

Basic introduction to change

Organisations are littered with changes that did not produce the desired results (and the attitudes that stem from it). So what is it, why do it, and how do we do it well?

- It is a way of bringing about improvement in organisational performance (otherwise why do it?)
- Involves many people from different parts of organisations (so you need the ability to think across disciplines, to consider unforeseen outcomes, and to work through negotiation and compromise)
- Combines both vision and process – needs a clear view of desired improvements or outcomes and a clear(ish) idea of how to get there
- Often involves “re-framing” a situation, helping people to see their current situation in a different way, developing new mental models, paradigms or personal narratives
- There is no one set approach – flexibility is vital

People don't tend to resist change; they tend to resist being changed. Why?

- They place a high value on the personal meaning of their work; change can devalue this
- They rarely express their resistance in terms of loss of personal worth; they usually speak in terms of effects on supporters, missionaries, beneficiaries, etc
- Networks of informal communication (or “moaning”) can easily determine how any change initiative is viewed
- Treat the concerns as genuine. Bring the goals and implications of the change to the surface. You can railroad it through, but you will pay a large price in reduced motivation and willingness to cooperate

Stages in a change management process

1. Clarify the scope and scale of the proposed change

Trying to do too much can lead to loss of focus or over-ambitious aspirations. If the change consists of several different elements, people need to be able to see how they fit together.

Staff and budget needs should be clear, with specific contingency elements for the unforeseen or increased expenditures you will experience.

2. Build a change team

This team should ensure that different perspectives are included (as well as advocates of the change into different parts of the organisation). The team needs to ability to lead the change, the power to ‘drive it through’, and the breadth to listen to all those who are affected

3. Prepare a diagnosis of the problem

SWOT and PEST analyses can help here. Build the case for change. Also the case for not changing (some change needs to happen not because of what it will do, but because of what will happen if we don't)

4. Create and communicate a vision for a changed future

Plans don't motivate people; vision does. The vision (or “preferred future”) should inspire the desire for change, and helps to clarify what would be appropriate and inappropriate actions within the change process. It helps people to work together without close coordination, and so it is worth taking time to get the vision right.

5. Plan the changes

Change does not occur by fiat from on high (“let there be”). Detailed plans are necessary, with actions broken down into manageable pieces. You need to be able to see how the various parts of the plans fit together and affect and build upon each other. Planning tools such as GANTT charts are helpful here.

6. Get started

Key lesson for managing change include:

- Go for some quick wins – things that can demonstrate results and impact, to maintain and build momentum for the changes. Communicate these successes
- Pilot the changes – test them out on a smaller section of the organisation. Apply the lessons learned to the wider initiative as it gets under way
- Provide support to those involved in the change
 - i. Training in new systems or approaches to work
 - ii. Change their personal objectives and performance targets
 - iii. Appoint new staff – key appointments can increase the speed of change and bring new beliefs into an organisation
 - iv. “Pizza days” (celebrate key milestones)

7. Embed the changes so they are not changes any more, but rather the norm

- Change the visible signs of the old culture (décor, office layouts, etc)
- Change the ways of working (new personnel processes, new structures, etc
- Change underlying beliefs (reward those who show commitment to the news ways of working, show how new practices are improving results)