

MANREAU PERSPECTIVE

Transformation Fatigue Is Not Resistance

By Waheeda Görlitz | 21 September 2026

People can still believe in the direction while losing the energy, attention and confidence required to carry another initiative. Leadership must restore the conditions for sustained action, not demand renewed enthusiasm.

A transformation can retain formal sponsorship long after the organization has lost the capacity to carry it with conviction.

People continue attending the meetings. Plans are refreshed. New initiatives are launched. The language remains positive. Yet attention fragments, decisions slow and confidence in the next promise weakens.

This is often described as resistance. That diagnosis can be wrong.

Fatigue is the gradual depletion of capacity and belief

Transformation fatigue develops when people are asked to absorb repeated change without enough closure, visible value or relief from competing demands. Each new initiative arrives before the previous one has become stable. Priorities are reset, governance accumulates and the same scarce people are asked to mobilize again.

Over time, the organization learns that urgency is permanent, commitments are provisional and promised benefits may not become visible. People may still agree with the strategic direction. What declines is their ability to invest attention, energy and belief in another mobilization.

Fatigue therefore belongs to the can side of transformation as much as the will side. Motivation is not an unlimited personal resource. It is affected by the conditions leadership creates and by the evidence people receive about whether their effort produces meaningful movement.

The symptoms can resemble resistance

Fatigue can appear as disengagement, slower decisions, minimal compliance, reluctance to volunteer and skepticism toward new language. Those same symptoms can also indicate conflicting interests, insufficient skill, weak authority or genuine opposition.

The visible behavior does not reveal the mechanism by itself. Leaders must ask what has accumulated around the people expected to act: how many priorities they carry, how often direction has changed, which dependencies remain unresolved and what value from earlier effort they can actually see.

Treating fatigue as resistance produces the wrong response. More communication, urgency, workshops or motivational pressure asks depleted people to supply the energy that the operating system has consumed.

Continuous transformation cannot mean continuous mobilization

If transformation is now continuous, the organization needs a sustainable rhythm for it. That requires limits as well as ambition: stopping work that no longer earns its place, reconciling scope with resources, protecting recovery and learning, and carrying fewer consequential choices far enough for their effects to become visible.

Cadence matters because it gives transformation a shape people can trust. Decisions are made, commitments are tested, evidence returns and priorities can be renewed or stopped. Progress becomes observable rather than perpetually promised.

The leadership response is to restore credible conditions

Leaders should not begin by asking how to make people believe again. They should begin by making belief rational again.

That means reducing contradictory demands, clarifying authority, providing the necessary resources and skills, and connecting effort to Booked and Sustained Value. It also means acknowledging where the organization has asked for commitment without creating the conditions under which commitment could hold.

Transformation fatigue is not solved by lowering ambition. It is solved by making the path from effort to consequence credible enough that people can invest themselves in it again.

Sources

This Perspective sets out MANREAU's operating diagnosis of transformation fatigue. It distinguishes depleted capacity from opposition so leaders can intervene in the conditions producing the behavior rather than labeling the behavior itself.

About MANREAU

A transformation program is not yet a transformation.

Your strategy can be sound, delivery disciplined and change carefully planned. Yet your transformation can still fail.

Managing the initiatives is one job. Managing the system that must transform the business is another. Most organizations manage the first explicitly. The second goes unmanaged. That system is the Transformation Operating System.

MANREAU works with leaders on their Strategic Mobilization to improve the conditions for successful transformation by making the Transformation Operating System visible and manageable. Strategic intent turns into coherent action, booked and sustained value, and the capacity to transform again.

About the author

Waheeda Görlitz is the founder of MANREAU. She works with leadership teams on the organizational, political and human system through which transformation becomes executable and enduring.

[Read the founder conversation](#)

Bring Us the Situation.

Discuss what your organization is facing and where transformation is losing momentum.

[Start a Conversation](#)