

'Adaptable leaders can engage with and process quality information'

Even corporate champions can reach a point when they panic and want to walk away, potentially damaging their careers. To really excel in business you have to learn how to raise your melting point, **CHRISTIAN MARCOLLI** tells Sangeeta Tanwar

What are the key pain points affecting executives and leaders in a VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) world?

Senior executives, business leaders, ambitious managers and top corporate performers — all of them face similar pain points, from dealing with complexity and ambiguity to a culture that requires long hours, overwork and bringing work home. Travelling, isolation, being always “on”, wanting to handle everything and not being able to delegate — all can play a role, as does the stress of career moves, health and family issues.

According to you, psychological performance stages are not at all rigid, but involve fluid transitions. How do these stages correlate with managers' goal-setting ability and performance?

A professional's trajectory can be divided into four psychological stages — drawn in, obsessed, ready for success and playful — which I call the “Executive Performance Transformation”. Often, once professionals have their first major success — not only reaching a long list of corporate objectives, but also



marking an outstanding achievement on a truly business-critical issue, their transformation happens. They learn to focus their goal-setting and performance management abilities on the areas in which they personally need to make a distinct difference. They deliver exceptional quality in these specific areas, and effectively manage and delegate other tasks within the organisation. Getting there is a challenge, and many professionals get stuck in the obsessed

stage, feeling tense and frustrated. Certain factors and situations push them towards a meltdown, and they can't progress.

Why is it important for leaders and managers to determine their melting point? And how can they go about addressing their melting point?

When massive intensity and pressure prevent us from controlling our thinking, emotions or behaviours,

we've reached the melting point. We start to derail and perform badly, making mistakes. No matter our passion, we can't take the pressure or meet the challenges and demands of our role. Even high-achieving corporate champions can reach that point, when they panic and want to walk away, potentially damaging their career. To really excel in business you have to learn how to raise your melting point.

First, feeling like you're making progress has been found to be a key motivator — so it's important to set daily priorities, and focus on those tasks that require your personal attention. Executives especially can feel pulled in so many directions that they may leave after a 12-hour day and feel like they got nothing done. Instead, break your day into a few blocks of focused, concentrated, uninterrupted time. Second, making conscious decisions to eliminate damaging but deeply ingrained habits, and replacing them with good habits, can have countless benefits for your life and work. For instance, instead of churning through the workday, take regular breaks to disconnect and move around. And exercise will significantly help your sleep patterns at night — which are vital to performing well the next day. Learn to leave the office with 30 per cent of energy still in the tank — so at home you can focus on that last task, and still have energy left for family.

For leaders and businesses, what is the key to sustaining high performance consistently?

There are three recognisable traits. High performing individuals need passion for their area of achievement. Passion fuels their journey to success. Next, adaptability. It's not enough to recognise your flaws and understand what behavioural changes you need to make. You need

to be able to implement those changes effectively, and not revert to old habits when you're under pressure. Adaptable people can engage with and process high quality information, and bring it to bear effectively on their behaviours. Finally, there's coolness: the best performers excel in highly charged, critical moments and difficult conditions. They don't allow anxiety and nervousness to stand in the way of being at their best. They stay cool.

What are the key elements that make for an effective and impactful corporate programme which could help keep leaders stay focused?

An effective corporate programme focuses not just on work, but on leaders' whole lives. I have put together P6PROP programme, to help leaders become highly productive and effective even under massive pressure. The programme focuses on six strategies: increasing productivity, harmonising inner and outer worlds, discarding dysfunctional habits, applying comprehensive energy management skills, maximising health, and interacting efficiently with professional and personal networks.

Being able to remain at your personal best, even in times of uncertainty or change, is intensely important. It's about far more than just working hard or being smart. It's about taking care of yourself on many levels.