

Leaving the insanity behind

Pharma is far too conservative in shaking up its salesforce strategy, argues **Leandro Herrero**



Insanity is commonly defined as doing things in the same way, but expecting a different outcome, Leandro Herrero, Chief Executive at The Chalfont Project, reminded attendees at EyeforPharma's Salesforce Effectiveness conference in Monaco last month.

And sadly, he says, that is exactly what the average pharmaceutical company's approach to sales strategy amounts to. "Companies have lots of things in the machine – selling skills, advanced selling skills, competitive selling skills, coaching, advanced coaching – and the average response is: let's have more of the same," Herrero says. "Insanity is carrying on a 'me-too' change management programme in the same old way and expecting it to work."

Companies employ new tools, new communication and training techniques and undertake new process mapping – and they expect new behaviours and cultures to 'just happen'. But, he warns, the average change programme starts with a big bang and then disappears as the next corporate initiative comes up – or, worse, shows up again and again as though it has a life of its own. Despite stakeholder meetings, user teams and steering committees, initiatives do fail and – more often than not – it gets blamed on associated technology, Herrero says. "Twenty-five percent of problems come from technology and 75% from people, but we're happy to spend 75% of our money trying to fix the technology," he argues.

A change in behaviour, he claims, is simply expected as a by-product of everything else that is being done. But the reality, Herrero points out from experience, is that people continue doing just as they have done before and it is the project instead that is considered to be the failure. "We first need to understand the behaviours we need to sustain the new processes, and not the other way around," he says.

The DNA of the salesforce

If a company wants to implement a new set of collaboration tools, it must reinforce

collaboration as a specific 'behaviour' so it becomes "part of the DNA of the salesforce," he says. "The reality is that, in many cases, we want one behaviour but reinforce another. We want teamwork, but reward with an individual bonus. We want quality customer relationships, but reward call rate."

A typical example, Herrero says, is salesforce management input and output. By pushing inputs – such as efforts, training, use of tools and sophisticated analytics – companies believe they will get the desired outputs.

"The problem is that reinforcing input does not necessarily yield output: it gets you more input," he says. "So our sophisticated, super-trained salesforce is a sophisticated, super-trained salesforce, but not necessarily productive."

Another important tool for driving change and establishing behaviours is to understand how ideas travel within an organisation, Herrero says. "Your organisation is a set of connections and a



collaboration and innovation happen in these networks. Only 25% occur in teams, committees and other formal clusters. So it seems a waste to put our energy into the 25%, but that's what we do all the time."

Viral change

Behaviours spread through an organisation much like an infection spreads throughout a population, Herrero believes. In some individuals exposed to 'the infection', the behaviour becomes

created that behaves as a single unit, which thinks, does and looks the same. It's often called 'group think'."

In highly networked organisations, Herrero says, broad communications to all miss the point that ideas travel better through the best-connected individuals or groups. Capitalising on networks allows ideas to become established, even if they don't directly touch every member of the company, he stresses. "The viral system of change is very powerful," Herrero notes.

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complex flow of individuals or networks," he says. "Old organisations look like organisational charts, where big issues need big actions to be pushed down through every management level (tsunami approach)."

But change, Herrero believes, doesn't have to be slow or painful. Today's companies need to initiate a small set of non-negotiable behaviours that enable people to deal with big issues and create sustainable change, he advises. "Organisations are really clusters of networks linked with each other," he explains. "Some are weak ties, while others are stronger, but 75% of all conversations,

established, while others 'incubate' the behaviour and are just on the verge of change. A third group is exposed, but does not show the signs or 'symptoms' of acquiring the behaviour, while a fourth group is of unknown status.

People distribution in an organisational network does not follow the Bell curve one might expect, he stresses. Instead, there may be small groups with a large number of connections and a large group with few connections. Herrero adds: "It's a simple case of the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. At some point, groups with a large number of connections will reach a tipping point. When that occurs, a 'super node' is

"No other system can do that. A small set of non-negotiable behaviours communicated through a small group of people in the networked organisation can yield big, sustainable change."

The pharmaceutical industry is full of 'me-too' companies, Herrero warns. They must "reboot," he says, and become innovative through viral change. **PT**

Leandro's presentation was voted 'best of show' by delegates at EyeforPharma's SFE conference in March and has been written exclusively for PharmaTimes Magazine by Lisa Roner. Leandro's book *Viral Change* is now available from www.meetingminds.com.