

Growing Pains.

6 Organizational Transformation Strategies for Mid-Market HR and L&D

Growth. Transformation. Agility. As the business environment continues to move rapidly, jobs and roles are changing quickly. From upskilling and reskilling requirements to bringing cultures together after M&As to growth—chances are you've been asked to respond to change.

Managing organizational growth, often via disparate locations and multiple employment arrangements, is not easy. At a time where you're trying to foster a place where people want to join, engage, and stay, you need the right tools to create a positive culture. Drawing on research and customer best practices here are six strategies to create a more agile organization, whatever the future holds:



“You won’t achieve excellence if your people don’t **know why they are coming to work** every day at your firm. The clearer you can be about **the value your company creates and for whom**, the greater your ability to **inspire your workers**. And the more you **align the right talent, operating model, and financial resources** to support your purpose, the better able **employees will be able to deliver on it.**”

— [Harvard Business Review, November-December 2019](#)

STRATEGY 1

Focus on culture first.

Research by the Economist Intelligence Unit reported that the top barriers to successful strategy implementation are cultural attitude, poorly managed resources, insufficient agility, and strategy this is not understood or poorly communicated. Employees need to know and understand what they’re supposed to be doing and why before they can get on board, much less execute.

Goals and objectives must be well-articulated and communicated effectively. Especially in times of change, being able to communicate purpose AND align personal, team, and organizational goals is key.



Key Insight

Use effective communication tools to align everyone in your organization to your mission, vision, and core values.

During times of change or transformation, employees require more openness and honesty from the top down.

ACCORDING TO
GARTNER

71%

of employees think employers should increase transparency

EDELMAN TRUST
BAROMETER FOUND

71%

of employees feel their CEO should be more responsive to challenges



“Leadership is really important to drive a business that’s in change, a business that wants to grow. It’s people that will follow people.”

– Donna Johnson, Head of Learning & Leadership, Global Media & Entertainment

STRATEGY 2

Be transparent.

Uncertainty doesn’t just lead to bad press—the stress of the unknown can send productivity into a tailspin. On the flip side, high-performing mid-market companies report a strong connection between transparency and their long-term success. How do you help your people feel more open and comfortable with change while boosting morale and productivity? One conversation at a time through frequent manager-employee conversations. These conversations should already be a mainstay, providing ongoing feedback to your team members. Why not utilize them as a platform for ongoing dialog, where employees can ask questions, voice concerns, and, more importantly, get answers?



Key Insight

Enable leaders to maintain open communication with direct reports through regular 1:1s and check-in conversations.

STRATEGY 3

Support leadership development.

While the role of the manager continues to shift, the impact they have on an employee's engagement and fulfillment has grown. People rely on their managers every day, but it's our managers who require the most support when learning how to adapt to perpetual change.

Leadership development is about more than technical and soft skills—it's about behavioral skills, too. However, willingness to adapt, communication, problem-solving, and decision-making can't be honed through formal learning alone. These skills need to be developed through real-world application, role-playing, coaching, mentorships, and formal learning from internal and external experts.



Key Insight

Equip managers with the development tools, skills and training they need to create responsive teams.



“The world is changing at a rate that no one individual can keep up with it. You have to **leverage the expertise and the skill sets of multiple people in order to stay in front of the innovation curve.** Building a culture that recognizes the unique skills that a whole variety of people bring to the table is critical. Including them and engaging them in what we do is the other piece of it. And then **building leaders who understand how to assemble teams and how to get the most out of people** is going to be critical.”

— Sandy Kuohn, Chief Human Resources Officer, Chemical Bank

STRATEGY 4

Leverage managers to scale for growth.

As you grow, managers have to deal with “growing pains” on all fronts. Direct reports, locations, customers, and even products can expand rapidly. This complexity requires a delicate balancing act to manage solid relationships with current stakeholders while integrating new ones at the same time.

Managers must provide strategic guidance while allowing each individual to perform with autonomy. The required skill set: Maintaining continual feedback, navigating ambiguity, and inspiring others rather than dictating next steps. All skills that get developed through education, hands-on experience, observation of others, and seeking feedback on their performance. This cycle of continuous learning is crucial for every member of your team during periods of growth and change.



Key Insight

Business moves too quickly for scalability to rely on an army of operations personnel. Invest in training frontline managers to lead.



“We have to be pragmatic and get our leaders to help us scale. They’re the ones that need to take on the ‘people agenda’ and have the conversations that set the direction, focus on alignment, and develop on-the-job training based on a common model.”

— Morten Jakobi, EVP, People & Culture, Dustin Group



“Our well-being is directly connected to our fulfillment—the quality of our relationships, our sense of significance from making an impact, and the challenge of growth.”

— Dr. Britt Andreatta, Author, [“Wired to Grow and Wired to Connect”](#)

STRATEGY 5

Promote connection.

As companies grow, “losing who we are” is a common concern. Feeling connected is essential to employee fulfillment, which motivates workers to perform at their best—and for up to three years longer at your company. And fostering it doesn’t have to be complicated.

Employees want freedom and control over their development journeys, as well as what they reveal about their personal interests with fellow team members. But they also need to lean on each other for continuous learning and skill development. Mentoring, coaching, and other knowledge sharing can—and should—take place in every corner of your organization. Make these activities part of your culture by promoting opportunities for every person to highlight what knowledge they’re willing to share, as well as what skills they’d like help with.



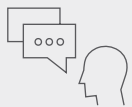
Key Insight

Provide a platform for employees to connect for organic relationship building and knowledge sharing.

Take swift action when discontent occurs.

In good times and bad, your employees want to feel heard. This is more important than ever in times of change. But, you can't address feedback if you don't know what's going on. Fortunately, there are many ways companies can gauge how employees are feeling on a specific issue, as well as the organization as a whole.

Pulse surveys, engagement surveys, and even analyzing employee sentiment in discussion groups can help identify red flags before they become out of control. But, gathering employee data is only the first step. Organizations and leaders must quickly take appropriate actions to address employee concerns and communicate company-wide when positive changes have been made.



Key Insight

Use listening techniques such as regular pulse surveys to uncover the issues that require swift action. Then have managers quickly form a plan and execute positive changes.

“Much of the feedback people have at work is not about you. It’s about the work, the workplace, the systems, and the process. Employees have vital and very valuable information about what’s frustrating them at work, so remember that some of what you’ll learn is simple things that just have to get fixed. If you create a culture of “reflection” and “after action reviews” and “open feedback discussions,” you’ll start to see what these things are and everyone can make the workplace better.”

— [Josh Bersin, HR Analyst and Industry Thought Leader](#)

As the pace of organizational change continues, the sooner you put these insights into action, the more adept your organization will be.

Download the **“How Bridge Solves Your Organizational Transformation Challenges: Strategies for Mid-Market HR and L&D Leaders.”** for the tools and techniques required for your organizational transformation.

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6330 South 3000 East, Suite 700
Salt Lake City, UT 84121

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FOOTNOTES

1. HBR <https://hbr.org/2019/11/why-are-we-here?ab=hero-main-text>
2. Gartner <https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2019-10-28-gartner-identifies-five-areas-hr-leaders-must-address>
3. Edelman https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2019-02/2019_Edelman_Trust_Barometer_Global_Report.pdf
4. inc <https://www.inc.com/magazine/201403/sustained-growth-dna-business-strengths.html>
5. Josh Bersin <https://joshbersin.com/2019/07/why-leadership-development-feels-broken-and-how-were-fixing-it/>
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