Adaptive leadership: the key to creating a company that can change

Adaptive leadership can foster employee learning, enabling organizations to face uncertainty with self-confidence.

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In a constantly evolving business world, a company capable of adapting isn’t just a bonus — it’s a necessity. Organizations led by managers who promote a culture of continuous learning

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and who give employees the confidence to react quickly to current challenges are more likely to achieve sustained success, according to findings by IESE's Nuria Chinchilla and co-authors Muhammad Salman Chughtai, Fauzia Syed and Saima Naseer, published in *Current Psychology*.

They identify three key elements to creating innovative companies:

Learning organizations, the engine of change

Learning-oriented organizations provide a platform for information-and-knowledge exchange, effective communication and feedback, enabling employees to think innovatively. In this context, employees gain the self-confidence to drive change, which, in turn, fosters innovation.

Employee trust in innovation capabilities

When employees believe in their ability to face transformative processes, it acts as a bridge between organizational learning and innovation. When employees trust that they can handle changes, they are more likely to adopt creative and proactive behaviors, facilitating new solutions. This confidence doesn't emerge spontaneously; it grows in an environment that prioritizes learning, constant feedback and the support of an adaptive leader.

Adaptive leadership

The first two points are reinforced by adaptive leadership — a leader who seeks to inspire subordinates through motivation, encouragement and care. The adaptive leader protects employees, especially in situations of uncertainty and ambiguity, and motivates them to embrace new ideas, increasing their confidence to make decisions in challenging situations. This type of leadership is essential for change to happen.

Tips to prepare your organization for change

To create a learning-oriented organization, led by an adaptive leadership style, consider the following:

- Encourage learning, debate and discussion to enhance employees' knowledge.
- Assess candidates' self-efficacy levels in situations of change, during recruitment

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processes.

- Organize seminars and training sessions to raise employees' awareness of the importance of trusting their ability to change, while providing support and guidance to improve it.
- Plan leadership training sessions to foster adaptive leadership at all management levels of the organization.
- Develop tools such as motivation, encouragement and recognition of achievements to enhance teams' confidence in their ability to embrace challenges.

About the research

373 employees in the pharmaceutical industry in Islamabad and Karachi (Pakistan) participated voluntarily to provide data for this study.

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