

TRAINING & ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



CHANGE
It's A SHORT TRIP FROM RIDING THE WAVES OF CHANGE TO
BEING TORN APART BY THE JAWS OF DEFEAT.
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**Change alone is eternal,
perpetual, immortal.**

*Arthur Schopenhauer 1788-1860,
German philosopher and notorious
pessimist*

All about **Change** Management!

Change management entails thoughtful planning and sensitive implementation, and above all, consultation with, and involvement of, the people affected by the changes. If you force change on people normally problems arise. Change must be realistic, achievable and measurable. These aspects are especially relevant to managing personal change.

Before starting organisational change, ask yourself: What do we want to achieve with this change, why, and how will we know that the change has been achieved? Who is affected by this change, and how will they react to it? How much of this change can we achieve ourselves, and what parts of the change do we need help with? These aspects also relate strongly to the management of personal as well as organisational change.

Make sure you check that people affected by the change agree with, or at least understand, the need for change, and have a chance to decide how the change will be managed, and to be involved in the planning and implementation of the change. Use face-to-face communications to handle sensitive aspects of organisational change management. Encourage your managers to communicate face-to-face with their people too if they are helping you manage an organisational change. Email and written notices are extremely weak at conveying and developing understanding.

If you think that you need to make a change quickly, probe the reasons - is the urgency real? Will the effects of agreeing a more sensible time-frame really be more disasterous than presiding over a disasterous change? Quick change prevents proper consultation and involvement, which leads to difficulties that take time to resolve.

For complex changes, refer to the process of project management, and ensure that you augment this with consultative communications to agree and gain support for the reasons for the change. Involving and informing people also creates opportunities for others to participate in planning and implementing the changes, which lightens your burden, spreads the organisational load, and creates a sense of ownership and familiarity among the people affected.

If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change.

Giuseppe di Lampedusa 1896-1957, Italian writer in The Leopard

For organisational change that entails new actions, objectives and processes for a group or team of people, use workshops to achieve understanding, involvement, plans, measurable aims, actions and commitment. Encourage your management team to use workshops with their people too if they are helping you to manage the change.

You should even apply these principles to very tough change like making people redundant, closures and integrating merged or acquired organisations. Bad news needs even more careful management than routine change. Hiding behind memos and middle managers will make matters worse. Consulting with people, and helping them to understand does not weaken your position - it strengthens it. Leaders who fail to consult and involve their people in managing bad news are perceived as weak and lacking in integrity. Treat people with humanity and respect and they will reciprocate.

Be mindful that the chief insecurity of most staff is change itself. See the process of personal change theory to see how people react to change. Senior managers and directors responsible for managing organisational change do not, as a rule, fear change - they generally thrive on it. So remember that your people do not relish change, they find it deeply disturbing and threatening. Your people's fear of change is as great as your own fear of failure.

Responsibility for managing change

The employee does not have a responsibility to manage change - the employee's responsibility is no other than to do their best, which is different for every person and depends on a wide variety of factors (health, maturity, stability, experience, personality, motivation, etc). Responsibility for managing change is with management and executives of the organisation - they must manage the change in a way that employees can cope with it. The manager has a responsibility to **facilitate** and **enable** change, and all that is implied within that statement, especially to understand the situation from an objective standpoint (to 'step back', and be non-judgemental), and then to help people understand reasons, aims, and ways of responding positively according to employees' own situations and capabilities. Increasingly the manager's role is to interpret, communicate and enable - not to instruct and impose, which nobody really responds to well.

Change must involve the people - change must not be imposed upon the people

Be wary of expressions like 'mindset change', and 'changing people's mindsets' or 'changing attitudes', because this language often indicates a tendency towards imposed or enforced change, and it implies strongly that the organisation believes that its people currently have the 'wrong' mindset, which is never, ever, the case. If people are not approaching their tasks or the organisation effectively, then the organisation has the wrong mindset, not the people. Change such as new structures, policies, targets, acquisitions, disposals, re-locations, etc., all create new systems and environments, which need to be explained to people as early as possible, so that people's involvement in validating and refining the changes themselves can be obtained.

Whenever an organisation **imposes** new things on people there will be difficulties. Participation, involvement and open, early, full communication are the important factors. Workshops are very useful processes to develop collective understanding, approaches, policies, methods, systems, ideas, etc. See the section on workshops on the website.

Staff surveys are a helpful way to repair damage and mistrust among staff - provided you allow people to complete them anonymously, and provided you publish and act on the findings. Management training, empathy and facilitative capability are priority areas - managers are crucial to the change process - they must enable and facilitate, not merely convey and implement policy from above, which does not work.

You cannot impose change - people and teams need to be empowered to find their own solutions and responses, with facilitation and support from managers, and tolerance and compassion from the leaders and executives. Management and leadership style and behaviour is more important than clever process and policy. Employees need to be able to trust the organisation.

The leader must agree and work with these ideas, or change is likely to be very painful, and the best people will be lost in the process.

Change management principles

1. **At all times involve and agree support from people within system (system = environment, processes, culture, relationships, behaviours, etc., whether personal or organisational).**
2. **Understand where you/the organisation is at the moment.**
3. **Understand where you want to be, when, why, and what the measures will be for having got there.**
4. **Plan development towards above No.3 in appropriate achievable measurable stages.**
5. **Communicate, involve, enable and facilitate involvement from people, as early and openly and as fully as is possible.**

Ideas on illustrating change management issues

When people are confronted with the need or opportunity to change, especially when it's 'enforced', as they see it, by the organisation, they can become emotional. So can the managers who try to manage the change. Diffusing the emotional feelings, taking a step back, encouraging objectivity, are important to enabling sensible and constructive dialogue. To this end, managers and trainers can find it helpful to use analogies to assist themselves and other staff to look at change in a more detached way.

There are several illustrations which can be used for this purpose, depending on the type of change faced, and the aspect that is to be addressed. Here are a few examples, useful for team meetings, presentations, one-to-one counselling or self-reminder, particularly to help empathise with others facing change. Both good aids for understanding and explaining why people - all of us - find it difficult to change assumptions, conditioned thinking, habit, routine, etc.

Just as the state of 'unconscious incompetence', needs to be developed into 'conscious competence' to provide a basis for training, so a person's **subjective emotion** needs to be developed into **objectivity** before beginning to help them handle change. None of us is immune from subjectivity, ignorance or denial. The lessons and reminders found in stories and analogies can help to show a new clear perspective.■

Change begets change. Nothing propagates so fast.

Charles Dickens 1812-1870, English novelist

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