More Humor, Less Fear - Manager Magazine

Author: Ventsislav Savov

Ms. Jagger, based on your experience with major companies like P&G and Johnson & Johnson, what are the most common challenges leaders face during organizational or market changes?

These are the acceptance of change and the management of uncertainty. People naturally fear change because they perceive it as a threat. Leaders often reject changes they did not initiate or do not like. This leads to initial resistance, which they must overcome. The most successful leaders accept change as inevitable and navigate uncertainty with an open mind. They understand that they will not always have ready answers, but they trust that they will find solutions as they move forward. They also help their teams accept and adapt to new realities.



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Which mindset-shifting techniques prove most effective for busy corporate leaders?

One of the techniques I apply with my clients involves positive affirmations. First, we assess their comfort level with change on a scale from 1 to 10. Then, we analyze their mindset towards change—people often see it as something negative. We gradually work on transforming this mindset into a more constructive one, for example, by seeing change as an

opportunity for growth. The key is to progress through a series of affirmations, moving from a lower comfort level to a higher one, to help overcome the initial fear of change.

How do you help a workaholic who sets big goals every month and then even bigger ones the next month take a break and break the vicious cycle that could completely exhaust them?

There are three main aspects I discuss with workaholics—motivation, fear, and action. Motivation is often lost when people forget their dreams or why they are working in the first place. It is important to help them remember the bigger picture and what they truly want to achieve beyond work. Fear is the second aspect—what is the cost of burnout? What do they lose when they do not rest? Third, they need to take practical steps—such as having a conversation with their team and creating a plan for the time they will take off work. This helps reduce the anxiety that things will fall apart without them.

Consistency/resilience or flexibility/adaptability – which quality is more important in highly turbulent times? And why?

One cannot exist without the other. It is important to know when to be persistent and when to be flexible. A leader must have a clear vision and stick to it—that is consistency. However, the path to achieving this vision requires adaptability. When a certain method does not work, you need to be able to adjust your approach without changing the ultimate goal.

How has your personal experience overcoming cancer changed your approach to leadership development?

One of the biggest lessons I learned was about the perception of change. I realized that humor can bring light even in the toughest situations. During my treatment, I used humorous visualizations to make the process easier. After the surgery, the doctor said:

"Good news—the alien has been removed."

This unconventional way of thinking helped me cope with immense fear and uncertainty. Now, I encourage leaders and their teams to find their own ways to handle challenges, using both humor and acceptance of the inevitable.

What is your golden rule for achieving a healthy work-life balance and lasting well-being?

Nothing is permanent—everything is constantly changing. What helps my clients is connecting with their intuition. In the corporate world, we often neglect intuition because we rely on logic and analysis, but for personal well-being, the most important thing is the inner feeling—gut feeling. The term comes from the idea that these perceptions are often felt in the stomach—for example, when we are nervous or intuitively sense danger, the stomach reacts. Leaders always know deep inside (even if they do not want to admit it to themselves or others) when they are overworked or when something is wrong. It is essential to learn to listen to these signals and use them as a guide for better work-life balance.

Desi Jagger is a certified professional coach specializing in navigating complex change. She has seven years of experience at Procter & Gamble, where she led cross-functional teams,

worked in brand management, and trained leaders. She has worked with leaders and teams from companies such as Viber, VMware, Coca-Cola, and others. Overcoming cancer gave her a unique perspective on how our thoughts can help us overcome the toughest challenges. Together with a team of partners, she works with clients worldwide.

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