

Microsoft Sales Organization Undergoes Its Most Successful Change Initiative Ever

An innovative sales organization begins a multi-year journey of becoming more agile and better aligned to their customers, building change leadership capability along the way, resulting in breakthrough results from their strategic change initiatives.

BREAKTHROUGHS

- Leading Strategic Initiatives
- Enterprise Change Leadership Capability Development
- Develop Conscious Change Leaders



“Change is not a spectator sport. For us to grow our change leadership muscle, it must be worked by each and every one of us. Being First gave us the disciplined approach that made this the most successful change initiative we’ve ever undertaken”

Michael Parks, VP

Challenge

Microsoft’s US SMSP organization (Small and Midmarket Solutions and Partners group) is a major growth engine for the company, serving the rapidly growing and increasingly tech-savvy small and mid-size business segment of the market.

To drive the growth opportunity in this market, the organization determined four critical breakthroughs were needed: 1) develop greater agility to turn on a dime and pursue emerging opportunities; 2) align the business model and structure to the shifting market requirements; 3) radically increase organizational efficiencies, particularly across functions and regions; and 4) make SMSP a great place to work, so it attracts and retains top talent.

Historically, such initiatives at Microsoft had been approached as discrete change projects, forced into an annual planning cycle, with executives keeping changes closely under wraps “to avoid employee churn.” Much attention would be focused on the design of the solution, or “content” of the change, with too little attention paid to people or the intelligent design of change process. Often, there would be too little upstream strategic context-setting and alignment work and insufficient attention paid to downstream impacts and implementation planning, to ensure a successful “landing” of the change initiatives.

Solution

Based on our audit of past change initiatives, Being First helped the change process leader to reframe the initiative from “a field re-structure” to what it really required – “a multi-year business model transformation.” We supported the change leaders to generate a clear, long-term vision, broader engagement in planning and design, greater transparency and communication, and more rigorous implementation planning.

We pulled together a small core team, which included representation from each function and region as well as HR, communications and change consulting expertise, to develop an overall change strategy. We ensured that historic oversights were adequately addressed, such as 1) engaging the workforce early to understand the case for change and vision, 2) developing clear design requirements, 3) creating an explicit and effective governance structure, roles and decision-making, and how projects would be integrated for speed 4) creating a disciplined process to test design options and determine best bet recommendations for a new field structure, and 5) developing a robust impact analysis process and integrated implementation strategy.

The initiative was built for speed, progressing rapidly through a series of working sessions including Context and Design Requirements, Design Option Review, Impact Analysis Workshop, and Implementation Planning. Much work was done in parallel between these working sessions by designated “workstream teams.”

We created a small, representative Fast Track design team to keep the overall process moving while workstreams engaged a broader spectrum of the organization in the work. A small Change Office kept the initiative aligned with the executive team, while also centralizing key support resources for each of the workstreams, such as HR, Finance, Communications, Program Management and change consulting.

We further supported teams with a comprehensive communications strategy, which “provided an ongoing and consistent drumbeat for the organization’s journey over the coming 3-5 years, with messaging continually being reinforced to provide a stable context for all of the change initiatives still ahead.”



Results

In the project debrief, the team summarized the overall results this way: *“We landed all the initiatives successfully and with less organizational upheaval than we’ve ever had.”*

A subsequent review provided this reflection by one of the team members: “Over the following years, we continued the transformation of the business and leveraged what we had originally put in place – the governance model, workstream structure, communications strategy, change tools, and change leadership skills Being First developed in

our original team. This enabled us to reach our ultimate breakthrough target of increased sales revenue.”

Other results reported by the team included:

- ▶ Increased speed of implementation even while engaging more people than usual
- ▶ Better and faster buy-in across the organization: full adoption with sustained results
- ▶ More robust two-way communications that provided useful employee input, plus better coordination of messaging

- Reduced risk through cross-work-stream impact analysis and collaborative work in mitigating impacts
- Reduced resource requirements and duplication of effort while also providing stretch opportunities for our current and future leaders
- Building muscle in working more collaboratively across the system
- Developing the change leadership capability that set us up for future successful change initiatives
- A real-time experience of agility: the clear design requirements and scenario planning work allowed us to generate a robust “Plan B” when the EVP had issues with our original proposal; we course corrected on a dime due to this discipline.



ABOUT BEING FIRST

Being First is a Breakthrough company, providing advanced expertise in personal and organizational transformation since 1988. We open leader’s minds, develop their self-mastery and equip them with the advanced Conscious Change Leadership skills to transform themselves, their organizations, communities and cultures.

As Strategic Advisors to the C-Suite, we provide an integrated System of Transformation that builds transformational leadership capability by providing your leaders with the consulting, training and development, coaching, methodology, tools and assessments to perform optimally and Achieve Breakthrough.

For more information, BeingFirst.com or call us at +1 970.385.5100.