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SIGNS THAT  
**CHANGE**  
IS TAKING HOLD

| A **CORE** Perspective

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**WHEN YOU SET OUT** to transform all or parts of an organisation, the numbers ultimately tell you whether you're succeeding. But before the data shifts, **people's behaviours and attitudes** signal whether transformation is embedding itself. These **subtle and obvious signs** align with the CORE model – **Clarity, Ownership, Resilience, and Engagement** – which ensures that change is not just designed but actively lived across the organisation.

The following quotes and anecdotes we captured during recent interviews with 27 leaders across multiple sectors.

CLARITY OWNERSHIP  
RESILIENCE  
ENGAGEMENT



## Clarity: Creating a Shared Direction and Purpose

**“When people understand the “why” and know where they’re going, they act with confidence.”**

### 1. The Three-Year Plan Illusion: Overcoming the Myth of Certainty

***“If you plan for three years with certainty, you’re kidding yourself.”***

Long-term plans help set direction, but agility matters more.

*“If you consistently hit every milestone, you probably haven’t been ambitious enough. Plans should be around 80% probable – not 100% safe.”*

*“Three-year plans don’t really exist because the world intrudes on them. Instead of aiming for perfection, create short-term impact and build momentum.”*

**Takeaway:** Clarity means providing a vision, but with room to adjust when reality intervenes.

### 2. A Strategy That’s Too Big to Remember Is Useless

***“If your strategy takes 20 minutes to explain, it’s too complicated.”***

Simplicity is power.

*“If your strategy is so complex that people can’t remember it, how will they execute it? The best strategies are **understood in a single sentence**. If people can’t articulate what we’re trying to do, we’ve already lost.”*

**Takeaway:** Clarity means that everyone understands the mission at a glance – so they can act on it.



### 3. The “You Said, We Did” Moment

***“People need to see that feedback leads to action.”***

*“You almost have to keep a case library of change stories. ‘You told us this was an issue, here’s what we did about it.’ If you don’t close that loop, people stop giving feedback because they assume nothing will happen.”*

**Takeaway:** Clarity means making visible the impact of decisions – so people trust that their input matters.



## Ownership: Encouraging Initiative and Empowering Decision-Making

**“When people feel accountable and trusted, they take action rather than waiting for instructions.”**

### **4. The Autobahn Mindset: Encouraging Initiative**

***“Try it out. Don’t always be safe and secure.”***

*“I tell them: Think of the German Autobahn. You have three lanes – the slow, the middle, and the fast. Don’t hog the middle lane. I’m here as the guardrail, but you need to try things out, to explore what’s possible.”*

**Takeaway:** Ownership means people move with confidence, knowing they won’t be punished for trying new things.



I knew things had changed when the leadership meetings stopped being a monologue.



## 5. From One-Way Speeches to Open Conversations

*"I knew things had changed when the leadership meetings stopped being a monologue."*

*"We went through a journey of five years. The first meetings? No Q&A. Just the top leader talking. Now? In our huddles and Q&As, it's the people who've tried something new. Regularly, 1,000-1,500 people turn up to listen. That's when I knew the culture had shifted."*

**Takeaway:** Ownership means that leadership isn't a one-way street – people speak up, contribute, and drive the conversation.

## 6. "I Heard About It From Someone Else" – When Word of Mouth Takes Over

*"If people are talking about it when you're not in the room, it's real."*

*"If someone who wasn't part of a programme hears about it from a colleague and then comes to talk to me about it, that's a sign. It means the message is spreading on its own."*

**Takeaway:** Ownership means employees advocate for the change themselves, rather than needing top-down reinforcement.





## Resilience: Building Sustainable Change that Sticks

**“When transformation is seen as a journey – not a project – it has the stamina to last.”**

### 7. The Forth Bridge: Change Is Never “Done”

***“If you stop, you slide back.”***

*“The mistake many companies make? They see change as a project with a start and finish. But real transformation is like painting the Forth Road Bridge – you never stop. The moment you think, ‘We’ve done it,’ it starts to erode.”*

**Takeaway:** Resilience means understanding that change requires ongoing effort, not just a one-off push.

### 8. The “I Need Something in Two Years” Story

***“Urgency with support creates action.”***

*“Our top leader said: ‘I’m giving you some time, but in two years, I need something. I cannot give you more time.’ He wasn’t just setting a deadline – he was telling us: ‘I believe in you, but we need to deliver.’”*

**Takeaway:** Resilience means setting ambitious but realistic timelines that stretch people while supporting them.



**What people say when they don’t have to say anything matters.**



## 9. The Birthday Test: Cultural Change in the Smallest Details

***“What people say when they don’t have to say anything matters.”***

*“For my birthday, people sent messages. But they didn’t just say ‘Happy Birthday.’ They wrote: ‘Thank you for making an impact.’ It wasn’t just one or two people – it was many. That told me something had changed.”*

**Takeaway:** Resilience means that change becomes part of daily behaviour, not just official reports.



## ► Engagement: Connecting People to a Shared Mission

**“When people feel part of something meaningful, they bring energy, passion, and creativity.”**

### **10.The Power of Showing Up**

***“Leadership is about being there.”***

*“With 800 people, you cannot know everyone. With 50, you can. I spend a lot of time in one-to-ones, talking to every employee at least once a month.”*

*“When people aren’t physically together, you lose the ‘hum’ of the place. That hum is a barometer for culture.”*

**Takeaway:** Engagement means leaders are present – visibly and actively.



## 11. The Moment You Know It's Working

*"It's not just the business KPIs. It's the conversations happening in the open."*

*"When people start putting real problems on the table and tackling them with energy, that's when you know the shift is real."*

*"It's when the solutions start to come from within the business – then you know something is happening."*

**Takeaway:** Real engagement shows up when people start to act differently – when you see people taking responsibility and engaging with renewed energy.

## 12. The Leadership Story That Sparks Momentum

*"People don't buy into a strategy – they buy into a story."*

*"The best way to engage people? Craft a compelling story. You can have the best data, the best rationale, but if it doesn't spark **emotion**, it won't stick. The moment I knew we were making progress was when colleagues started telling their own versions of the story-making it theirs, adding their personal experiences. That's when you know it's alive, not just a slide deck."*

**Takeaway:** Engagement means transformation becomes personal – when people see themselves in the story, they take ownership of it.



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a strategy – they buy  
into a story.



## ▶ The CORE Signs that Transformation is Taking Hold

### Clarity

Everyone understands the mission and sees the impact of their contributions.

### Ownership

People take initiative, drive conversations, and share the message.

### Resilience

Change isn't seen as a project but as a continuous evolution.

### Engagement

Employees feel connected to the transformation and energised by it.

When these things start happening, **you're on the right path.**



## ► Final Thoughts

Aligning these stories with the **CORE framework** shows that transformation isn't just about numbers – it's about **behaviours, conversations, and culture shifts**. When people at all levels demonstrate **Clarity, Ownership, Resilience, and Engagement**, you can be confident that change is embedding itself **for the long term**.









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