

Lets consider the three levels of change businesses typically deliver, and the capability required at the three major levels of organisational leadership. For a strategic transformation to realise the desired benefits, all levels of leadership need to have the capability to lead and embed change well. For a business unit level change the middle managers role increases as they must develop and then implement the change, and for a team level change all change leadership activities fall to one frontline manager.

As shown below, the key issue to note is that regardless of the size or level of the change, BaU middle and frontline leaders are typically the individuals responsible for taking a change and driving its implementation so benefits are realised. This groups ability to ‘catch the change’ and turn it into something that teams can deliver, is a skill that needs to be developed so resistance, transition and implementation can be managed more effectively. Having worked in both strategic and middle management roles I know how important this capability is for transformation success. We pour money into the frontend of transformation projects, but often don’t fully support role of middle and frontline managers to enable their success. Then we wonder why we fail. A McKinsey global surveys identified this as a strength in entities who were successful in transformation. We need to support and enable these groups now.

Size of Change	Executive Role	Middle Managers Role	Frontline/Team Managers Role
ORGANISATION WIDE CHANGE Strategic/Large Change	The Executive is normally the sponsor for a strategic change. They are responsible for the creation of the strategy and leading the organisation through the implementation at a strategic level. Often Executives have strategic change support that provide high-level change support to middle and frontline leaders e.g. communication support.	Middle managers are expected to convert the high-level strategy into business unit plans to embed the change. They are responsible for leading the business unit through the change. Managers at this level are often technical experts in a particular field and rarely get the detailed support they need to convert and embed strategic change well.	As part of a strategic change. Team managers will be required to convert business unit plan into operational business processes. They are responsible for leading their team through the change. Apart from project specific training and communication this level of management rarely receives detailed support to embed change well.
BUSINESS UNIT LEVEL CHANGE Business Unit Change	The Executive should coach Middle Manager and support them deliver the change. They may be aware of how the business unit is planning to change and how it supports the strategic goals. No strategic support is required.	With business unit lead change, the business unit managers becomes the sponsor for business unit change and the delivery lead. They will lead the creation of the business unit strategy and operational plan and then deliver it. This requires a higher level of capability.	As above team managers will be required to convert business unit plan into operational business processes. They are responsible for leading their team through the change. These changes are often closer to the heart of the business unit so a high degree of capability to lead is required.
TEAM LEVEL CHANGE Individual Team Change	Be aware of how the team change change supports the strategic goals	Middle Managers should coach Frontline/Team Manager and support them deliver the change.	Frontline/ Team managers become the sponsor for the change. They create the team plan and operational processes and will lead their team through the change. Even though this is only a local change capability to develop lead and deliver the change is still very important.