

Why Nothing Happens Overnight - Especially, Self-Management

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Agile as a concept might have once been the forte of the software industry. But now, industries across the board have realized the value of letting teams operate like micro-organizations that are autonomous and self-reliant.

Today, there's a huge repository of research that confirms the positive effects of allowing teams to self-steer, with minimal or no interference from the management. Agile teams help organizations respond faster and nimbly to the dynamic changes of today's markets. Having busted through the proverbial bureaucratic red tape, agile teams can cut to the chase and solve problems as and when they emerge.

Building The Agile Muscle

However, many organizations and their leaders make the mistake of focussing too acutely on the end-goal - a matured, self-steering team that functions completely autonomously. However, it's not something that can be achieved overnight and the leadership needs to allow newly agile teams to gradually amp up their maturity.

To begin with, there are a number of things that teams, as well as the management, need to unlearn. Trust needs to be established, clarity on roles and responsibilities should be created and teams need to figure out how to make their own decisions, solve problems and resolve conflicts by themselves. In other words, agility is a muscle that needs to be developed slowly and consistently - there are no shortcuts here.

Allow Things To Fall Into Place

When a hitherto traditional and hierarchical organization decides to go down the self-management route, it can be quite unnerving for people. It's no secret that we, as human beings resist change and when it's inevitable we'd like to be given some time and support to adjust to our new status quo.

That's exactly what leaders need to give their newly agile teams - time and support to learn the ropes of self-management. The different pieces of the puzzle like, role clarity, trust, confidence to make decisions, setting boundaries within which to operate need time to come together, with managers making themselves incrementally scarce.