

Every business wants to be innovative, and most have paid some lip service to the notion in their official strategy documents and reports. But those that are really doing creative things are the ones that focus on getting the right people to facilitate the process.

The practice of “change management” has been a fundamental part of business theory since the 1980s and is vital for companies that want to undergo fast transformation in the digital world, which values rapid iteration and agility over staid bureaucratic process.

So how do companies ensure that they have the right people to manage constant change without hurting organisational efficiency?

Dr Mark Bussin, chairperson of remuneration consultancy 21st Century and author of *Organisation Design for Uber Times*, says that so-called soft skills are becoming more pertinent in today’s world since interpersonal skills are an essential part of facilitating change.

“Change management is a vital part of ensuring that people are onboard to give effect to the technical changes required. It is about great and consistent communication and ‘taking your people with you,’” Bussin says.

**“YOU EITHER GET ON THE CHANGE BUS OR YOU GET DRIVEN OVER BY IT.” — ANGELA DE LONGCHAMPS**

Angela de Longchamps, an associate with Catalyst Consulting, emphasises that managers need to be facilitators of learning. They need to focus on working with employees to see how skillsets can be expanded.

“In many organisations, team members probably know more about how to move forward, but restrictive management styles have taught them a type of learned helplessness where



Mark Bussin

approvals and lack of empowerment restrict their progress and hinder their innovation,” she says.

“Managers who recognise their role as chief innovation and learning officers of their teams unleash the potential of their team.”

### WHY CHANGE IS NEEDED

De Longchamps says that resistance to change is the perfect recipe for failure. “Industry disruptors aren’t asking for permission, they are just forging ahead. You either get on the change bus or you get driven over by it,” she says.

Rather than curated, one-size-fits-all courses offered by learning partners, the way people learn new skills has drastically changed because of the internet and mobile devices. “A radical shift has taken place in the last two decades. Progressive learning organisations have recognised that learning is taking place everywhere and is no longer a curated process,” De Longchamps says.

One key change that many struggle with is the need to understand new technologies that impact the business, while at the same not getting bogged down in becoming a technology expert.

“Learning how to code isn’t a requirement for managers. Creating an environment where others can learn to code is,” De Longchamps explains. “As

# HAVING THE RIGHT FACILITATORS

Megan Ellis looks at why change management is a vital skillset for keeping businesses innovating

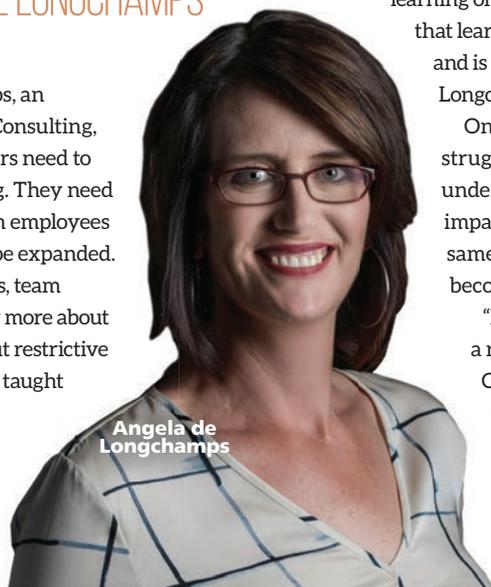
managers, you need to scan the horizon for technology innovations that could enhance the learning and therefore the performance of your team.”

Rapid digital transformation means that being open to change is a huge priority. De Longchamps says that personally learning the skills for new technologies is an impossible task for managers. Rather, the focus should be on being a facilitator of change and innovation.

“So the skill to be chasing is not a specific technology, but an openness and willingness to learn, be wrong, make adjustments and try again,” she says. ■

### SCALE OF THE CHALLENGE

According to Dr Mark Bussin, it’s estimated that over the next 15 years, 84% of all working people at general staff levels in the United States of America will need to be reskilled. This will be a huge monetary undertaking and has implications for South Africa. “We need to get all the vocational education and training back on track,” Bussin says. “We need to make IT and problem-solving compulsory high school subjects. We need to match the school and university curricula with what employers are going to need in the next 10 to 15 years.”



Angela de Longchamps