Five things you need to *STOP DOING NOW* if you want to save your organization!

You are worried, really, really worried. Something is terribly wrong in the culture of the organization you lead and nothing you have tried has moved the needle.

I know how you feel.

It is frightening to feel like the Captain of the Titanic right after it hit the iceberg. I empathize. After doing my first stint (eight long years) leading a nonprofit turnaround, I volunteered to do it again at another organization. After ten years of that, I started TurningWest so I could help other leaders like yourself turnaround an underperforming, or even a seemingly doomed, organization.

I have spent the past 30 years living my own turnarounds and walking with others through their experiences. I have spent tens of thousands of hours researching the most promising ways of getting to the heart of the true problem. My consulting, writing, and publishing have centered around helping leaders like you to "right the ship" and get back to changing the world for the better.

There are so many things I would like to teach you, but if you want to stem the flooding in the engine compartment of your organizational ship, you simply must **S T O P** doing these five things immediately!

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1 Stop Looking for Simple Solutions

Let me assure you of one certainty: the simplistic solutions you are pondering or have tried will not turn around your organization! It is tempting to think that changing out one leader or drafting a new strategic plan will turnaround your organization. You will not solve the underlying issues by eliminating a program or starting a new one. The problems you face are much, much deeper than you know.

I know that last statement frightens you. It took me years to learn the truth of that assertion, and then years more to figure out solutions to the real underlying causes of the dysfunction. The real problem lies in the hidden, unconscious transmission of human culture that lies at the core of your social system.

Once I understood this, I went searching for tools to turnaround dysfunctional organizational cultures. It took a doctorate, several published books, and spent tens of thousands of hours of research to uncover nine primary culture embedding mechanisms with the greatest promise to realign dysfunctional cultures. Believe me, while you can learn how to wield these nine powerful tools, nothing in your education or experience to this point has taught you these skills.

2 Stop Mistrusting People

One of the early pioneers of business management principles, Douglas MacArthur, famously grouped managers into two categories: Theory X leaders and Theory Y leaders. Theory X leaders start with the presumption that employees lack ambition, shun responsibility, and are only concerned with looking out for themselves. Leaders who start with such assumptions of mistrust end up producing organizational cultures that are demeaning and lack the level of psychological safety in which people thrive. Employees under such leaders then behave in ways that reinforce the original distrusting beliefs of the Theory X leader. And the cycle goes on and on.

Stop mistrusting people and start learning to empower your team members to engage their highest selves at work. The paradox is that this approach, what McGregor called Theory Y leadership, produces loyal, motivated, and highly productive individuals and teams. Your organizational turnaround begins with the most fundamental assumptions you make about human beings. And it all starts with trust.

3 Stop Blaming Your Board/Leadership/ Managers/Team or _____

Former Navy Seals and New York Times Best Selling Authors Jocko Willink and Leif Babin famously have brought one of the military's most important leadership axioms to the non-military world, namely, Extreme Ownership. What Willink and Babin mean by this is that if your organization has problems, you are responsible!

Here at TurningWest our oft-repeated phrase is, "If you have been a leader in your organization for longer than three years, then you own the problems you face." Extreme ownership means that you cannot blame the organization's problems on anyone else. You own it.

Leaders get either what they create or what they allow.

This means that change begins with you. Leadership is first and foremost modeled. If you want your people to change, they need to see you changing twice as much. Stop blaming anyone and everyone. Get to work changing yourself. Only then will you be about to turn around your ship.

4 Stop Ignoring Your Culture

It is likely that whatever business or graduate school you attended failed to adequately prepare you with the tools necessary to expertly craft and shape your organization's culture. Culture is one of the most complex concepts in human knowledge. Culture includes structures, unwritten rules, taboos, policies and procedures, dress codes, ideologies, communications, and much, much more.

Culture determines for a group how to be successful. It defines what is meant by concepts such as progress and teamwork. It teaches people how to navigate the social constructs of the group. It supplies a whole host of other philosophical assumptions that drive behavior. Every organization has a culture and whether they formed that culture intentionally or unintentionally, culture is acting as an unseen force that has the power to propel the organization towards success or failure.

Leaders shape organizational culture. In fact, I argue that the leader's primary job is to consistently and proactively mold the culture of the organization. Culture is the engine that drives the productivity behind everything you do. It is your responsibility to learn how to create and maintain a healthy human work culture.

5 Stop Thinking You Can Solve Your Organization's Problems Alone

If you felt a mass somewhere in your body, you would not try to operate on yourself. That would be ridiculous. You'd get yourself to your physician as soon as possible! The same logic applies to your organization's health.

If you are in a situation where you are convinced that you need to lead an organizational turnaround, you need help. In my situation, I looked around for resources to teach me how to fix my organization's ninety-year history of dysfunction. What I learned was that the normal leadership principles and lessons out there are not applicable to the special circumstances I faced. (This is why I wrote my doctoral dissertation on the specialized leadership skills required by turnaround leaders).

You need specialized help. You need someone, outside of your organization, to talk to in order to properly diagnose your organization's dysfunction and then to prescribe the appropriate solutions. You need a compassionate guide who has been there before to listen to your frustrations and calm your fears. Stop trying to go it alone. You reduce your chances of success to almost zero in trying to be the lone ranger leader of your organization.

Call Us

Ready to talk? We are ready to listen—and then we can work with you to co-create impactful solutions with the power to realign your organization's culture and restore it to health and productivity once again.

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