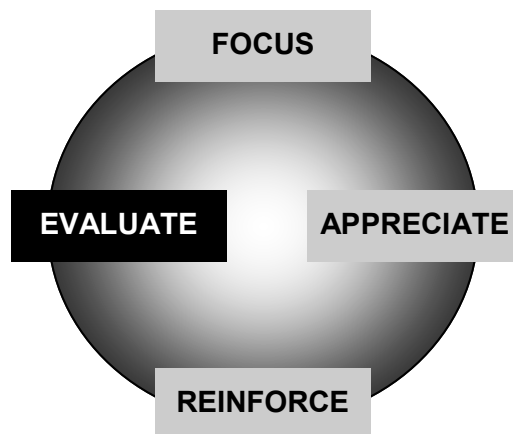
Effective reinforcement efforts, meet the following five criteria:

1. Realizable by all—Every person in the work unit should be able to receive the shot-in-the-arm;
2. Random—the provision of the reinforcement comes at a point when it may not be expected;
3. Real accomplishment—the reinforcement is provided for a significant results, major milestones—efforts that made something significant happen;
4. Relevant—the reinforcement or reward is appealing to those who might receive it;
5. Rocks! Generates significant energy within the group.

Good reinforcement requires a will-

ingness to experiment with a variety of options to determine which of the available options produce the desired response. Some reinforcement resources used by a number of organizations include:

- Certificates;
- Plaques;
- Trophies, ribbons;
- Jewelry (pins, pendants)
- Pens, desk accessories
- Watches, clocks
- Cash
- Savings bonds
- Event tickets (ball games, etc.)
- Vacations



EVALUATE—the final phase in this four-phased process of transformation requires you to consider how the work you have undertaken has accomplished what you set out to accomplish. Here, your goal is to be brutally honest about what you have done, what has worked well, and what needs to be reworked for future application.

Ideally, the evaluation you undertake is not a solitary activity. Evaluation activities tend to be most effective when all relevant parties are included in the evaluation. This is particularly true if these same relevant parties will be required to make changes or to undertake new initiatives based on the outcomes of the evaluation.

We find it helpful for leaders to fo-

cus on four potential levels of evaluation. The levels are increasingly more sophisticated and require successively greater efforts in order to achieve a meaningful outcome.

Level 1: Conversation—At the initial phase of any transformation, it is important that those engaged in the transformation be talking about the transformation. This doesn't require deep analysis, and can be achieved well through guided conversations, intentional dialogues on a given topic, town hall meetings on the topic, or, at an individual level, journaling. All of these efforts are designed to ensure that your transformation efforts remain top-of-mind. If the efforts are not top-of-mind, then the likelihood of individuals engaging regularly with the transformation-related efforts are minimized.

Level 2: Behavior—At some point (ideally sooner, rather than later), individuals efforts must move beyond rhetoric to behavior if true transformation is to occur. As the instigator of the transformation, it is important that you monitor the individuals in your organization to ensure that what they are doing is consistent with the expectation. Whether the transformation focuses on customer service excellence, employee coaching, or increased sales effectiveness, it will be impossible to declare the effort a success until the behaviors of the involved individuals reflects the expected changes.

As the old saying goes, "Well done is better than well said."

Level 3: Milestones. Given the ultimate aim of your transformation, there will likely be milestones that suggest that you are well on your way to achieving the desired results, that you are well off-base, or that you need to scrap your efforts and start over. These milestones enable you to make mid-course decisions and/or mid-course corrections that, ultimately,

will ensure that you are on-point to achieve the outcomes you desire.

A clear example of this transformation is in the area of sales performance. If your sales team's ultimate goal is to achieve a 20% increase in sales during the calendar year, one milestone will likely be the degree of increase that has been achieved at the end of the first quarter, the second quarter, and so on.

Level 4: Results. The achievement of the primary focus of the transformation constitutes the final level of evaluation and allows you to ensure that what you achieved by the end of your transformation efforts mirrors the expectations you established.

Summary and Application

About the Author: *For more than 25 years, Dr. Ollie Malone has worked with a variety of organizations, both domestically and internationally, to improve both the functioning of these organizations as well as the results produced by the organizations. His clients have included such diverse organizations as American Express, AT&T, Boeing, University of Virginia Medical Center, Shell, Sprint, and the United States Secret Service. A published author with three books to his credit, Dr. Malone is president and principal consultant of Olive Tree Associates, a Plano, TX-based consulting firm that partners with executives and organizations in creating long-term profitability, sustainability, customer, and employee satisfaction. Dr. Malone can be reached by email at DrO@OliveTreeAssociates.com.*

Creating and implementing a transformation, whether on an individual level or on a corporate level, requires more than an announcement. Catalysts must be willing to provide and maintain a focus, to expand their view and that of the organization in seeing the desired transformation, to reinforce the approximations toward the ultimate goal, and to evaluate their efforts as well as the efforts of others accountable for the transformation.

The example worksheets that follow are designed to enable you to frame the transformation you would like to achieve and to follow this framing with the necessary actions to get you closer to your desired end goal.

Example

Thirty Days to Transformation: The Thirty-Day Plan

From: 67% customer satisfaction

Week	Target	Focus	Appreciate	Reinforce	Evaluate
Week One	Self Other leaders	Deliver a clear message on the radical change needed in customer service Messages delivered in teams; specific results for the team	Provide metrics of how customer service drives financial performance		Hall “buzz”—are employees talking about this?
Week Two	Self Other leaders	Employee understanding and the beginning of ownership at all levels Random check-ins with employees to check perceptions	5-10 minute presentations focusing on “What’s a customer worth?”		Employee “buzz”—increased attention to customer-related issues and topics?
Week Three	Self Other leaders	Increased expectation of ownership on employees’ parts Encourage participation in this week’s customer contest		Employee-designed contest to raise customer satisfaction scores. Winner(s) receive Dallas Mavericks basketball tickets	How many employees participate? Quality and potential impact of employee ideas submitted.
Week Four	Self Other leaders	Reinforcing winning messages from employee contest	How winning messages impact the way we think about customers	Recognition of creators of winning messages Recognition of team members’ great ideas.	Current employee satisfaction results: what improvement?
Week Five	Self Other leaders	How we’re changing to meet customer needs Team results, team changes to meet customer needs	30-second videos from customers on the change in the quality of our service	Recognition of individuals that reflect the desired changes Team recognition of “local stars”	Group improvement results Team improvement results
Week Six	Self Other leaders	How the overall group made the shift How individual teams made the shift		Recognition of those who made the greatest improvement—and how they did it	Overall customer satisfaction results Determine what’s next to reinforce results

To: 92% customer satisfaction results—consistently