

## **Tipping point leadership**

*By Chan Kim and Renee Mauborgne, Harvard Business Review, April 2003*

The theory of tipping points states that in any organization, once the beliefs and energies of a critical mass of people are engaged, fundamental change will happen quickly. Leaders who make the call for change forcefully, concentrate their resources on what really matters, mobilize the commitment to key stakeholders and neutralize critics, can bring about change effectively.

Tipping point leaders do not use facts and figures to communicate the need for change. They put the key managers face to face with the operational problems. Managers witness poor performance, not hear about it. This way, the message goes home and more importantly sticks.

Resources are always limited. But tipping point leaders know how to get around the problem. They concentrate their resources in areas that are most in need of change and that have the biggest pay offs.

For change to happen, employees must not only be aware of what needs to be done but must also want to do it. Tipping point leaders focus on motivating the key influencers, i.e. people with disproportionate power due to their connections within the organization, their ability to persuade others and their ability to block access to resources. Often, the key influencers have a set of common problems. So it is easy to identify and address their concerns.

Powerful vested interests can always resist the impending reforms. This resistance can completely derail the change process. It is important to identify and silence these critics early on. One way to do this is by using indisputable facts.

To conclude, tipping point leadership involves dealing with four types of hurdles typically faced while driving change. Cognitive and resource hurdles are obstacles in the way of formulating and reorienting strategy. Motivational and political hurdles stand in the way of executing strategy. Tipping point leaders break through the cognitive hurdle, sidestep the resource hurdle, jump the motivational hurdle and knock over the political hurdle.