

# NORBERT LEINFELLNER ON HIS PASSION FOR CHANGE MANAGEMENT



## **NORBERT LEINFELLNER**

VP, Product Development Engineering

*Fresenius*

**N**orbert Leinfellner has been with Fresenius Medical Care in Concord, California, since 2015.

Prior to joining Fresenius, Norbert worked as Program Manager at other medical device companies in the San Francisco Bay Area, most recently at Carl Zeiss Meditec, Inc. in Dublin, California, for the development of devices in the Carl Zeiss Retina Diagnostics product line. Norbert holds a Ph.D. in Physics from Technical University Graz, Austria.

Norbert has a long history of passionately implementing cultural change at companies which are increasingly challenged to deliver value in a rapidly changing market. The cornerstones of such a cultural change include the implementation of effective project management and the transformation to a matrix organization that promotes ownership, transparency and clear roles & responsibilities.

## **How did you find yourself in the role of VP, Product Development Engineering at Fresenius?**

The company's Global R&D (GRD) organization was implementing sweeping organizational changes to have the right management in place. My last leadership role in successfully driving and implementing change, coupled with my deep industry experience and educational prowess, uniquely qualified me for the role. I had all the credentials and was recognized within the company as a deeply passionate change agent at the time. Fresenius GRD's CEO was managing execution excellence at the highest level and demanded all of his Product Engineering Centers to deliver to time, quality, and cost. I was uniquely qualified to deliver on this. It has been an amazing journey and I am in admiration of this company's drive for excellence.



Norbert is responsible for the development and life cycle management of dialysis delivery systems such as hemodialysis machines (pictured left) and peritoneal dialysis home care devices.

**"Keep the big picture, but make sure the details are being taken care of!"**

#### **What inspires you to develop products?**

For me, there is no better job than developing medical device products. It is a mix of challenging customer requirements, the constant push for safety and efficacy, the regulated environment, and the ever-changing market landscape. Of course, at the heart of all this is the patient, that makes everything we do worthwhile. There is nothing more satisfying than saving lives and improving the quality of life for patients with the products you build.

#### **Why is organizational change management a passion of yours?**

Everything we do is done with people. An organization is made up of people and only works well when you have the right people "on the bus" and "in the right seat." You always have legacy issues that you inherited as a new leader and you need to continually review whether the current structure still makes sense for what you set out to do. We should not build

functions around people but rather create an organization built around the problem to solve and then staff it with the right people. Change Management also includes execution excellence which requires attention to the team's performance.

#### **How did you develop the 5 strategic pillars for Organizational Change Management?**

They were developed by using a cycle that starts with looking into the business needs, followed by a gap analysis of your organization's capabilities. Most of those pillars are similar to what other companies do, however, some may require a different focus depending on how far along the organization is in regards to execution excellence. Every pillar, or strategic initiative, needs to be reviewed continuously with executive management including Human Resources. The cycle never ends, and when one pillar is working well, another one may need more attention. It is a cycle of continuous improvement.

**"Create an organization built around the problem to solve and then staff it with the right people. "**

**What resources (books or otherwise) do you recommend for executives interested in change management?**

I recommend getting really solid resources on people management, leadership practices, and risk management. A best practice of mine includes getting advice and talent from outside the organization and hence strengthening the existing team using neutral advisors. Many lessons come from life itself, such as ownership, accountability, and thriving for excellence no matter what you do. I love to intake audiobooks on my way to work and some among my favorite titles are: "Stealing the Corner Office" by Brendan Reid, "The First 90 days" by Michael Watkins, and "Work Rules!" by Laszlo Bock. It's all about working with people.

**What advice did you receive in your career that you would like to share with our readers?**

Keep the big picture, but make sure the details are being taken care of! If you manage an organization you can't take care of the details yourself, but you need to be confident that the people doing it are aligned with your strategy. Utmost transparency is key in all you do and you will build an organization that is being trusted.

*Norbert Leinfellner will speak about "Organizational Change Management as a Strategic Growth Initiative" at the American Medical Device Summit.*

**To hear more from Norbert, join us at the American Medical Device Summit!**

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