Leading Bold Change

We’re taking charge of change.

by Ann Schulte

When MasterCard went public in 2006 and faced the challenges of such a major change, we began crafting a more systematic approach to the way the company talks about and leads change projects, which has built vital organizational capabilities in the years since. We selected John Kotter’s Leading Bold Change methodology and partnered with ISB trainers to bring the program to life. Since the fall of 2007, nearly 1,000 employees in nine global markets (five different countries) have gone through the Leading Bold Change workshop and have learned to plan their change initiatives.

The Leading Bold Change training program has the right blend of accessible workshop content and research (books, articles, videos), and the ability to certify our trainers to drive the delivery. We kicked off the program with executive sessions to build buy-in and support.

All participants were asked to read Kotter’s book Our Iceberg Is Melting and complete online pre-work. During the workshops, the participants developed action plans to apply the 8-Step model. Many executives saw the benefits of applying “lessons from the colony” and requested Leading Bold Change sessions with their teams. After the workshops, change teams receive consulting from the Global Talent Management & Development team on implementing their action plans.

Six Program Components

The Leading Bold Change workshop consists of six components: 1) interactive dialogue on the book and reinforcement of its key concepts; 2) discussion of how the archetypes from the book relate to participants’ leadership styles; 3) video presentation of several case studies on why the 8 Steps are needed and what successful implementation looks like; 4) breakout and group discussion on the past experiences of participants with change initiatives and how they relate to successful implementation of each step; 5) exploration of the current state of the team, including strengths and weaknesses, and analysis of critical change issues; and 6) application of the 8-Step model to the identified focus areas, including completion of a plan and goals for each step.

Eight Steps to Change

Here’s how we’ve progressed with the 8 Steps:

• To increase the urgency for change (Step 1), the CMO introduced employees via a global teleconference to the key change themes and their application to the company. A week or so later, all employees were invited to listen to Dr. John Kotter and ask questions during a live global broadcast.

• While we focus on creating a culture of change, we allow each business unit to assemble the correct guiding team (Step 2) for their own change initiative.

• The teams then create a vision (Step 3) for their project that embodies their willingness to learn to be change-ready.

• Our broad communication efforts (Step 4) are enhanced by our strategic partnership with the corporate communications team. Teams from around the globe, and their change project success cases, have been featured in the corporate news.

• We have empowered action (Step 5) by providing employees access to the Leading Bold Change methodology and by certifying our own team as facilitators and consultants.

• As for producing short-term wins (Step 6), teams are now thinking about and planning for change and creating a common language around change. For example, any team that speaks of their “green bottle” is sharing an understandable urgency that something needs to change.

• To keep the momentum going (Step 7), we help teams see the end goal and remember why this work is so vital.

• To make these changes sustainable (Step 8) the Global Talent Management & Development consultants follow up with business unit teams, providing guidance, monitoring progress, and serving as group mentors to make the changes a permanent part of our culture at MasterCard Worldwide.