

Change Management

Change management is a process that seeks to help an organization integrate all components of a desired change. When a company wants to undergo any change whether it is the implementation of new software or the integration of a new organizational structure, there are 3 key elements that need to be looked at:

- People
- Process
- Content

Change management is an integrated approach that helps bring all these components together and ensures that they are all aligned. Therefore the strategy must be:

- Well developed and documented
- Well planned to involve key stakeholders
- Well communicated

Change Management is an Integral Part of Project Management

Project management brings together many key players within an organization. In a project team, members often have very different perspectives on issues as they come from different disciplines, skill sets and have varying work mandates.

As a project team focuses on the task at hand, it is easy to lose sight of the larger picture and the importance of bringing together all key stakeholders. Change management aims to help bring together all the pieces that need to be integrated for project completion and implementation and acts like a common thread through out the project management process.

It is important to help people assess and understand why the change is necessary. People generally resist change because they really can't understand what benefit it would bring. There is always the question of "What's in it for me?"

If people don't see that there's a direct benefit for them, they won't understand why they would need to come out of their comfort zone and try something new or different. That's why helping people understand what might be on the other side and how to prepare for that new reality is a priority. It's important to empower people so that they really "own the change."

Incentives and Change Management

In order for people to embrace change and stretch outside of their comfort zone they need incentives. It is important for people to understand why the change is necessary and be able to identify the consequences of staying with the status quo.

Common Obstacles to Change Management

It's easy for companies to consider the material aspect of change. But what they seldom consider is "How are people going to feel about undertaking the challenges"? Getting a fresh look at how change will affect organizational culture, the way people are accustomed to working, is key to successful change. Research indicates that 50% to 75% of major change initiatives fail, in large part because the people component isn't looked after.

Understand the Fear of Change

Often what happens in any change movement is a lot of perceptions fed through the rumor mill. This creates stress and often-unfounded hearsay. It is really important for management to lay out a strategic, well-integrated communication plan that goes beyond just sending an email. It is essential to connect with people and give them the information they need.

Ask questions that will get a good understanding of what people fear about the change.

Are they afraid of losing their job?

Are they afraid of not having the skills to use the new tool/process?

Are they afraid of not being able to get along with the new boss?

Identifying these factors will greatly influence how to plan for the change process and will determine what you need to do to help everyone involved in the process.

Three Major Benefits of Implementing a Well Planned Change Management Process

1) A higher probability of long-term **success** of the change.

2) You get **buy-in** from your people. This is key to making your change happen.

3) The **transfer of skill** and capacity so that the change can be sustained. Coaching managers will ensure that they understand how to do successfully implement change and subsequently themselves become "agents of change."

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