

**LAUREN MATHYS, FOUNDER
AND SOLE PROPRIETOR OF
BLUECREST CONSULTING**

SURFING THE WAVES

BY ADITI SHARMA KALRA

Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS) as a concept came into prominence in 2005, when the book was published by INSEAD professors, W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne. The idea was to create new demand in a previously-uncontested market space, hence making the competition irrelevant. Having completed the Blue Ocean Strategy qualification process under the tutelage of the BOS founders, Lauren Mathys, a coach and consultant on Strategy founded Bluecrest Consulting. She was recently in India for corporate workshops, when we caught up with her for a discussion on the impact of BOS on the HR function, and more particularly, how it has brought about HR innovations through its base principles of Value Innovation, Tipping Point Leadership, and Fair Process.

“The people side is extremely important in successful implementation of BOS, which means that once you have got that great idea, you will not fail in its execution,” affirms Lauren right off, as she tells us more about BOS’s key building blocks. *Fair Process*, she explains, is the managerial expression for procedural justice, as it includes a dialogue to engage all those who

will be involved or touched by the Value Innovation (*that is, formulation of the new strategy*), for their opinions to be heard. This makes them feel important, and affects their attitudes positively. As a result, they become voluntarily willing to implement the new strategy, and even exceed expectations, since they understand the reasons behind the strategic decision and what the new rules of the game are. She points out, “Treating people fairly is just as important as the final outcome.”

Next in line is the tool of *Tipping Point Leadership*, which deals with addressing the hurdles that people must overcome in order to implement BOS successfully. Lauren explains that BOS has identified four such typical hurdles, namely:

- **Cognitive Hurdles:** Getting people to see the need and urgency for change, by helping them confront difficulty. For example, meeting with disgruntled customers to understand the issues.

- **Resource Hurdles:** It is easy to assume that introducing an organisation change will require additional resources; however, BOS lists alternatives to re-allocate resources from areas of little impact to areas with the biggest impact.



GREATEST HR INNOVATIONS

- Blue Ocean Strategy.
- Value Innovation.
- Tipping Point Leadership.
- Fair Process.

- **Motivational Hurdles:** Some people may still not be motivated to make the change happen; the solution lies in creating a forum of people who are responsible for the implementation, who meet together on a regular basis to share their experiences and successes. This recognition is so meaningful, that nobody wants to go in front of their peers and say that they are failing.

- **Political Hurdles:** Proactively identifying who will benefit the most and the least from the change, in order to understand who will help you in promotion of your ideas, and who you perhaps need to address for successful implementation – hence aiming to transform ‘devils’ into ‘angels’. This identification can be done by recruiting a conciliary (*comes from ‘advisor’ in Italian*), a well-respected and senior person in the organisation, who can help to navigate successfully through this process.

It is interesting to note that BOS principles do not just apply to strategy, but more broadly to any organisational change initiative. HR’s role here, says Lauren, is critical, and can be instituted through the people proposition. This, in turn, can impact the profit proposition, thus adding further to the organisation’s value proposition. She adds, “HR needs to understand how to attract the kinds of people who will work willingly toward the new value proposition – what are the things HR must increase and what it must eliminate to create that environment.”

In the future, her prediction is that it will be all the more important for Human Resources function to be able to constantly challenge the way things are being done today, and identify areas where they can eliminate the additional activity, instead of continuing to stick to the same process. 