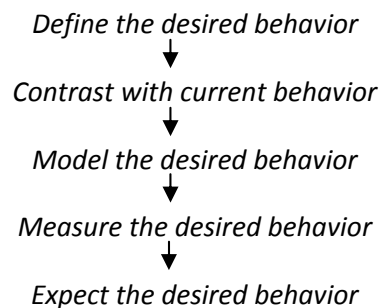


## **Incorporating Organizational change: 5 best management strategies**

Once a leader has determined that organizational change is necessary, he or she diligently manages the change process. Change management strategies generally focus on a combination of people, processes and technology. Ultimately the goal of a change strategy is to alter the behavior of an organization. Specifically, the leader seeks to change how the organization is responding to its customers, to the marketplace, to competition, to new technologies, etc. How a team is guided through the change process ultimately determines its success or failure.

When the leader shows the ability to focus on behavior change, the people treat the organization structure, the processes and the available technology as the tools they can use, and are expected to use, to change the behavior of the entire organization. This level of awareness is where breakthrough results are achieved.

The following steps are essential components to successfully manage the change process:



### ***How does the leader change behavior?***

The steps are straightforward:

#### **Step 1: Set up an accountability system that clearly outlines who is responsible for each important aspect of the change process.**

- Once a leader has determined that a significant organizational change is necessary, a change leader should be identified. The change leader is responsible for overseeing each aspect of the change cycle including planning, implementing, monitoring, and transitioning into routine business.
- The change leader must be empowered by senior leadership in order to succeed. A change leader must be able to direct resources and staff from all levels of an organization to effectively drive organizational change. For large initiatives, a change leader will need to assign responsible parties for each major action area. In addition, each individual action item should have a responsible party. Accountability is necessary to ensure that the change process is focused and driven.

- It is also key to include representatives from a variety of levels and job functions in change planning and implementation. It is impossible for a leader to predict the impact that changes will have on every level and facet of an organization. By including a variety of staff, a leader is able to obtain a clearer picture of how the organization will be affected and will be able to achieve the greatest degree of success while avoiding or minimizing any negative impact.

**Step 2: Effectively communicate with the change team and others impacted by the change.**

The flow of information in an organization is its life force. To maintain and improve the strength of the organization, information must be shared upward, laterally, and downward. Regular communication is vital to a successful change process. The following must be clearly communicated to staff:

- Why the change is necessary for the organization? Ideally this will include an overview of external and internal factors driving the change and the benefits to the organization.
- Who will be responsible for the change process? This includes identifying the change leader as well as the key team members responsible for major action areas.
- What mechanisms will be used to implement the change? This involves a description of the work plan and group processes that will be used to design, implement, and monitor the change process.
- Where staff assistance is needed to facilitate the change process? This includes clearly outlining how job duties will be affected and what is expected of staff during the change process.
- How the organization is progressing toward the desired change objective(s). This communication should occur at a regular frequency throughout the change process.

It is important for the above information to be communicated in a timely and understandable manner to all staff impacted by the change. In addition, it is recommended that multiple forms of communication be used, including verbal (e.g., conference calls, voice mail) and written (e.g., e-mails, memos). Written information, such as phone lists and process flow charts, are more critical for staff that will need to frequently reference the information during the change process.

**Step 3: Support the team in the challenges related to the process. Implement a mechanism to quickly problem solve barriers and answer questions related to the change process.**

Successful change is dependent on staff understanding, investment, and focus. A team needs to be supported through each aspect of the change process. The following table suggests areas and examples of appropriate staff support:

- Tools needed to get the job done: Providing staff with revised policies and procedures and detailed written instructions regarding the change.
- Information needed to proceed with change initiative: Set up daily meetings or an electronic site (via intranet and/or e-mail) where staff can ask questions and obtain assistance with issues.

- Staff training related to the change: Providing staff with training on new policies and procedures, changes in their job function, how to communicate the change internally and externally, etc.
- Timely response for urgent issues: Set up a quick response system for immediate issues such as a telephone tree with cell phone and pager numbers by area of issue.

#### **Step 4: Acknowledge employee and organizational successes.**

It is very important to acknowledge employee and organizational successes during the change process. This allows employees to know that their efforts are making a difference. People want to know that there is a meaningful purpose and a productive outcome resulting from their investment of time and energy.

Leaders can easily make the mistake of focusing on what is left to do and not taking enough time to celebrate the gains that have been made. While understandable, this mistake can lead to a loss of staff investment in the change process. If staff begins to think that an objective is unachievable, or that the organization will never be satisfied, it can lead to a reduced intensity of effort and even loss of employees.

Below are a few examples to acknowledge accomplishments along the road to successful change:

- Thank you notes to staff for their investment and hard work related to the change initiative.
- Celebrations involving food, such as a cake with an applicable message, being brought into a staff meeting.
- Certificates of achievement for noteworthy staff accomplishments.
- Small gifts such as pens, candy, or gift certificates for special contributions.
- Leaders reporting on successes during meetings or in written communication.

Staff will appreciate knowing that their contributions are recognized by leadership. They will also know that their time and effort is positively contributing to the organizational achievement of stated change objectives.