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Igniting Champions

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By Doug Williamson

Organizations profile prospective employees and leaders for a number of vital characteristics, such as business acumen, management capability and interpersonal skills. Rarely, if ever, do they look for the organizational equivalent of a "spark."

Rarely do they look for that natural born catalyst: Someone who can initiate great amounts of growth through people, or someone who can see through the bureaucracy and decide what must be done immediately.

Organizations need catalysts now more than ever. With most employees paralyzed, or at least demoralized by the current economic situation, organizations must tap into a catalyst's natural abilities and kick-start the road to recovery.

Chemical Reaction

In tough times, catalysts are what you need. Just as important, in great times, you are also wise to seek out and listen to your catalysts.

Catalysts are wired differently. They understand what it takes to achieve an organization's growth target and how to get around roadblocks. The role of the catalyst is someone who speeds up a process that must happen within an organization.

The organization knows what must change, what it must do to reach its target; however, it takes a catalyst to cut through the analysis and bureaucracy to get the process started now.

Mental Models

Trapped? You can't do it? Are there too many constraints, such as bureaucracy, corporate policies — you name it? There is no way you can reach your new, higher targets with this impossible number of constraints.

Keys to Igniting the Catalysts in Your Organization

The good news is that you can profile catalysts. Here are some of the traits you should be looking for:

Dominance. Catalysts are frustrated with the here and now, and are always looking for the next big thing. They are also very task focused. If the growth target is "meaty" enough, they'll get to work on it immediately

Influence. Catalysts know that they can't do this alone. They know that they must influence others in the organization to get on

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- [Attracting and Retaining Winning Employees: How You Can Get and Keep the Best People for Your Team](#)

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Words from the Wise

"The key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority."

- Kenneth Blanchard

However, this attitude may be all in your head!

In many cases, organizations teach—or better yet, brainwash—managers into believing that there is no taking control of the organization and making the changes necessary to achieve long-term substantial growth. With organizations, the key is to minimize risk and maximize control. In other words, maintain the status quo.

A catalyst sees through this trap. It knows that if it can build a sound business case to achieve the company's goals it will get the needed permission to change the company.

About the Author

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board with them, and pursue this new approach together.

Steadfastness. While the traits of this area of personality are important, they become secondary when there is a major change process underway. Catalysts are not shackled by their organization's past. They understand its importance, but they never feel constrained by it.

Conscientiousness. Catalysts often choose uncharted waters for their change plans, which is contrary to what this element of personality relies on. Catalysts love to learn as they go; rules and regulations may just get in the way.

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