

Champions of Change!

Get your people involved if you want great change outcomes!

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Why is it that most organizational change programmes are done badly, or at best, moderately? Why are most employees the 'last' to know what is going on, or that there is a change plan happening at all? Is it necessary to keep organizational change initiatives 'secret' so only those at the top of the tree are involved?

No it's not and those organisations that believe this is the best way to encourage successful change, are doomed! They get their people off side, motivation drops, people feel undervalued and insignificant and often their most valuable asset – their people – walk out the door.

Ever Changing

Organisations are dynamic, ever-changing entities. They are not static. Like everything, they grow and change, responding to sector pressures, changing customer needs and a range of internal and external threats. Staff turnover, the market changes and change is guaranteed.

I mentioned in my last column on **‘Creating a Resilient Organisation’** that there are key ways in which to ensure the ongoing sustainability and profitability of your organization. Let’s consider managing change well as one of them.

Change is ongoing

Because of today’s rapid pace of business, technological advancements and economic changes in which organisations of all sizes are found, those organisations that are able to predict and adapt (and even create change) are those that will thrive. Those that attempt to stay static and don’t become part of the ‘modern way of doing business’ will struggle to sustain their ongoing longevity.

Many smaller organisations, in particular, are focusing on joint ventures, partnerships and alliances, as these new collaborations of resources and capacity building enables all players to become larger in the market, often guaranteeing their stability and sustainability.

When your organization undergoes change, how good are you at doing it well?

Key points to remember when planning organizational change

- Have a Vision for the future of your organization. What do you want to achieve? Share it with your people at all levels regularly
- Have a plan. Let your people know what your plan is. Then check your plan again and again.
- Understand the ‘process’ of organisational change and become familiar with successful models. An example is the 3 stage process of Lewin, which outlines the ‘Unfreeze, Change, Refreeze’ approach
- Appoint a key person and project management team to drive the change forward. Change Champions is what they are often called!
- Ensure the relevant person/parties have the necessary skills to understand, design and drive a change programme through the organization successfully
- Ensure that a strategic plan and timeline (and the outline of who is responsible for what) is undertaken and clear to key stakeholders whose role it is to ensure that the rollout of the initiative goes to plan
- Communicate with your people the whole time. Let them know about the change, what it will involve and how they can be involved in it.
- Sell the positive aspects of the change to everybody. Many will be fearful of the ‘new regime’ and truthfully, some may not have a job after the change is completed, but the more you engage and involve them, the better the change programme will be.

- Understand human behavior during change and expect people to respond differently. Some will be vocal, others may become quiet and seem detached. Others, who perceive the change as negative, may become aggressive and disruptive whilst others may view it as a positive and necessary step forward for the organisation
- Evaluate the success of the programme at all stages. For example, if the plan has been broken down into four stages, then evaluate during, and after, each stage. This can be done by using online surveys (Survey Monkey), focus groups or a 'hotline' for employees to ring to air their concerns or questions, if necessary
- Ensure communication is regular across the entire organization. The project team could send out regular updates via the organisations intranet about what is happening. Updates could be attached to staff's payslips (both manually and electronically) and forums, meetings and mini-conferences could become part of the strategy to ensure that everybody is involved in the change process

For leaders in change

- Get out of your office and spend time 'checking in' with your people, regardless of whether you are on the same site or not.
- Show an interest in them and answer any concerns they have
- If you don't have an answer to a question, admit it and explain you will come back to them when you have. Then do it!
- Be optimistic about the changes, even though you may not feel that way. There is nothing more disconcerting than a leader who is pessimistic about the change or the organisation's vision
- Be supportive and encouraging
- Understand that change may be just as challenging for you as it is for your staff, so look after yourself
- It does not matter at which level in the organization you are, your role is to lead your people through the process. Do just that. Keep them updated and informed, spend time talking to them, show interest in them.

Case Study – SunnyJolt Manufacturing!

Whilst this case study looks at a medium to large sized company and implementing organizational change, the same principles and processes can be used by small companies in change.

The SunnyBay Shoe Manufacturing Company had been in existence for 24 years and whilst profitable, it was going to struggle in the long term. The organization needed more (very expensive) machinery, costs were increasing and the market appeared to be getting smaller. A joint venture was pursued with a similar organisation and after intensive negotiations between the various Board

Members from each Company, a new company, SunnyJolt Manufacturing, was born.

This merger needed careful planning to ensure the smooth transition from one company into two, and to involve as many people as possible to ensure this happened effectively.

How the change was implemented:

A new manager, Sam, had recently been appointed to run one of the original Sunnybay divisions, and he had a strong background in organizational change. He was the Champion chosen to drive the change. However, he needed a member of the Executive to work with him on the project to help him access resources he needed and to assist him in pulling the programme together.

John, the Executive Director of People and Culture, was appointed his Executive Change Champion.

They both recognized the need to involve their people in the change process and communicate with them regularly throughout the change. They also realized that if they did not achieve this well, they would create uncertainty and tension in their people, and the 'grapevine' would become the most active (and destructive) method of communication organization wide.

Steps Taken

Step 1: The Champions of the Project were appointed. They were the Middle Manager (John) and the Executive Director of People and Culture.

Step 2: A cross functional team was formed. 21 people from all levels and parts of the organization were approached to form part of the Project team to represent staff in their area during the change. Part of their critical change role was to ensure that all change updates were sent down to their people as soon as new information was received. This group included the CEO, a cleaner, a sales rep, a shop assistant, a machine operator and so forth. The key to this team is to have at least one person from every department represented on it and for the team to comprise people at all levels

Step 3: The stages of the process of change were devised and discussed with the Project Team

Step 4: A weekly and monthly communication plan was devised where notices, flyers, brochures and so forth were sent out to all staff, via the project team, who were given 72 hours to ensure everybody in their area had a copy. Additional updates were attached to either manual or electronic payslips. (If there is one piece of information we all read, it's the one that tells us how much money we have been paid!)

Step 5: A Hotline was set up to encourage people in the organisation to call in and have their say or lodge a concern

Step 6: That concern is answered within 24 hours and included in the next weekly communication so everybody could see what the question and answer was

Step 7: The whole process was evaluated along the way, using surveys, focus groups, team meetings and a suggestion box

Step 8: People were systematically informed what was happening in their areas as the changes were made

Step 9: The CEO made a formal presentation to the staff about the changes and why they were happening and the affect is had on the organization overall

Step 10: Once the programme was implemented, there were 3 monthly, 6 monthly and 12 monthly evaluation/reviews to see how well the change programme had been implemented and areas for improvement in the future.

Conclusion

Organisational Change is challenging and can be difficult.

However, if you plan correctly, understand how change works and human reactions to it, it can be implemented effectively.

There are many key strategies to implement to ensure it is done well – one of the most important is to remember that your people make all the difference! Keep them involved and ‘in the loop’ – grow your people, transform your organization.

Caryn Walsh is the CEO of Pure Magic International Training Solutions Pty Ltd. The Australian based organization operates in companies of all sizes both in Australia and the south Pacific Region.

Their client base in Fiji includes the University of the South Pacific, The Reserve Bank of Fiji at Air Terminal Services in Nadi.

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Publishing Error

In our last column on ‘The Resilient Organisation’, under the heading ‘Six ways to make your organisation more resilient,’ we omitted to feature the source of this. We regret this error.

It was sourced (and adapted) from information by The Australian Journal of Emergency Management Volume 25, No 2, April 2010 (Adapted)