

The Leader's Guide: 3 Key Steps to Effective Change Management

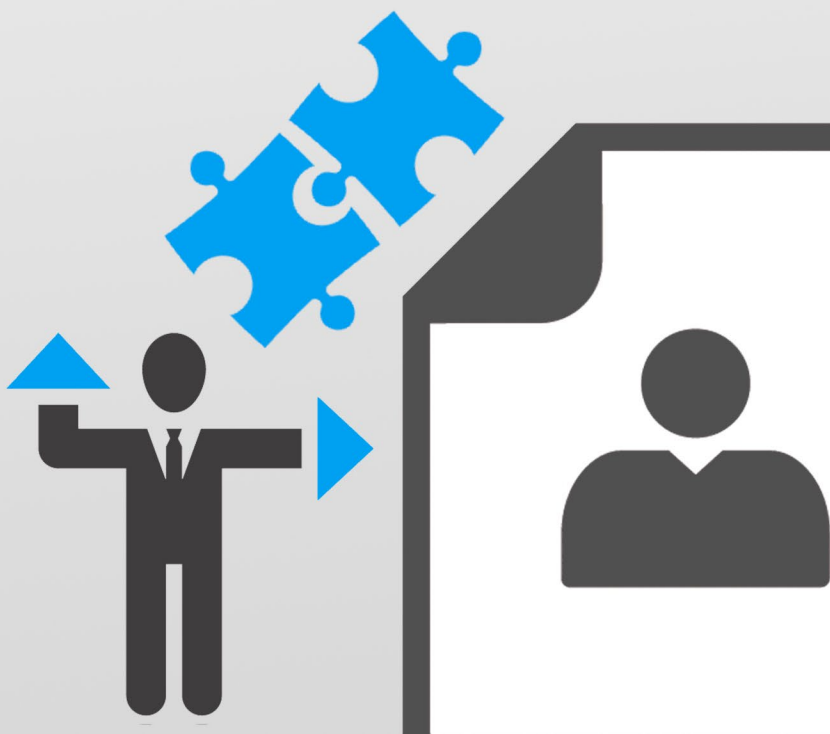


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INTRODUCTION:

What is Change Management?



Change Management

focuses on changing the current state (how things are done today) to the desired future state (new processes, systems, transformations, organizational structures, job roles, etc). It requires processes, tools and techniques to manage the people-side to achieve the required business aim and outcome.

Sometimes it is clear that a change is needed to make your business processes flow easier, run a more competitive organization, or even strengthen your bottom line. Here are 3 key steps to ensure a smooth transition and achieve effective change management.

STEP 1:

Lead the Change



Leading your organization throughout a period of change empowers you to develop and establish your team as a flexible and creative unit within your organization. It also allows you to own the change – not be owned by it.

A.) Build Your Team of Change Ambassadors

Having the right team to carry out change is crucial to the growth of not just the individuals of the team, but the entire organization. Good change makers can spot passionate people by the way they carry themselves, the confidence they exude, and the drive they possess. You will face adversity while implementing change, but as the change leader, you must know that your team can confidently overcome any obstacle. David Capece, founder and president of Sparxoo, recommends identifying and training “change ambassadors.” These people should be individuals with charismatic personalities who are widely respected among their peers. Train these employees first, then allow them to set a positive atmosphere while guiding other employees.



B.) Gain Buy In through Open Communication

Opening the lines of communication with your team creates a level of trust that cannot be gained otherwise. Being open about shifts will foster buy-in early. Make no mistake: buy-in doesn't happen once; you must continue to build trust. You'll likely have a team member who isn't an early adopter. A positive team environment, based on collaboration, is crucial when motivating change. People need to know that they're part of a team-oriented environment where trust comes first. Change often shakes people's foundations. By displaying honesty, you will create the security needed for your team to function and achieve.





C.) Establish Credibility with a Track Record of Efficiency

Proving that your team of change ambassadors has a successful track record of deploying change is what gives your team credibility. Upper management will take your team seriously when they prove the team is not only effective, but also efficient. When management decides to make a change, they often desire swift, but proper, execution of a plan. Because management is occupied with several organizational changes, they rely heavily on the assigned team to build morale and activate change seamlessly. Proving that your team is creative, but also efficient, will develop a trusting relationship between the team and management.



D.) Keep Your Team Moving Forward, and Teach Them that Change is a Journey

Change isn't easy, but it's inevitable. As a leader, it's your responsibility to guide your team through uncertain times. No matter what kind of shifts your team encounters, you need to – and can – manage the unsure times that lie ahead. Remind your team that change is a journey, not a destination. It's important to focus on today, working toward a common goal. We often think too far into the distance, and overlook small victories. When you plan for potential setbacks, you're better equipped to manage them when they arise – and defuse their impact.

CHAPTER 2:

Communicate the Change



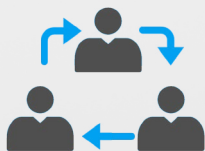
The most successful business leaders don't shy away from communicating change to their employees and to the rest of the world. Neither should you. Here are a few things to keep in mind while communicating a major change in your organization.

A.) Communicate Clearly through Multiple Channels

When communicating as a change leader, lay off the jargon and get down to business. It's not appropriate to be vague about necessary changes. Find out what is involved in the process and be proactive about sharing this information in an open and accurate manner with your team. Allowing the rumor mill to run rampant before bringing in professionals to handle tactful communication is a mistake. Finally, keep in mind that emails and vocal communications can be missed or overlooked. Try to communicate change frequently and through several mediums to ensure that announcements aren't passed over by busy staff members.



B.) Share Information ASAP



Opening the lines of communication with your team creates a level of trust that cannot be gained otherwise. Being open about shifts will foster buy-in early. Make no mistake: buy-in doesn't happen once; you must continue to build trust. You'll likely have a team member who isn't an early adopter. A positive team environment, based on collaboration, is crucial when motivating change. People need to know that they're part of a team-oriented environment where trust comes first. Change often shakes people's foundations. By displaying honesty, you will create the security needed for your team to function and achieve.

C.) Communicate the Reasons for Change

While it may be apparent that the organization needs a change, the reasons for change may not be obvious. Help your employees understand the need for the change by discussing problems with the current system, and soliciting advice in making the change successful. Compile this feedback with statistics and financial data. Design a presentation that outlines the reasons for change.



CHAPTER 3:

Implement the Change



Implementing a major change for your team can be a daunting task. By identifying potential barriers, taking manageable steps, and monitoring compliance you can ensure total adoption and effectively achieve the desired change.

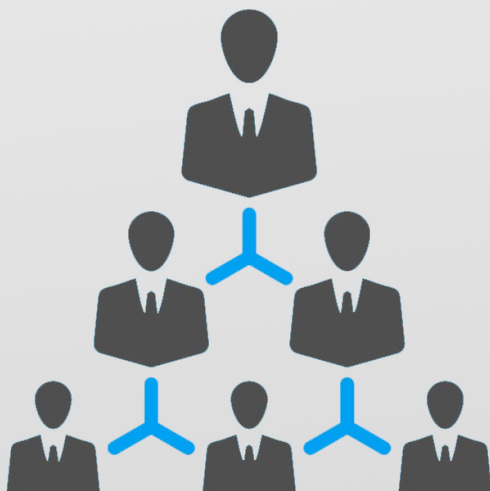
A.) Be Prepared for Potential Obstacles

Identify and remove any potential barriers to the implementation process before taking action. This will ensure the process runs smoothly, and can even expose bigger problems that might have surfaced later on in the process. Nothing is more frustrating than a new software system that is buggy, or a new set of rules that never stays the same. Make sure the change is rock-solid before you start implementing it in order to uncover flaws and inconsistencies that could cause trouble. Also, remember the importance of timing. Avoid rolling out the change during a time of the year that is busy, or when the organization is under exceptional pressure.



B.) Take Manageable Steps

Never underestimate the length of time required to implement change. There are numerous reports of poor performance in project management following mergers and other major changes. Establish a clear deadline for incorporating the change into everyday operations. Do not allow employees to stall and do not take on their workload, as this will only prolong everyone's pain. Rome wasn't built in a day, and organizations and people can't be expected to change in a small amount of time. Many habits are ingrained and require sufficient time to make changes. Leadership must allow adequate time for change.



C.) Monitor the Change

The change process, no matter how well thought out, is useless without proper compliance monitoring. If your plan hits a snag, identify and correct it quickly, before it sours the atmosphere. Establish a clear deadline for incorporating the change into everyday operations. Do not allow employees to stall and do not take on their workload by doing their work for them, as this will only prolong everyone's pain. If necessary, secure mentors for struggling employees to help get them on track, or take an afternoon to sit down with them yourself and go through the new processes step by step. Once this additional training has occurred, consider using a project management system to ensure compliance.



Following these 3 key steps can empower any business leader to manage change effectively.

Email this valuable set of change management tips with a friend or colleague.

Email to a friend



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Sign up for a consultation

About QuickBase

Designed with the business user in mind, Intuit's QuickBase is the fastest, easiest and most flexible way to help teams work together.

QuickBase provides one platform from which workgroups can easily create unlimited applications to automate business processes and improve communication and collaboration online. QuickBase online database applications solve critical business problems and help improve productivity and efficiency because they are tailored by the user to match the exact workflow and unique needs of their team - something complex point solutions or generic spreadsheets simply can't match.

Used by more than half of the Fortune 100, QuickBase is the only proven team collaboration platform that's perfect for business users - regardless of size, location or industry - while delivering the visibility and control IT executives need to manage enterprise-wide deployments in large companies.