

Forbes

LEADERSHIP

ORGANISATIONS

TRANSFORMATION

FORBES WOMEN

Stuck in Success: Status Pro vs. Status Quo

By *Forbes Belgium* 7th of November 2025



©Ilse Jaques

In the series “Stuck in Success,” we explore, together with high-performance coach Ilse Jaques, the hard truths that many accomplished leaders eventually face. Known as the secret agent for the 1%, Ilse Jaques works exclusively with those who refuse to settle for mediocrity. She supports a select circle of exceptional leaders in their pursuit of ultimate fulfillment and peak performance — in every dimension of their personal and professional lives.

Her mission is radical growth and irreversible transformation at the deepest level. In her world, success knows no boundaries. Because excellence is not a talent — it’s a state of being, a posture of fearless winners.

This edition dives deeper into the foundations of winning organizations — and how a leader ensures they keep winning.

What is the main pitfall that prevents organizations from being — or staying — successful?

There are many, but one of the most defining is being stuck in the status quo. It runs much deeper than the familiar saying “standing still is falling behind.”

In a world of constant evolution — where technology advances at lightning speed and new players emerge overnight — success inevitably stagnates when you cling to methods, systems, and mindsets that once worked but no longer serve.

This attachment to the status quo often has a deeper root: organizational culture. Culture is not a buzzword — it's the bedrock of sustained success. It's shaped by every action and inaction within an organization, and by the energy that behavior carries.

To be truly successful, that collective behavior must be directed and elevated. And that begins at the top. Transformations in organizational culture are one of the most powerful — and most requested — outcomes of Ilse's one-on-one coaching with decision-makers, founders, and executives.

A leader sets the tone for how high-performing and resilient a culture will be. The top-down dynamic is reflected in employee engagement, the attraction of top talent, groundbreaking innovation, agility, the alignment between collective goals and individual contribution, and ultimately — the organization's performance as a whole.



©Ilse Jaques

How do you build such a powerful culture?

It may sound radical, but it all begins in the mind of the leader. What is the quality of their thoughts? And just as importantly — how are those thoughts expressed?

Because language creates reality. The way a leader thinks and speaks directly influences how executives, investors, employees, clients — in short, all stakeholders — think and speak in turn.

That manifestation creates a ripple effect with tangible impact on achieving goals and maintaining success. We could say: a winning culture can only emerge from a winning state of being in the leader — and their ability to carry others into that state.

A “winning state of being” — could you elaborate?

A state of being is literally your inner stance — the attitude from which your thoughts, words, and actions arise.

People often get trapped in unproductive patterns and limiting beliefs. They convince themselves they’re playing it safe — yet that illusion of safety undermines both their leadership and their organization.

Even the most successful leaders fall into this trap. They tend to set extraordinarily high standards for themselves, always striving to be the best — which can slide into perfectionism. Fear of mistakes or compromise leads to procrastination, or paralysis, because the results never feel “enough.”

Innovation is avoided because of the risk of trial and error. They hold on to too much responsibility, making their work heavier and less effective. Creativity and growth disappear.

Another pitfall: successful people often receive abundant praise. It feeds the ego, creating dependence on external validation — or, conversely, overconfidence and reckless decision-making. All of that must be stripped away, radically, if you are to build a truly winning organization.

The only sustainable state of being for success is this:
Be who you must be to achieve what you wish to achieve.

Every internal dialogue that diverts you from that alignment must be recognized — and transformed.

Status pro. Not status quo.



Forbes Belgium

