



THINK TANK
BY LAB45

Embracing change leadership at work

Break the box by Dipika Prasad

WHAT'S INSIDE!

Design your own job
description; don't
merely respond to one

Once you're in, invest
time in establishing the
authority to act

First and always, drive
the organization to
victory

Rally the right resources
for the right stage of
your journey



Many corporate leaders are gifted with skills and resources to create large-scale impact, but the typical 9-to-5 workday is a straitjacket to their potential. They long to make real change for their employees, community, and planet but the “I’ll quit and start a non-profit” approach is just not financially feasible. **Newsflash: It doesn’t have to be an all-or-nothing strategy. Dig in to discover four tactics you can use to break the box of your corporate leadership role, and build a more meaningful career.**

In a sea of look-alike senior executive profiles on LinkedIn, Gaurica Chacko, Global Domain and Consulting Head of Life Sciences at Wipro, stands out. On paper, her job is to bring Wipro’s consulting and system integration services to healthcare enterprises. But her true passion is improving health outcomes for the underprivileged, especially mothers living in poverty.

So alongside her more traditional responsibilities she is also Wipro’s Executive Champion at the Edison Alliance – a World Economic Forum initiative to deliver impact in digital inclusion in health (among other areas). This balancing act is not easy. But Gaurica has managed to reconcile her role as a revenue leader with her desire to impact an audience where revenue might not be an immediate priority.

Let’s consider another example, Alice. She leads the enterprise SaaS division at one of the world’s largest technology companies. She feels strongly about reducing and reversing the impacts of climate change. But there is no clear pathway from her current work to change she wants to see in the world. How can she transition from being just a leader to a Change Leader?

Alice is far from being the only one in this situation. Many corporate leaders like her are gifted with skills and resources to create an impact, but the typical 9-to-5 workday can feel like a straitjacket. How can they shape their job to have more impact while still keeping the bills paid and staying in the game for a long haul?

Corporate leaders long to make real change for their employees, community, and planet but the “I’ll quit and start a non-profit” approach is just not financially feasible. Worse, it rarely ever scales.

Newsflash

It doesn’t have to be an all-or-nothing strategy. Here are 4 tactics I learnt from speaking with Gaurica and six other senior executives. They hold roles from CMO to CTO across diverse industries like space tech and sustainability.

1 Design your own job description; don’t merely respond to one

When searching for a job, it can be tempting to simply make peace with what’s offered. Yet, in leadership, job descriptions often serve merely as rough outlines. Successful Change Leaders view them as mere starting points, actively shaping roles to match their passions with organizational goals. Early-stage Change Leaders integrate the exploration of interests into their assigned tasks. More experienced leaders boldly design tailored programs and recruit partners to advance their change agendas.

2 Once you’re in, invest time in establishing the authority to act

Secure a new role or promotion and immediately start building your authority to implement change. Focus

on two key areas: persuading your superiors (bosses and perhaps even shareholders), and rallying your team behind you. Aim for early, low-cost victories like proof of concepts, reports, and public events to spark interest in your agenda. Leverage external validation to prove the worth of your ideas. Earn your team's trust by prioritizing their professional development before seeking support for change initiatives. Remember, initial progress may be slow and challenging, but effective leaders know that slow steps often lead to great distances.



3 First and always, drive the organization to victory

Gaurica's experience at Wipro offers a powerful lesson. She masterfully merged her interest in health equity with Wipro's strategic plans. Her work makes it clear that the desire to do good and achieve corporate growth aren't just possible together, they're a powerful combination. Leaders should understand that there always ways to align their change goals with the organization's core mandate, especially when they've taken the care to design their job right.

4 Rally the right resources for the right stage of your journey

Large organizations, contrary to popular belief, can be daunting for Change Leaders. The inertia and resistance to change can be overwhelming. Having people in your corner who back you up is super important. For instance, a leader in renewable energy within a conventional oil company might find allies in the R&D department, PR team, or even among shareholders who care about the future of energy post-oil. What truly matters when rallying like-minded allies is to match the right people to the right stage of the journey. In the early days, you are better off with allies who can get excited about the

'why' even when details about the 'what' and 'how' are hazy. The time to bring the specialist experts in is once you're more confident about the what solutions you want to bet on, and can truly leverage expertise to accelerate your progress.

Leaders must steer the ship towards their vision by plotting a course of practical steps. The grind of modern-day capitalism need not be dreary or monotonous. With the right moves, leaders can inject a sense of purpose into their roles that's more than just the daily grind. Gaurica's sentiment encapsulates this ethos perfectly in how she describes herself on LinkedIn, "Life is no brief candle for me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it off to future generations".

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