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Middle Management Struggle with Change (Anti-Pattern)

Or “Permafrost”

Consumer

- Change agents
- Transformation leadership team
- Managers

Description

Permafrost is a metaphor for the middle management layer that struggles with change, transformation, and adopting new ways of working. Upper management says they are fully committed to transform the organization, the front line is already well on the way or there is pent up demand for changing the way things are, but the middle layers of management are stuck or frozen.

The anti-pattern is that leadership fails to see and understand that the middle layer is overly constrained and frozen.

Impact

Transformation efforts stall or slow down when any change or support is needed from middle management. The front lines become frustrated with the lack of support.

(Potential) Remedies

Senior leaders need to recognize and understand that the permafrost or frozen middle is a system-level problem that they own. The middle layer is overly constrained and resistant to change. The middle is still being evaluated and measured on maintaining the status quo and delivering results (e.g. hitting the numbers).

Examples

Best way to see this is look at leadership's support of the transformation, often seeing it as something that is necessary but frustrated by lack of progress, and Teams view of the transformation, often excited but frustrated by the lack of progress. The discussion needs middle management support, removing impediments, working to descale current bureaucracy, in order for there to be real progress.

Want To Know More?

- Source: [What Kinds of Problems Do you Typically See As The Organization Transforms to Agile / Lean?](#)

[AntiPatterns](#), [Smells](#), [Leadership](#)

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