



A CUSTOMER STATE OF MIND

MOBILIZING THE WORKFORCE AND COMMERCIAL OPERATIONS IN LOGISTICS

The Key to Success

The Challenge of Mobilizing the Commercial Workforce

In today's logistics industry, many executives struggle to mobilize their workforce to implement strategic goals and change programs while managing the complexities of daily business operations.

Execution as the Key Challenge

While creating strategies is typically not the issue, executing them effectively is. According to Gartner (2022), over 70% of executives cite workforce disengagement, poor process adherence, and resistance to change as the biggest barriers to achieving their goals. These challenges are even more pressing for logistics companies. The sector thrives on speed, efficiency, and agility but faces tight margins and rising costs. For example, EBITDA margins for transportation and freight forwarding companies range between 5-10%, while contract logistics and warehousing can yield 10-15% margins, primarily due to value-added services. Any delay in mobilizing the workforce can directly impact customer satisfaction, productivity, and profitability.

**"STRATEGY, EVEN A GREAT ONE,
DOESN'T IMPLEMENT ITSELF."**

- Jeroen de Flander -

Industry-Specific Challenges: Supply Chain and Costs

Beyond these immediate challenges, logistics companies must contend with supply chain disruptions, fluctuating customer demand, and rising operational costs—challenges that can only be overcome with people-driven solutions.

Skills shortages and recruitment challenges also persistently pressure senior leadership. Upskilling and reskilling are vital to bridging these gaps, offering employees opportunities for continuous learning while fostering engagement and loyalty. Treating talent development as a strategic investment ensures that teams are prepared to handle the evolving demands of the logistics landscape.

Communication and Strategic Alignment

Changes in strategic direction can disengage teams if not carefully communicated. Recent employee surveys from a major logistics provider revealed that lack of clarity around strategy and shifting priorities were key sources of dissatisfaction. Clear communication and workforce mobilization are crucial to driving successful change.

Sales teams in the logistics sector also face high turnover rates, often between 25% and 34%. Factors like work stress, burnout, and competitive offers exacerbate this challenge, as does inconsistent leadership across multiple locations, particularly in companies that have grown through acquisitions. This turnover can significantly impact commercial performance and customer relationships, making workforce mobilization even more critical.

As logistics providers strive to stay competitive, mobilizing the commercial workforce—including sales, customer service, marketing, and key account management—becomes essential for driving growth, increasing customer retention, and improving ROI on sales management investments.



Why Technology Isn't Enough: It's About the People

Many logistics companies have invested in automation, AI, and IoT, but technology alone does not guarantee success. According to Harvard Business Review, 67% of strategies fail due to poor execution. Why? Because success ultimately depends on people—the workforce who must adopt and effectively use these innovations.

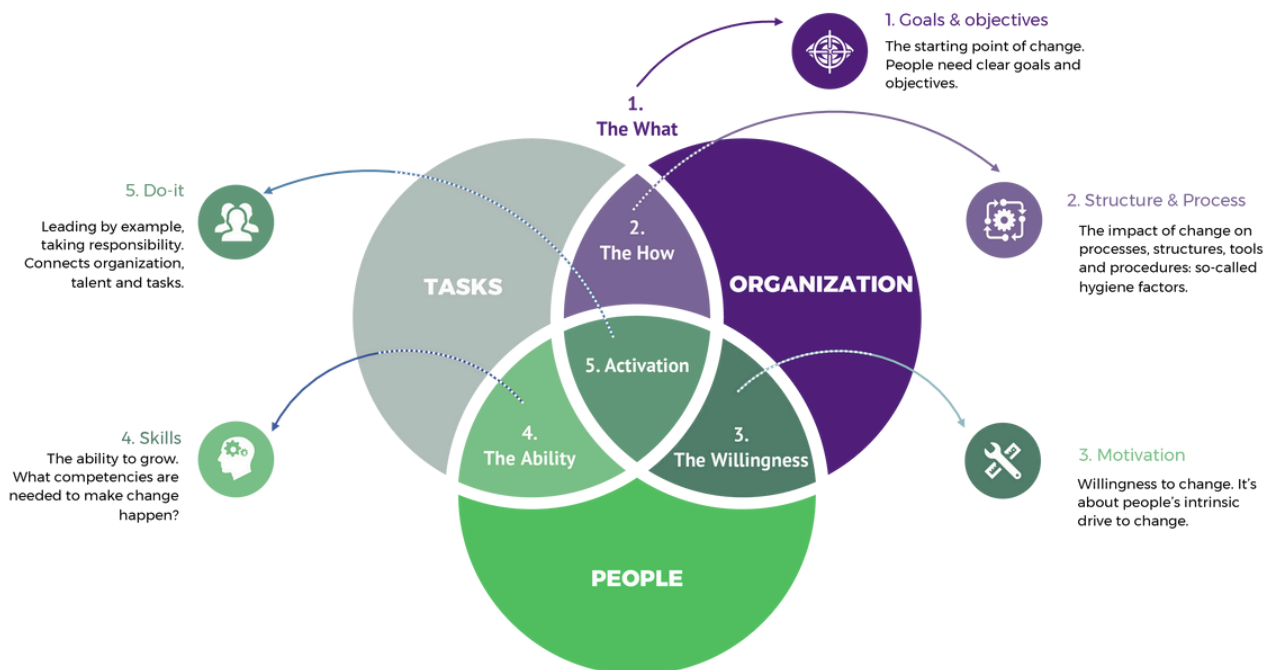
McKinsey (2021) found that companies that invest in process innovation see a 25-30% improvement in operational efficiency, but only if their workforce is fully engaged. In logistics, where collaboration between supply chain management, customer service, and operations is key, simply having the right technology in place isn't enough. You need a workforce that is engaged and ready to embrace change.

The Role of the Mobilizer: Activating Change and Driving Innovation in Logistics

The Mobilizer is a key role that goes beyond traditional consulting. A Mobilizer is not just an advisor or a problem-solver—they are an activator of change that drives organizational transformation by engaging the workforce to implement and sustain innovation. In the fast-moving logistics industry, the Mobilizer bridges the gap between strategy and execution, ensuring that teams are aligned, motivated, and ready to act.

"YOU CAN IMPLEMENT THE BEST SYSTEMS, BUT WITHOUT THE RIGHT PEOPLE AND FULL ENGAGEMENT, NOTHING WILL CHANGE."
- Anonymous executive -

Motion5 Model of Change



1. **The What - Strategic Alignment:** Mobilizers ensure that goals are clear, actionable, and aligned with the company's vision. In logistics, where speed and coordination are essential, every employee must understand how their role contributes to achieving these goals. Mobilizers ensure that employees understand the strategy and see the tangible benefits it brings to their work and the organization's bottom line.

2. **The How - Structure and Processes:** Mobilizers help define and implement the right commercial processes, balancing automation with hands-on engagement. Whether used with existing processes or integrated with tools like SPORTSMAN and COACH, Mobilizers ensure teams can quickly adapt to supply chain disruptions or shifting customer demands. This agility allows commercial teams to spend more time growing the business and less on administrative tasks.

3. **The Ability - Skill Development:** Mobilizers focus on continuous learning and development, ensuring employees have the skills they need to succeed in a rapidly changing market. From up-skilling in technology to developing leadership capabilities, the Mobilizer ensures that training is directly linked to personal and organizational growth.

4. **The Willingness - Driving Motivation:** Motivation is critical to organizational change. Mobilizers cultivate a culture of purpose, aligning individual goals with the company's mission. By connecting daily tasks to the organization's strategic objectives, employees are more likely to embrace change and stay engaged.

5. **Do It - Leadership in Action:** Mobilizers empower leaders to lead by example. In logistics, where speed and coordination are critical, leaders must actively participate in the change process. Mobilizers work with leadership to remove barriers and create an environment where teams feel supported in executing new strategies and initiatives.



Benefits of the Mobilizer Approach

Mobilizers are crucial for logistics companies looking to thrive in an increasingly competitive and complex market. Their role in driving change delivers significant benefits:

- **Enhanced Productivity & Engagement:** Increases commercial output from existing teams, leading to a stronger sales pipeline and improved customer retention rates.
- **Strategic Focus:** Shifts teams from tactical execution to strategic thinking, resulting in higher job satisfaction and better career development opportunities.
- **Value-Based Customer Engagement:** Transforms customer interactions into value-driven discussions, deepening relationships and improving long-term value.
- **Substantial ROI:** Reduces overhead costs and increases sales, delivering a high return on investment and optimizing business performance.

A Common Case: Moving the Commercial Organization from Reactive to Proactive

One of the major challenges for mid-sized logistics companies is the reactive nature of their commercial teams. Sales staff often respond to orders, negotiate prices, and manage order entries. While automation and AI are helping to streamline these tasks, a reactive approach limits long-term growth.

Anticipate to future challenges

To stay competitive, logistics companies need to shift from reactive to proactive. This means moving beyond transactional sales and focusing on building sustainable customer relationships. Implementing process optimization, governance structures, and methodologies like Opportunity Management and Account Management can help teams anticipate future challenges and growth opportunities.

Today's customers want logistics providers to act as partners, helping them solve complex problems and anticipate future disruptions. By becoming advisors rather than just service providers, logistics companies can strengthen customer loyalty and position themselves for long-term success. However, even the best strategies will fail without a Mobilizer to ensure the workforce is fully aligned and motivated to implement change.



Conclusion

This white paper was co-authored by **Colin Howard**, Associate Partner at Motion5 and former Head of Sales and New Business Development at Zalando, and **Peter Rademakers**, Founder of Motion5. Colin and Peter have decades of experience driving commercial excellence and innovation in logistics.

As Mobilizers, they focus on turning strategies into action by fully engaging the workforce and ensuring successful execution. By adopting the strategies outlined in this white paper, logistics companies can move from reactive operations to proactive, customer-centric organizations prepared to meet the demands of a rapidly changing market.

References/used sources

- Harvard Business Review – Research on execution failures in strategy.
- BCG (2021) – Analysis of reactive vs. proactive approaches in logistics.
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