

## CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR MANAGING CHANGE

### INTRODUCTION

Change may be part of life and part of business, but, in general, it is not always an easy process. Change happens best when it does not happen by chance; it must be carefully managed. There are specific approaches and action steps that an organization can take to minimize negative consequences of change and maximize the positive outcomes of the process. In order to lead a successful change process, it is essential to thoroughly plan the change itself, carefully manage the change, and strategically communicate information about the change.

### Plan carefully for the journey

*Vision without action is a daydream.  
Action without vision is a nightmare.  
Japanese proverb*

- Planning for change, and the management of change, needs to begin as early as possible.
- Planning for significant change is essential and time-consuming. The bulk of an organization's time needs to be spent planning and readying the organization for what is to come.
- Part of planning is surfacing dissatisfaction with the current state in order to help employees feel the need to change.
- During the planning, consider the effects of the change on employees and the organization overall.

### Communicate early, often, and everywhere

*"The greatest lever for change is awareness."  
Michael E. Angier*

- A primary factor that determines how effectively an organization manages a change process is the manner in which information regarding the change is communicated.
- Communication needs to be well planned and strategic in nature, and directed at both employees and the "outside world."
- When management leaves holes or gaps in information, whether by choice or not, employees inadvertently fill those gaps themselves, often with misinformation, gossip, and rumors.

- “Over-communication” is essential. By this we mean, “Tell them what you know. Tell them what you don’t know. Tell them when you may know what you don’t know. Tell them what you can’t tell them and why. Tell them everything you can.”
- Communication must be clear, honest, and personal.

### Become aware of reactions to change

*“Change your thoughts and you change your world.”  
Norman Vincent Peale*

- Consider and manage the “human” aspects of the change – the emotional reactions that invariably occur.
- Prepare management to handle their own reactions to change, and to support others as they walk through predictable stages of reactions.
- Reactions to change can be described by the Kubler-Ross SARAH model:
  - S – shock
  - A – anger
  - R – rejection
  - A – acceptance
  - H – hope
- There are specific stages through which people progress in regards to change. These are:
  - Status quo – comfortable with the way things are
  - Denial – refusal to see that anything needs to change
  - Confusion – belief that change needs to happen, but unsure of how
  - Renewal – buy-in to the need to change and champion of the process
- Include information about change and the change process as part of managers’ development plans. The more management understands these specific stages and the appropriate method of communication during each stage, the more effective they can be in managing the change process itself.

### Develop leadership to effectively lead change

*“Change is the law of life.  
And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.”  
John F. Kennedy*

- There are helpful tips to leading change, such as involving those who will be affected by the change in both the planning and implementation processes where appropriate, and relating the change to customer and marketplace needs to increase understanding and acceptance.
- Seek input on your plan from key leaders within the organization. This helps gain their support and buy-in.
- The emotional intelligence level of management can have a huge impact on the nature and outcomes of the change process. In other words, managers need to: 1. be aware of and able to manage their own emotions; 2. be aware of the emotions of others; and 3. be able to work with and influence others.

## Survive the difficult task of restructuring

*"No man will work for your interests unless they are his."*

*David Seabury*

- People are more likely to support a change effort when they see their own personal benefit from the change.
- Consider offering training for all employees about change, career management, and the like.
- Focus efforts on both sets of employees – those who will leave and those who will remain. In addition, it is important to consider your audiences outside of the organization.

## Seek help through the process

*"Wisdom is knowing what to do next,  
skill is knowing how to do it, and virtue is doing it."*

*David Starr Jordan*

- Take the necessary steps to bring change management and strategic communication expertise into your organization as early as possible in a change process in order to begin planning a strategy for educating management and communicating about the change.

## **SUMMARY**

There are specific approaches and actions that an organization can take in order to be more successful in a change process. It is important to: 1. carefully and strategically think through the process; 2. plan the process itself; and 3. plan all communication about the process. It is also important to anticipate, recognize, and allow human reaction to change and, in fact, to prepare management to help themselves and others walk through these normal reactions. With proper attention to these factors, proper planning, and proper guidance from a qualified expert, an organization is more likely to effectively walk through change.

*Chatsworth Consulting Group, based in New York and Pennsylvania, helps individuals and organizations articulate and realize their goals. By taking a holistic approach to consulting and coaching, CCG uncovers the often-hidden opportunities for success so that clients move forward with greater focus and purpose. Learn more by visiting [www.chatsworthconsulting.com](http://www.chatsworthconsulting.com) or calling 1-877-405-7288.*