

FROM THE CHANGE AGENCY NOVEMBER 2009

# Short term wins, long-term success

## Harnessing your organization's competitive spirit to sustain successful change

When Anna's team originally won her organization's first annual Regional Marketing Competition, she admitted to her colleagues that she felt a little nervous about it. "At first, I was elated," says Anna, "Winning our regional competition brought attention to the work we've been doing here in our own market and gave a lot of support and credit to our hardworking staff. But I also thought, OK, but how well are we going to measure up against our colleagues when we move on to the international level?"

This morning, she has an answer to that question. It is a bright morning in Cairo, through the picture window on the south wall, sunlight streams into the display area where Anna's team presents her region's winning idea. As her colleagues from competing regions circulate through the room, she and her team take turns presenting their new marketing concept for attracting

and retaining a more loyal customer base. After taking a tour of her own around the space, Anna has the opportunity to hear presentations from other regions. Afterwards, her earlier look of concern seems to vanish from her face. "You know, the most exciting thing for me about this competition is no longer if we win or not, it's the sheer number of great ideas I've seen today. I'm thinking about the huge potential for our region if we could manage to implement even a few of them."

Anna's organization is by no means unique in harnessing the spirit of competition to help identify and spread the use of best practices within the organization. What is unique about this particular marketing competition is that

it is being implemented as a part of a large scale transformation of their sales and marketing strategy. In this case, Anna and her team's winning idea was developed not just to improve customer loyalty in their region, but builds on the entire organization's wider strategic initiative to become a more customer-centric business. Of course, this is just one of any number of creative approaches that can be used to communicate change and get people engaged. You are limited only by your own imagination!

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At SamSari, we work with companies just like Anna's every day as they focus on one of the more challenging phases of the change process, the part where people begin actually living the change in their daily work. When the goal is turning

new behavior into the status quo, i.e. sustaining change, people need to work with a series of short term 'wins' or achievable goals like those set out for Anna and her team in the marketing competition. Short term wins establish a pattern of positive action and help reinforce and institutionalize that behavior over time. It's this kind of sustained change that is the ultimate result of any successful transformation effort.

On her flight home, Anna takes a moment to reflect on the events of the past few days. "I know

that we came in fifth place behind some of our colleagues from much larger markets, and forgive me for resorting to cliché here, but there is really no other way to describe how I feel than to say that we're all winners. I mean, I've already overheard some of our team discussing ideas for next years competition. This energy and effort is now a part of our company culture. For me, that's first place."

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