

KERTAX MAKING A DIFFERENCE: USING DISRUPTIVE LEADERSHIP TO CHANGE THE STATUS QUO

THE SITUATION

In the book *The Innovator's DNA*, Clayton Christensen and his colleagues at Harvard University characterized the traits of innovative leaders. These traits include associational thinking, questioning, observing, networking, and experimenting. Christensen calls these attributes "*discovery skills*" which focus on the front-end of the innovation process related to identifying new opportunities. The process of using these skills is now referred to as Disruptive Leadership. The definition of disruption is to cause (something) to be unable to continue in the usual way; to interrupt the normal progress or activity of (something). In 2005, KernTax began to change its status quo using Disruptive Leadership.

KERTAX'S RESPONSE

KernTax identified necessary competencies that are essential for change:

- **Leapfrogging Mindset** – creating or doing something radically new that produces a significant leap forward.
- **Boundary Pushing** – expanding mindsets and creating problem-solving abilities to push the limits of the organization and its partners.
- **Data Intuition Integration** – obtaining hard data, but being comfortable using gut instincts.
- **Adaptive Planning** – managing uncertainty with an adaptive approach.
- **Savoring Surprise** – using the surprise of unforeseen events as a strategic tool and being able to capitalize on unexpected events.

KernTax adopted five rules for culture change:

- **Be curious and ask why** – Without constant curiosity and questioning, the future seems closed, and opportunities distorted.
- **Stand up and be counted** – Think beyond the small square of today and always want to reach further and recognize more.



- **Be leading edge, not bleeding edge** – Consider opportunities as a leading edge. Think with agility. Include others in the decision-making process. The process can be challenging, but very fulfilling.
- **Build bank of intelligence** – Appreciate the value of an intelligence bank. Embrace the strengths and skills of others in your circle. Create opportunities to influence others and disrupt current thinking.
- **Diversify circle of influence** – The seed of disruption and new ideas occurs with differences of opinion, shared visions, and learnings. Share ideas through open discussion and communication and through networks to produce new opportunities, innovation, and solutions to existing problems.

THE RESULTS

KernTax has grown into a highly respected and influential non-profit organization that has developed multiple partnerships working for the community's benefit. To promote a forward-thinking business and civic mindset, KernTax now sponsors Kern Leaders Academy, which trains innovative, visionary community leaders for the future.