

Personal resilience in transformations: A conversation with Jon Garcia

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As executives strive to enhance their companies' well-being, they must be mindful of their own health.

The successful execution of a business transformation requires more than hard work. In this video, Jon Garcia, founder and president of McKinsey RTS, discusses the importance of personal resilience by drawing on his experience in working with CEOs and other leaders in dozens of enterprise-wide transformations. As Jon explains, executives who strive to enhance their companies' well-being must also be mindful of their own personal health to remain effective. He offers lessons in developing and maintaining resilience, such as prioritizing activities (including sleep), delegating, and developing a business culture that respects personal health. An edited transcript of his remarks follows.

Interview transcript

Resilience during a transformation is a tricky and important topic. Transformation is obviously difficult, and it often involves a real acceleration in the metabolic rate of an organization. After that initial burst of energy, it's not uncommon to see fatigue set in. Individuals often tire as more tasks are added to their workload, and they don't always see the gains immediately. To address this, I'd like to share some lessons that we've learned as we've worked with many organizations.

First, it's very important that executives are intentional when it comes to their personal health. I can't tell you how many times I've seen executives who are leading transformations work themselves to a point where they're no longer effective. So, being intentional about your own capacity to keep working is absolutely critical.

Look at your diary and see how you're actually spending your time. When I work with executives and we review their diaries, we discover that some of their tasks are not adding sufficient value. Or, put differently, some tasks are crowding out activities that deserve more priority, such as getting enough sleep.

Delegation is absolutely critical. We all know this, but it's often hard to let go of certain tasks. Still, if you're not delegating, you're surely making a mistake. And if you don't feel like there's someone you can delegate to, then you should examine how robust and deep your bench is. Think about how to build capacity in your organization so that you can delegate more tasks.

It's important to have a culture that respects the idea that personal well-being deserves to be discussed. Everyone is going to be working hard during the transformation. Everyone is going to be giving their utmost to ensure that it's successful. You need to be comfortable, and your colleagues need to be comfortable, talking about the challenges that you're facing as individuals and discussing strategies for personal resilience.

Because at the end of the day, it's a marathon, it's not a sprint. It's going to take time for the organization to see the real wins, to see the progress. In that early period, it's absolutely critical that leaders of the transformation have the time and the energy to do what they need to do for everyone to be successful. □