

Five leadership lessons for business transformation

Leadership advice from 120 executive sponsors who've done it



Introduction

Major transformation initiatives have a poor track record. They promise breakthrough benefits, but the journey can be painful, and they normally cost more and take longer than expected.

We wanted to understand what leaders can do about this to make their transformation programmes less stressful and more successful.



What we did

We first spoke to 20 senior leaders, each with experience of major transformation initiatives in large organizations. The wide-ranging conversations covered the role of senior executives in business transformation, how decisions were made, the challenges they'd encountered and the lessons they learned.

We then asked Andrew Campbell, Director at Ashridge Strategic Management Centre and author of **Think Again, Why Good Leaders Make Bad Decisions and How to Keep it From Happening to You** to help sift through and interpret all the interview transcripts.

Out of this emerged five leadership challenges that should be specific focuses of attention for senior executives. If you are executive sponsor or a board director, these are what you should pay attention to. This is the **Business Transformation Leadership Framework**.

We then asked a further 100 senior executives to score their most significant transformation initiative against this leadership framework. They scored their initiatives on how well the different issues had been addressed, what they'd done to address them, the challenges they'd encountered, and what they wished they'd done differently. The interviews and the quantitative survey drive the **Leadership lessons from 100 major business transformation initiatives**.

Together, the Business Transformation Leadership Framework and lessons learned provide executive sponsors, leadership teams and boards with an agenda for their involvement to help their organizations change.



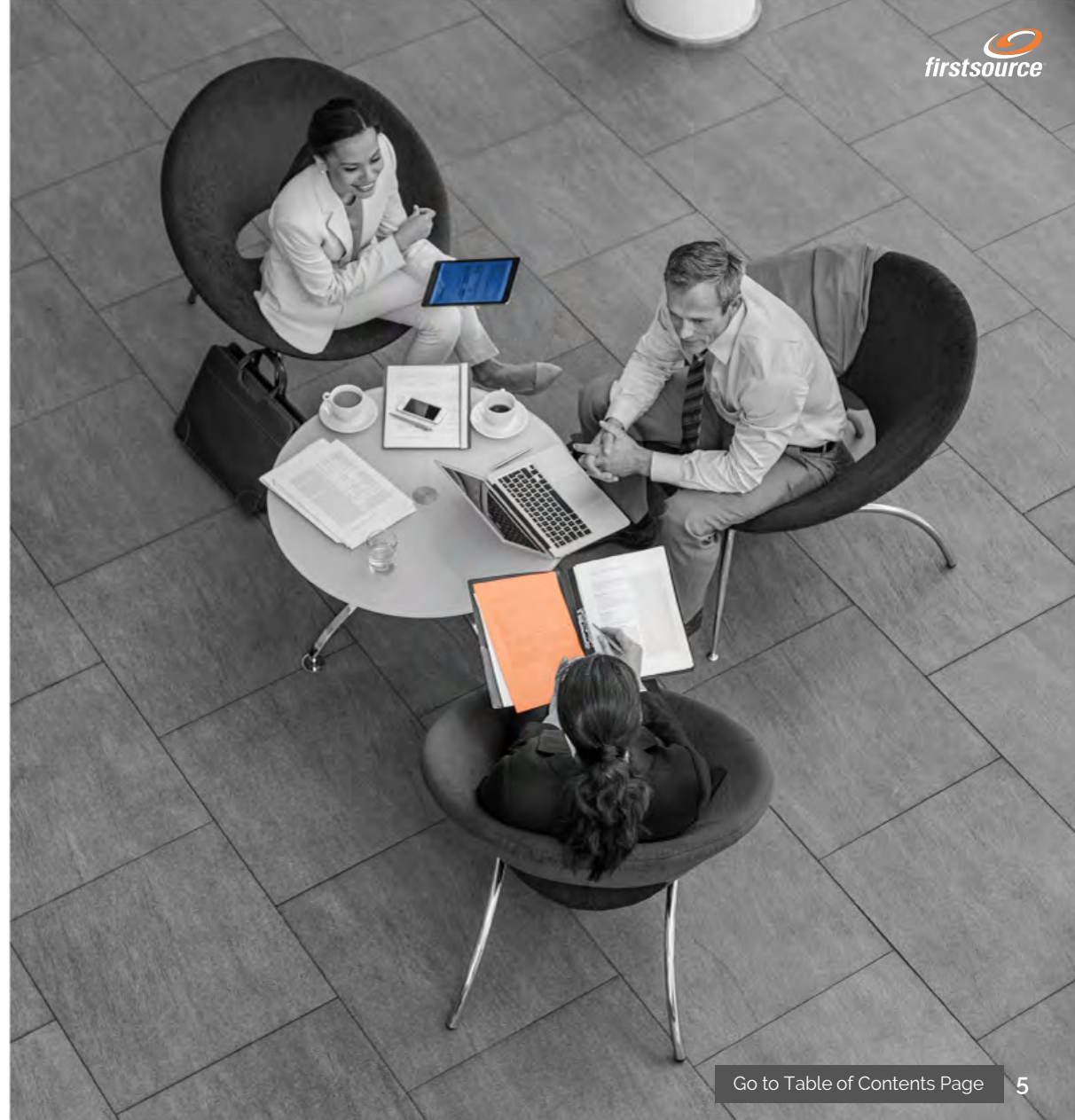
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Business Transformation Leadership Framework



Business Transformation Leadership Framework

The research identified five leadership challenges in business transformation that particularly require senior executive attention. These show you which issues to probe into, what hidden problems to look out for, and how other leaders tackled them, and equips you to turn these aspects into catalysts for success, rather than thorns in your side.

1

Managing the paradox of business case optimism

It is human nature to be optimistic, but in business transformation there are always unknown Unknowns, and nearly all large projects over-run on timescales and costs. The paradox for leaders is to do their utmost to make a business case grounded and realistic, while accepting that despite their best efforts, it's still likely to overrun.

2

Judging organizational readiness and impact

Change initiatives ripple through an organization, affecting processes, systems, and culture. Senior executives need an approach to properly assess all this. However, there is no consensus on how to judge organizational readiness and impact effectively.

3

Ensuring dissenting opinions are heard and disconfirming data confronted

When we want something, it is natural to amplify supporting evidence and arguments, and downplay or set aside the inconvenient points against us. This means opposing opinions and data can get ignored amid the optimism and enthusiasm of the group. Effective leadership means being on the lookout for this and tackling it.

4

Creating a genuine partnership with key suppliers

Change initiatives often involve external consultants, systems integrators or outsource providers. Leaders need to nurture a partnership approach with openness and candour, and select partners who will 'walk in the client's shoes' and become an extension of the team.

5

Managing the emotional marathon

In any large change project, there will be emotional highs and lows. You hope for a series of big wins, as new capabilities go live and results come through. But inevitably there will be some legitimate low points of gloom and low morale. Leaders should consider how all this will affect the executive sponsor, the leadership team, the main project board and other parties.

Leadership lessons from 100 major business transformation initiatives



We wanted to find a clear roadmap for those leading change. So we asked 100 senior executives to evaluate a significant transformation programme against the five leadership challenges in the framework. They scored the challenges they encountered, how they tackled them and what they wished they'd done differently.

The six key findings

01

The hardest challenge is **managing the paradox of business case optimism**. All acknowledge that benefits are often over estimated, costs underestimated and timescales unlikely to be achieved. So leaders work hard to get around this unavoidable reality. Executives identified six good practices to help. Adoption of these practices ranged from 30 to 70%, suggesting an opportunity for leaders to get better at making their business cases grounded and realistic, and adjusting for the predictable optimism.

02

The research on optimism also exposed a seventh, related, issue. Many leaders wished they'd put more time into the **why**: clarifying and getting alignment on the reasons for the transformation in the first place, especially as circumstances changed as it evolved.

03

The top "regret" of leaders is ensuring dissenting opinions are heard and disconfirming data confronted. Executives were very clear: it is not enough to have an open culture where everyone can speak their mind. Senior leaders need structures and processes that actively encourage uncomfortable topics to be surfaced and discussed, such as ensuring dissenters/free thinkers are given a voice or are involved in steering groups.

The six key findings

04

Judging organizational readiness and impact is the second most important “regret” for large transformation initiatives. Yet there is no established consensus about how to assess an initiative’s impact on processes, IT systems and culture. Individual executives had their own insights and advice, but these had been learned the hard way, from making mistakes. The research captured six such insights.

05

The challenge of creating a genuine partnership with key suppliers was the one leaders were most comfortable with. Although it was identified as a top five challenge, it was considered to be relatively well done and a low priority for doing better. This is an area where research and experience appear to have created some established good practices. The research highlighted ten of these.

06

Managing the emotional marathon appears to be the most complex challenge. It is also the one done least well. There was a wide range of views on how to tackle this challenge, suggesting little conventional wisdom. Executives identified 13 different causes of stress and 11 good practices.

1

Managing the paradox of business case optimism



Of all the business cases in the many companies I've either been Chief Executive or Chairman, where they've gone through all the process to the Board, I can't remember one that ever delivered what was on the nameplate.

- CEO



You need to have a rough plan, and it needs to be a good plan and you need to know that you'll have to re-build that plan multiple times.

- Head of Strategic Finance



No business case is ever right. It's never right, they just aren't.

- Head of Transformation

Large projects tend to over-run on timescales and costs. It's human nature to be optimistic, and there will always be unknown unknowns. The paradox for senior leaders is, no matter how much effort you put into making your business case grounded and practical, it will still be wrong. This can leave you having to make decisions based on a shifting platform.

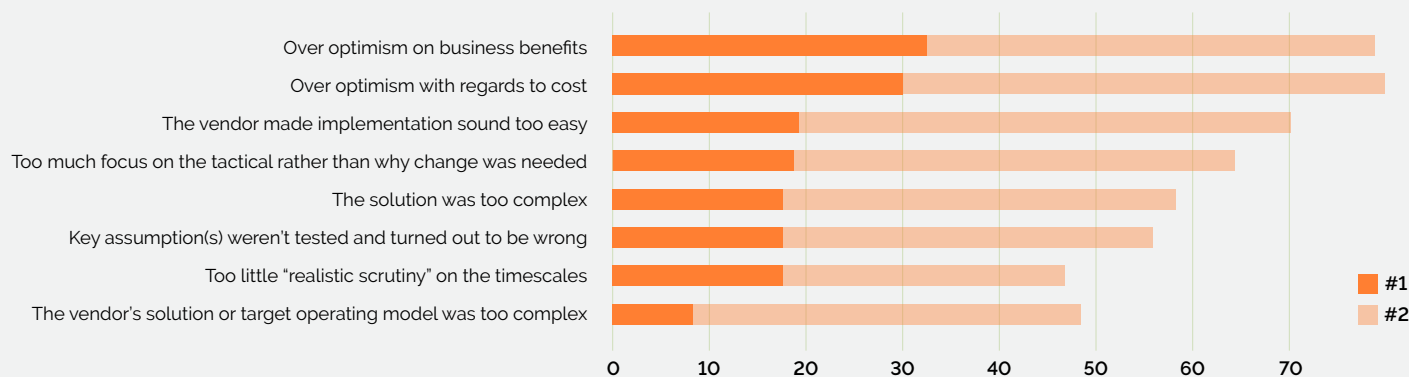
Managing this paradox was the hardest leadership challenge to overcome. 73% of senior executives rated it as difficult or very difficult for the transformation initiatives they were evaluating.

The research identified seven main risk factors on this issue, and six approaches to tackle the risk.

Natural human optimism is the big issue

The two biggest challenges on the initiatives scored were business cases being over optimistic in terms of business benefits and costs. 77% of executives rated this as difficult or very difficult for benefits and 78% for costs.

How big were these challenges, on a scale of 1 (no challenge) to 5 (big challenge) % of initiatives scored as either 4 or 5.





“ Something I learnt is, let's get the timelines, bump them up five times, and maybe we are approximating reality.

- Head of Strategic Finance

“ Transformations are big, complex, ambiguous and multifaceted, and they are over the medium term. Nobody writing a business case at the start of a three to five year process of transforming an organization will ever be able to get all of it right.

- Head of Transformation

“ If you're doing a large project, you've got to have good risk mitigation and contingencies floating around you. So whether you're cautious or bold, you've got something you can fall back on.

- CFO

People, pilots and drill-downs

The top three measures leaders are using to keep their business case realistic and grounded are:

71% of initiatives

Meeting key people to assess their credibility

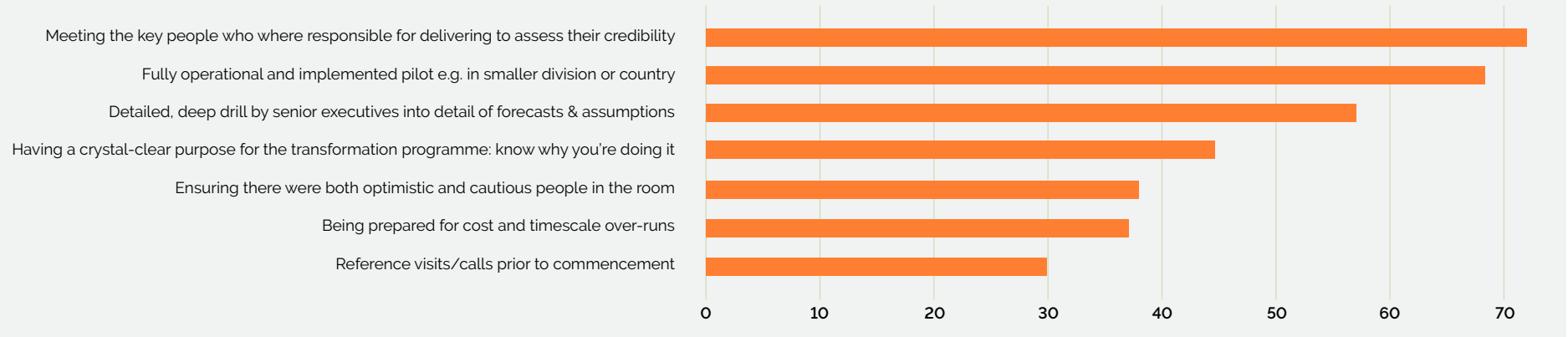
68%

Running a pilot

57%

Ensuring there is a detailed drill-down by senior executives into the detail of forecasts and assumptions

100 transformation initiatives - % where the following were in place to help ensure the business case was grounded, realistic and practical





How do you spot the few [programmes] that are going to be successful? I think it comes down to the credibility of the people putting forward the case. Have they got that mix of analytical and knowledge of the detail that is absolutely essential in pushing through a big case? I would also be looking at, not just at the people presenting, but the people who have to deliver. Because often, the people who present projects to top management groups are not the people who have to deliver.

- CEO



We usually start with a pilot in one country and then we'll do another country and then we'll do a big bang with everyone else. They all have different sizes, they have different requirements and they also have very different ways of working as well. It's pretty tough!

- IT Director



To get past the optimism, you need to get involved in the detail and really challenge the process. Meet the people, discuss why they've got to that position, especially if it's a third party. Understand some of the reference points as well, because I think kicking the tires is a good thing to do.

- CFO



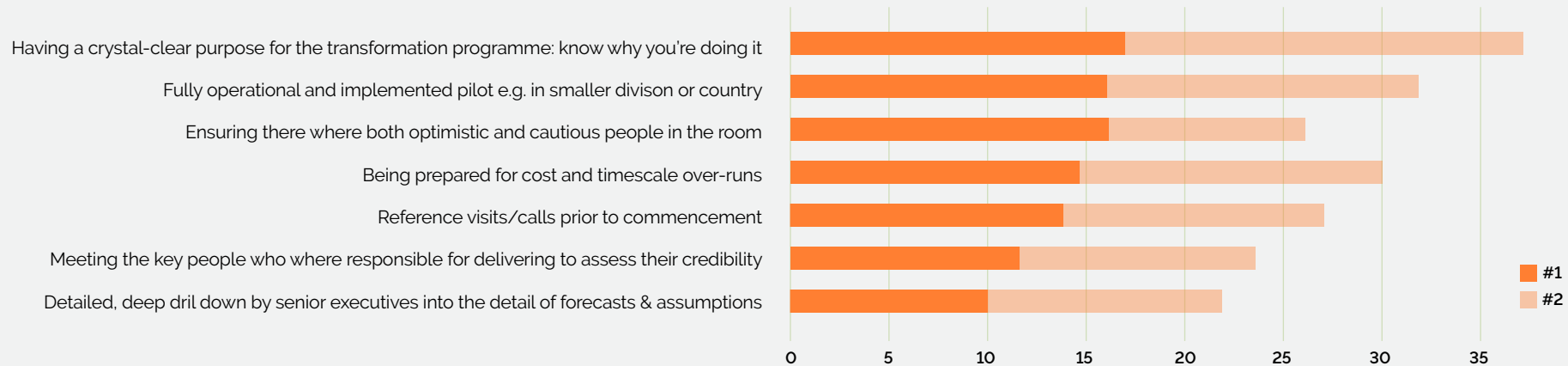
If the initiative's really important – in terms of either scale of expenditure, or impact on the business positively or negatively – the leadership team has to set aside precious time to deep dive, so that they really understand what it's all about.

- CEO

Remember the why

On the 100 transformation initiatives scored, the business case aspect most leaders wished they'd had done better was having a crystal clear purpose. A clear why perhaps provides a frame for all operational conversations and decisions, and keeps different parts of the initiative in alignment.

Top 2 things executives wish had been done or done better on these 100 initiatives - % chosen



One of the most common [weaknesses in business cases] is, 'what is the purpose, why are you doing this?' It is one of the first questions I will ask when I am reviewing a proposal or putting one together. The number of times that people can't give me a simple answer... to me it undermines the credibility.

- VP Global Client Strategy

And lastly

Ensuring there were both optimistic and cautious people in the room makes a difference to both project success and individual stress levels. 43% of initiatives rated successful had this in place compared with only 13% of less successful ones. And 64% of low-stress initiatives had done this compared with only 31% of high-stress ones.



Find the middle ground between one very cautious person and one very optimistic one. You need very opposite people in the room to make a proper decision.

- Divisional President



What is the contingency if the project goes wrong? For every stage we always prepared for the worst, we always had contingency in the budget. We'd know the probable state, but we always had a back-pocket, just in case. Otherwise you'll be on the back foot, and you'll always be behind on budget.

- Divisional President



If you haven't got an executive sponsor or an executive lead, you're going to be screwed in terms of delivery. So holding one of your exec colleagues accountable for the business case is something I'd always be looking to do.

- CFO



2

Judging organizational readiness and impact

“ I find that most proposals haven't considered the implications for adjacent systems and processes. Then you end up with project over-runs and you're into more money than you'd originally planned. I kicked proposals back for that more than any other reason.

- COO

“ Sometimes transformation introduces fear to people – that we're going to take their jobs away. Usually, we are not replacing jobs. When this isn't communicated by the senior management at the start the people most needed to make the transformation success are the ones most in fear of it.

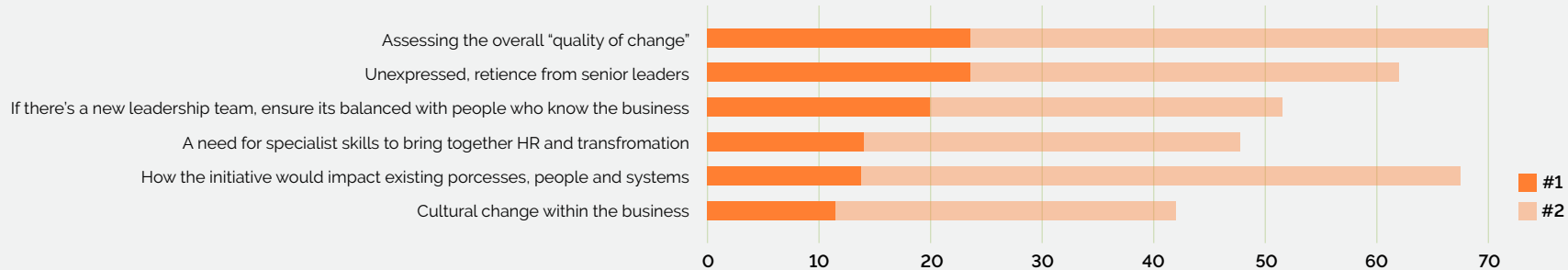
- Enterprise Architect

Any change programme has an impact on the rest of the organization. Tangible impacts include knock-on effects on adjacent processes and systems. And there are cultural impacts, for example a technology company moving into services may go against the heritage of the organization. It's a senior executive responsibility to judge organizational readiness, and the potential ripples across the organization.

Some conventional wisdom is what we all need here

The research identified six factors to look at and five approaches for tackling the issue. There was a wide range of opinions about which were the most important, which suggests there is little established wisdom on this. Individual executives had their own insights and advice, but these had been learned the hard way from their own experience. The lack of conventional wisdom matters because this challenge was one of the top two that executives wished had been done better.

How well were the following factors assessed, on a scale of 1 (unsatisfactory) to 5 (exceptional)? % of initiatives scored as either 4 or 5.

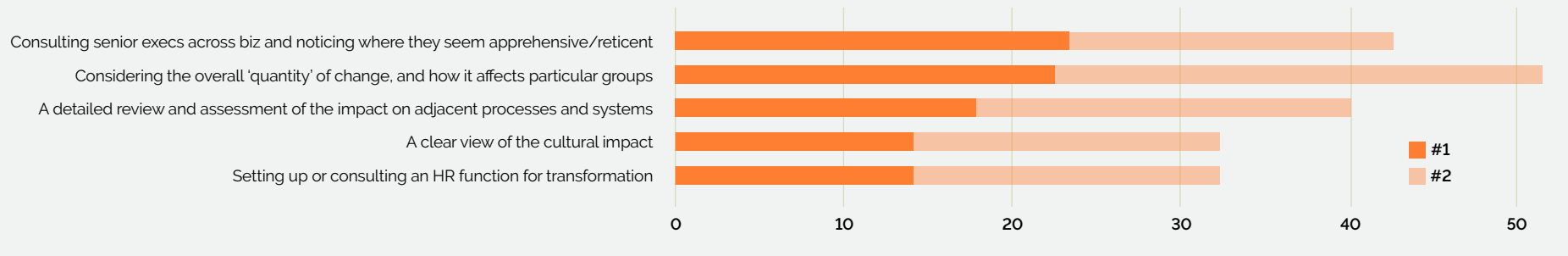


“ The biggest concerns for senior management are the actual cost and ability to manage the dynamics of the people through a large-scale implementation. It's the large-scale implementations where you have very serious management discussions.

- COO

There was also a wide variety of opinions on what executives wished they'd done differently, perhaps reflecting the lack of much established wisdom.

Top 2 things executives wish had been done or done better on these 100 initiatives - % chosen



Consultation, specialist HR functions and thorough impact assessments

The three most common approaches to judging organizational readiness were:

65% of initiatives

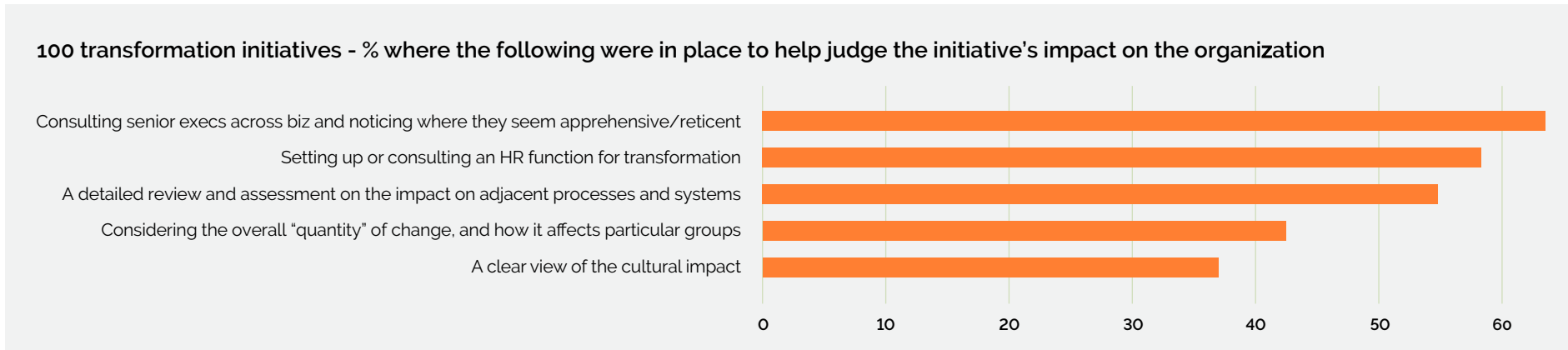
Consulting senior executives across the business and noticing where they seem apprehensive/reticent

58%

Setting up an HR function for transformation

55%

A detailed review on the impact on adjacent processes and systems



Every transformation project needs to have a HR function. You can't have a transformation project and divorce it from the impact it has on culture and people.

- Group Vice President

What you should look at is not if the organization has the capacity to change, but instead how engaged are the people who are going to be part of that change. Look at things like, 'have we tried to do this before and failed?' If you have, people will be naturally resistant, and so you know that you need to do more work and communicate really early on.

- Transformation Director

People setting up transformation think they'll do the analysis during the program. So [readiness assessment] is done at a very high level and without rigor. The most important step gets shifted into the program, by which point it is too late.

- CDO



And lastly

A detailed review and assessment on the impact on adjacent processes and systems correlated with lower stress levels during implementation.

82% of low-stress initiatives had carried this out compared with only 46% of high-stress initiatives.



I would look at how new is the top leadership wanting to bring in change. Do they come from the business or are they brought in from outside? If they came from outside, I'd welcome their ideas but be suspicious about their knowledge of the processes inside the business. A new team [wanting to make major changes] would immediately send signals to me that there was likely to be trouble.

- CEO



3

Ensuring dissenting opinions are heard and disconfirming data confronted

“ Making sure you hear those voices means going and finding the right combination of stakeholders and some real dissenters. You know, the Ian Paisley's, the no-nay-nevers. You get them in that room so you hear that voice. Because otherwise you do get groupthink.

- Head of Transformation

“ A good steering group also matters. Try to have a steering group that involves people who are pro and anti – both sides of the story. It means a) you bring them into the fold so you're closer to what their concerns are, but also gives them an opportunity to feel that they're part of the process. That's important.

- CFO

When we want something, it is human nature to amplify supporting evidence and arguments, and downplay or set aside the inconvenient points against us. Opposing points can get lost amid the optimism and enthusiasm of the group. Good news travels upwards quickly; bad news and problems don't. Top management need strategies to reach more of a balance, so dissenting opinions are heard and disconfirming data confronted.

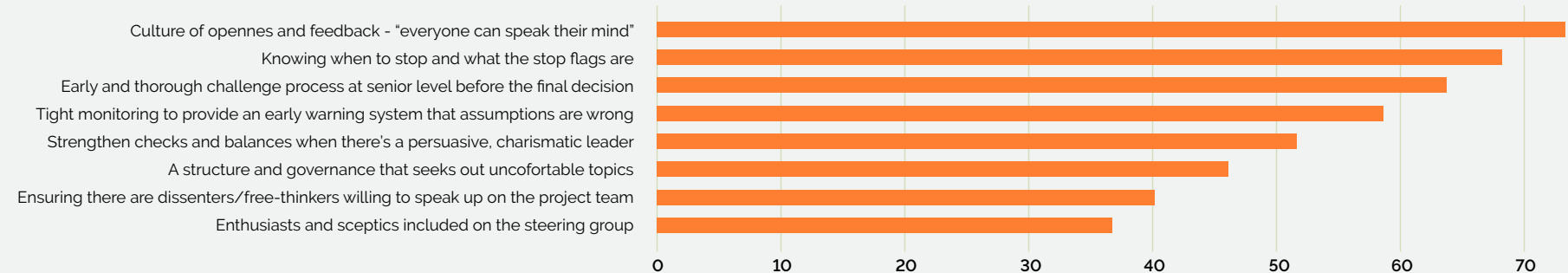
The research identified eight approaches that executives take to tackle this.

You need an open culture (but that's not enough on its own)

On this leadership challenge, a strong consensus emerged: an overall culture of openness and feedback – **'everyone can speak their mind'** is not enough. Executives perceived they had this in place for 74 of the 100 initiatives rated, and nobody picked this out as something they needed to perform better on. Yet, among the five factors overall, **Ensuring dissenting opinions are heard and disconfirming data confronted** was one of the two least well managed, and was the top one executives wished had been done better.



100 transformation initiatives - % where the following were in place to ensure open discussion, including dissenting opinions and data points





There needs to be no culture of fear, so everyone can speak their mind. If the senior leader is in the room, it shouldn't mean you can't voice your opinion. That comes from the leadership and culture of openness and feedback.

- Enterprise Architect



It's fair to say project teams are first to shout good news, but try to solve bad news themselves. But this risks sucking in too much resources, and it just has to change. There needs to be regular dialogue so the project team is clear that bad news isn't something to be ashamed of. Projects don't always go well, they may need escalation and that's what senior management are there for.

- Group Vice President



We put a lot of effort into building a senior management team that was challenging enough to each other, but also trusting that whatever we might say wasn't personal criticism, it was about content. There were some very heated debates.

- Digital Director



I can think of one case of a CEO who was a very good salesman and strongly able manager. He had a very distinguished career. He brought a proposition for a major change programme to digitize and simplify a very complex set of processes across the world. The board had misgivings, and his team had misgivings, but the CEO's persuasiveness and charisma carried the day. This particular initiative eventually failed for exactly the reasons anticipated.

- CEO

You need to actively stimulate and enable dissent

The top two items to do better, by a clear margin, were: a structure and governance that seeks out uncomfortable topic, and ensuring there are dissenters/free-thinkers on willing to speak up on the project team.

Top 2 things executives wish had been done or done better on these 100 initiatives - % chosen



You've got to have a structure and governance procedure, a clear project leader. And you set up in advance, ensure that there's a free thinker in the group, who'll be a pain in the neck for the operators, but who won't be frightened to speak up and speak their mind.

- CEO

And lastly

An early and thorough challenge process at senior level before the final decision correlated with the initiative's success.

72% of initiatives rated successful had done this compared with only 27% of less successful ones.

“Without a very good or a very quick feedback loop most transformations don't work. In my industry you regularly have to change direction. If it's working, great, do it faster, if it's not, then you change and try something else. That's the beauty of experimentation, you see the output. But that environment has to be created within the organization where everyone is open to voice their opinion and people are listened to, and things are agreed as a team.

- Enterprise Architect



4

Creating a genuine partnership with key suppliers



Vendors need to be able to walk in our shoes rather than just push technology. They need to be able to see things from our perspective as well. That's how a vendor becomes a partner - it makes a big difference.

- Enterprise Architect



In an ideal world you can't tell who is a supplier and who is an employee, everyone is working together to get the right outcome.

- Digital Director

Large transformation programmes often involve external consultants, systems integrators or outsource providers. Leaders need to choose partners who are capable of helping the company achieve its objectives, and set up relationships in a way that rewards the partners for doing so. This involves creating a partnership approach with openness and candour. Partners 'walk in the client's shoes' and become an extension of the team.

The research identified eight challenges in creating a genuine partnership with key suppliers, and 10 approaches for tackling these challenges.



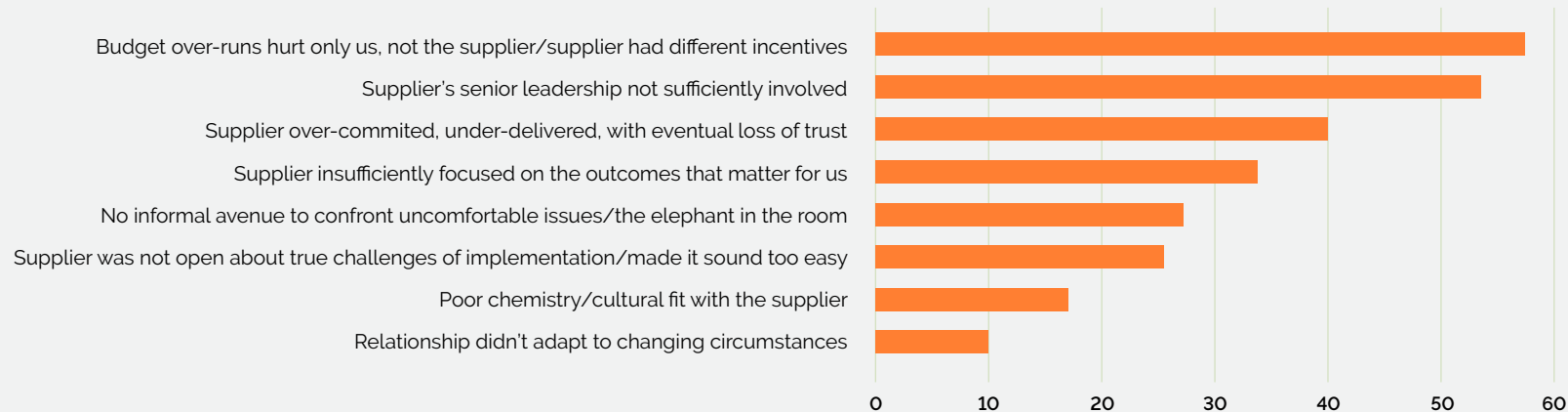
Supplier management is 'comfort zone'

Compared with the other factors, senior executives seemed relatively comfortable about this issue. It was ranked as the best done, and one of the lowest for wishing it had been done better.

The top challenges related to budget over-runs (56% of initiatives) and insufficient involvement from the supplier's top senior leadership (51%).



100 transformation initiatives - % where the following were a challenge in forming a genuine partnership with the supplier



One team approach with open, transparent relations

The most common measures leaders are using all relate to creating a one-team approach with open, transparent relations:

68% of initiatives

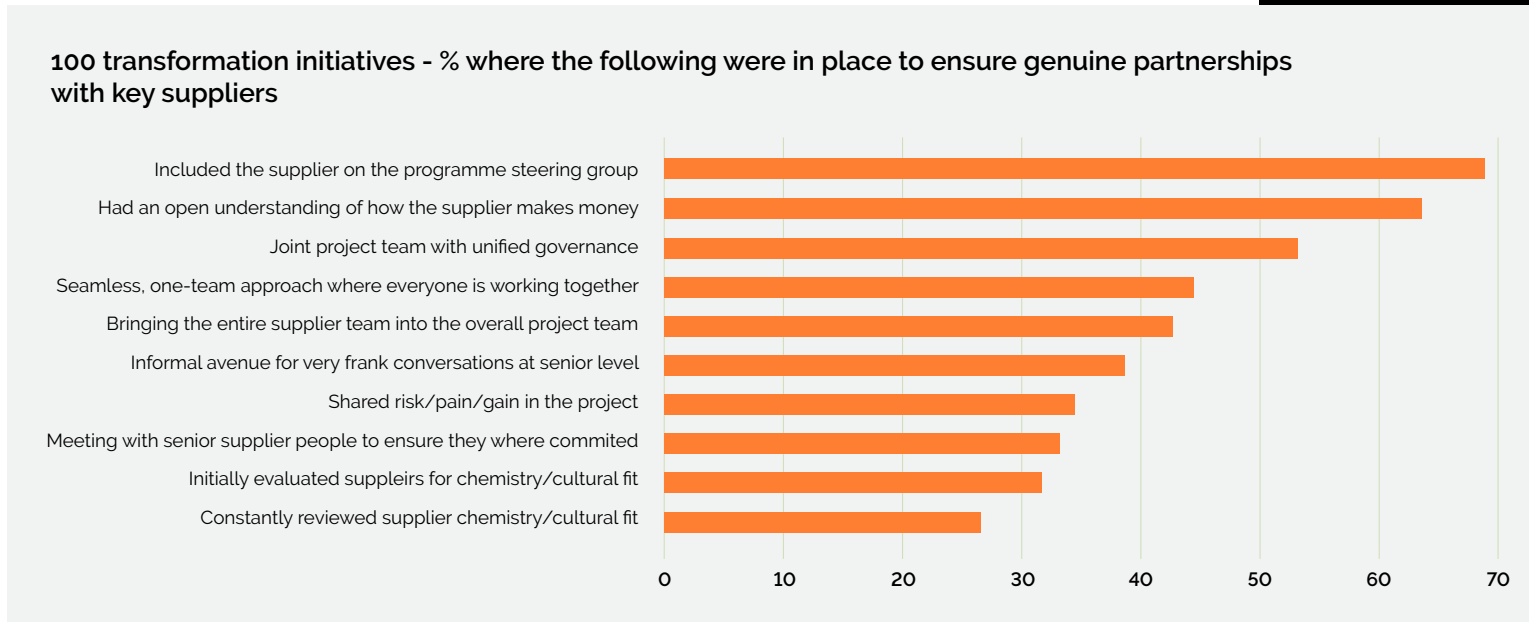
Included the supplier on the steering group

62%

Had an understanding of how the supplier makes money

53%

Took a joint team approach with unified governance





I'm a firm believer in always having your suppliers involved in steering large projects as well. Again, it means they're part of the process rather than being just suppliers looking into it. That whole 'have your partners close to you' is a good thing to do. That's another bit of good governance.

- CFO



It's important to understand the vendor's economic model as well, as in 'how do they make money as a supplier?' How are the services going to be delivered? And how is the supplier still going to make money? When they go, 'we know we can do it and it's going to save you money', you then think, 'hmm, are you just cutting corners?' Where's the credibility? On large partnership type projects, transparency on pricing and cost is something that really matters.

- CFO



Partnership means being an extension of the team. You want a partner who will work with you. You don't want one who's going to do it for you.

- Group Vice President



I think honesty makes it easier. There is a great tendency from a lot of suppliers to look at a problem or solution and go, 'we can do this really easily'. And you then think, 'we actually find it quite difficult ourselves, so why you find it so easy is beyond me altogether'.



If a partner is taking you on a journey, you need to know that they are going to match your structure, so you can have a coherent conversation. There's no point having an account support counterpart to the executive sponsor who's just purely a salesman. You need someone who's been there, got the T shirt and can pair up with you. So if something's going wrong, they genuinely can help you.

- CFO

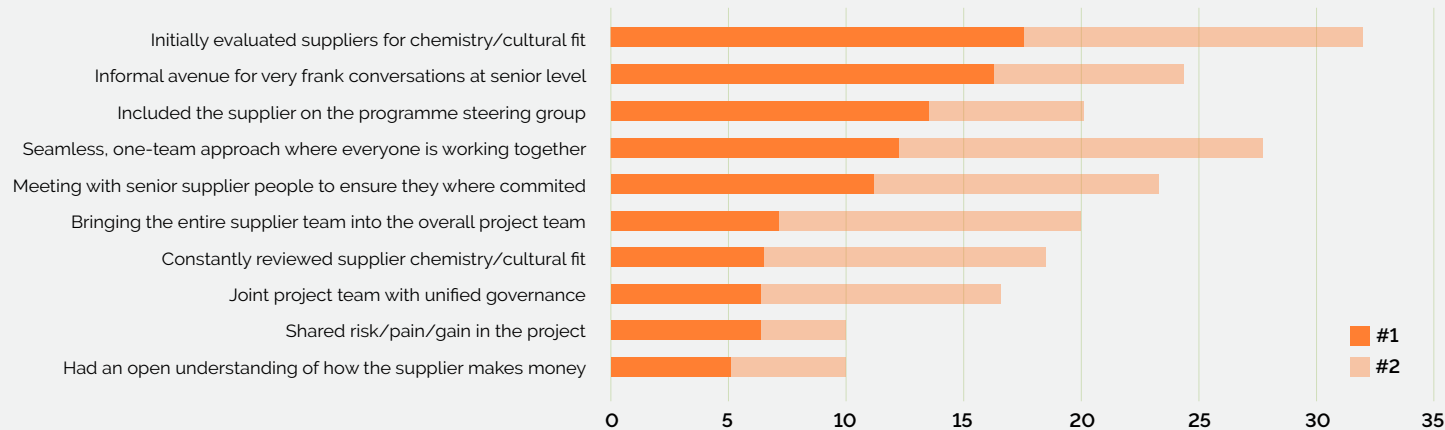
Chemistry, cultural fit, and frank conversations

The top two aspects people wish they'd done differently or better when choosing their partners were **evaluating suppliers for chemistry/cultural fit** and **having an informal avenue for very frank conversations at senior level**. More people said not having an the informal avenue for very frank conversations was their number one regret, suggesting if you don't have it in place it can be sorely missed.

A **joint project team with unified governance** had the biggest impact on stress. 82% of low-stress programmes had this in place, compared with only 45% of high-stress ones.



Top 2 things executives wish had been done or done better on these 100 initiatives - % chosen





Cultural fit is as important as the technical things the supplier is going to do. We had all the joint project team and governance, but we also really built a team. So, our comms, our social stuff, all of the kind of glue that knits a team together – we included them in that. We were agnostic about who employed you – you were part of the team and you were treated equally.

- Head of Transformation



Having structured meetings are good because they focus on detail. But the big issues either explode into these meetings or are resolved outside these meetings. The most productive way is to resolve them outside of meetings at a level where people are willing to speak very frankly.

- CEO



And lastly

Gain-share pricing has its fans. We will explore this in a separate ebook.



I think shared risk is brilliant - If people do want to partner with organizations, then they should absolutely be willing to share some risk and it doesn't have to be a financial risk, they have to take some risk or otherwise that isn't partnership.

- Transformation Director



I think it's always better to have a partner with 'skin in the game', I think that just makes sense.

- Head of Strategic Finance



5

Managing the emotional marathon

“ You can become over-focused on a programme. You actually live and breathe the whole thing yourself. When it's going badly, you're going badly, and when it's going well, you're going well. You take on the personality of the stage of the programme you're in. And that makes it very, very tough.

- CFO

“ I think transformations are possibly some of the most stressful work you can do. Because if you are leading that transformation you have to be relentlessly optimistic and focused in the face of stuff which is, excuse the language, crap on a daily basis. It really is exhausting.

- Head of Transformation

In any large change project, there will be emotional highs and lows. You hope for a series of big wins, as new capabilities go live and results come through. But inevitably there will be some legitimate low points of gloom and low morale. This affects many different groups: the executive sponsor (they're human too), senior leadership team, main project board, programme team, wider organization, suppliers, supporters of the project who want it to work, and naysayers who were convinced from the outset it would be disaster. The emotional marathon affects these groups in different ways.

Executives perceive this to be hard. It was the second most difficult leadership challenge, 63% said it was difficult or very difficult to manage – and also the one managed least well.

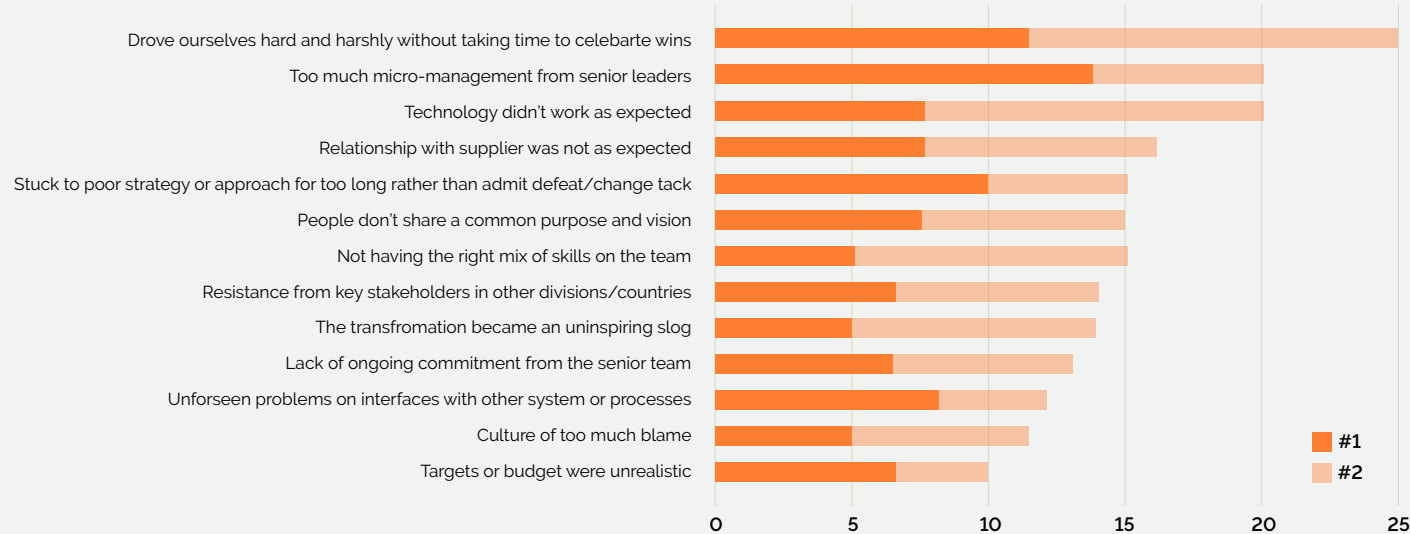


Thirteen different causes of stress

The main finding is that different large transformation initiatives are stressful because of very many different causes – there is a top 3, but there are 10 others, all significant. This is a much broader set of challenges and approaches than the other four factors, suggesting it's a more complex issue.



Top 2 causes of stress on these 100 initiatives - % chosen





You take a lot of abuse during something like that as well. Because you're doing stuff that is impacting lots and lots of people around you, and people can have quite strong views. So, they can be very negative in terms of dealing with you, and with the problem.

- CFO



Stress builds overtime. If you're an architect and you were part of the team that designed the solution and then things start coming out of the woodwork, left, right and centre, oh we've got this cost or these licenses we didn't think about, we've got these implementation charges or run costs are different. You feel responsible because you're part of that solution team, and so your stress starts to rise as those things come out because you feel responsible for it.

- Chief Data Officer



I would love to say; 'I have never let stress get the better of me', but there are occasions when it does get the better of me. The skill is actually can you step back from it relatively quickly and get into; 'right, what do we do about it?'

- CFO



Losing team morale manifests itself as: lack of energy, lack of progress, people lose focus and they lose their resilience to keep motoring ahead. If people get tired of the same projects, thinking 'not this again, it's the same issue over and over again', people stop engaging. Everyone, including senior management, stop listening because they get bored of it.

- Group Vice President



If I've committed to you that I'm going to do something in 100 days and it takes 150, what does that drive? Embarrassment and feeling stupid, that's all it drives. You could pick any stress within a transformation program and I bet you could boil it down to human embarrassment and fear of failure. Why does failure make me feel bad? Well it makes me readjust my own internal view of myself as a good project manager, and that makes me feel bad.

- Chief Data Officer

A positive culture helps, a lot

The most common approaches to managing the emotional marathon all related to nurturing a positive culture:

64% of initiatives

Identifying and celebrating individual/team wins

59%

Learning from mistakes while avoiding a blame culture

57%

Empathetic approach especially when things go wrong



100 transformation initiatives - % where the following were in place to manage the emotional marathon





When things go wrong, you want people to go, 'that's all right, what have we learned from that and what are going to do differently as a result'. But when people are stressed, they don't want to be in that empathetic space, and they learn to blame and challenge.

- Head of Transformation



It's about trying to say to people; 'It's OK to be wrong, it's OK, we do it all day, let's not pretend that we don't'. No one is perfect. In fact, everybody is almost completely imperfect, and it's about how we deal with that.

- Chief Data Officer



It's about empathy and understanding of the project. Don't just ask, ask and demand, demand - understand the constraints the team are under.

- Group Vice President



We made a big point of celebrating wins when they happened and learning from mistakes if they went wrong. There was no blame culture it was more 'how do we learn from this? We were confident we had good people on the project and we were all colleagues. We might get emotional and upset, but there was never any personal criticism.

- Digital Director



Inject as much resilience as you can, make people more accountable and empower them to do it. You need to let them have their space to deal with something that is more complex and help them when they want more moral support.

- Chief Commercial Officer

There were a wide range of things executives wish they'd done or done better. This may reflect the unique circumstances of different transformation initiatives, or the absence of any established best practices.

Top 2 things executives wish had been done or done better on these 100 initiatives - % chosen



There's something about not over-promising, and then social awareness of whether you have over-promised.

- CEO

And lastly

There was a mild correlation between awareness of **whether you've over-promised and confronting** what to do about it and initiatives with lower stress. And also a mild correlation between **crystal clear KPIs, communicated across** the team and extended team and initiatives that had relatively smoother ride.



Sell things along the way as well. The first day we started to be able to get real data –consistent across a couple of organizations and start delivering it to everyone daily – that was just a huge win. We'd gone from a position where you only knew sales at the end of the month, so you can imagine how excited people were. It's about having a constant 'sales' mindset.

- CFO



We always split projects into stages and we celebrate small wins when a stage is complete. This also allows us to gain credibility with the stakeholders. If you can achieve that milestone and you deliver not only do you justify the business case and reinforce the business case is realistic, but also you can convert people who were otherwise resistant.

- Transformation Director



With any change there are always going to be champions, there's going to be people who don't care, and there's going to be blockers. Identify the champions early and arm them with the benefits, the reasons why you are doing it - communication material. They'll start to spread the message, and eventually, the people who are ambivalent in the middle will start to sway towards being champions for the change, and the culture will become accepting.

- Transformation Director



The concept of agile sprints is a really good way of managing [the emotional marathon] because you chunk it up. Eat your elephant piece by piece. Celebrating success is really important. People can focus exclusively on what you're going to deliver at the end and forget how far you've come. So, you keep plugging away, looking forward, going; 'blimey, we've got this to do, this to do'. You need to take time to pause, reflect, and go; 'look how far we've come'.

- Head of Transformation

In conclusion

The success or failure of a transformation initiative has a huge impact on business performance, long term prospects, share price, the careers of the people leading the initiative, and the stress and wellbeing of the people involved.

We believe the wisdom of leaders that has been captured in this research offers a clear agenda for boards and executive teams, and a valuable checklist of the 'leadership health' of any transformation initiative.

We will be publishing more on this subject, including interviews with senior leaders, and a range of self-assessment tools. To learn more, or to continue the conversation:



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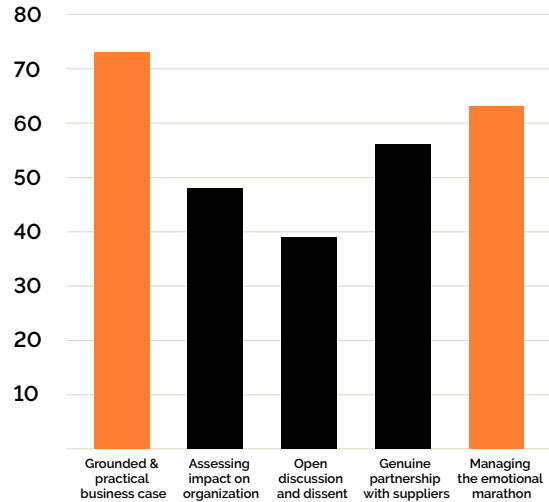


Or email ian.harcus@firstsource.com if you would like to discuss any aspect of this or are open to being interviewed for our blog series on this

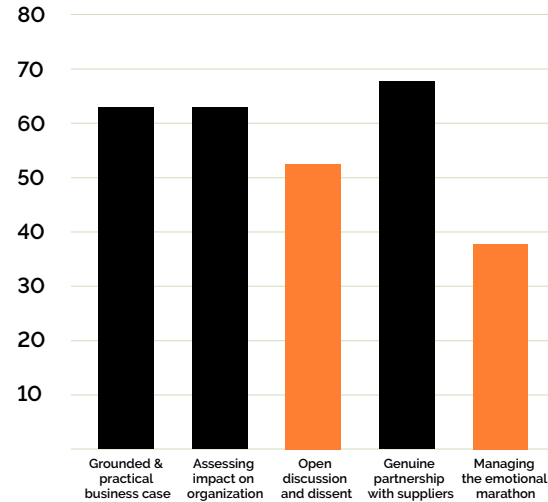


The five factors compared

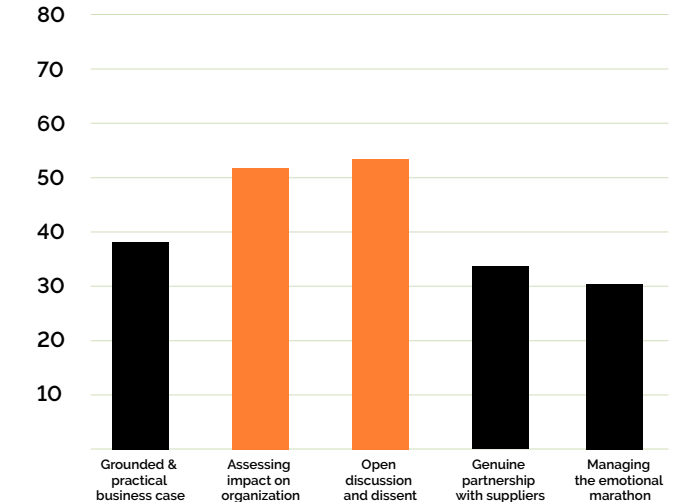
What was most difficult on this initiative?
(% initiatives where it was difficult or very difficult)



How well were they done on this initiative?
(% initiatives where it was handled well or very well)



What do wish had been done better on this initiative?
(% initiatives where it was picked as top 2 choices to do better)



How we can help

Firstsource is a business process management company specialising in digital customer experience management, intelligent back-office processes for financial services and healthcare, and automation and analytics.

One way we make business transformation less stressful for our clients is our willingness to share risk and underwrite business outcomes. For examples of how we've done for this specific clients, please see our case study ebook **5 reasons we are able to guarantee business transformation outcomes** and case study **Reducing transformation risk for an auto-finance lender.**

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