

## **TOP TEN TIPS FOR MANAGING CHANGE SUCCESSFULLY**

All organisations experience change throughout their life cycles. Sometimes changes are forced upon them due to either internal or external factors e.g. new CEO/MD taking over or economic pressures. On other occasions, however, organisations decide to make planned changes in order to achieve specific objectives e.g. in order to expand or diversify or even simply to stay ahead of technical advances. Managing change is often perceived as a difficult thing to achieve and many organisations fail to achieve what they set out to do. If sufficient attention is paid to the important factors, however, there is no reason why any organisation should not achieve successful change.

### **1, Is your 'change plan' clear, realistic and achievable?**

If you want to bring about change within your organisation, you need to be clear about what it is that you want to change and what you want to change it to. This sounds like common sense but you would be amazed at how many organisations enter into change without having a clear idea of what they expect to achieve at the end of it. Before you embark on any change, think through what you want the end state to look like and what is the likelihood of you being able to make it happen. Break the change down into manageable chunks.

### **2, How will you know when you have achieved the change that you want to achieve?**

You need to think about what your current baseline is i.e. where are you now, where do you want to be in X time and how are you going to measure it? Your change goal may be to expand the organisation, if so, how will you measure that expansion e.g. in terms of new staff employed/% increased business/% increased market share? It is important to be clear from the outset about how you will measure the change and ensure that you have baseline measures against which to measure the extent of change achieved.

### **3, How will you consult and involve your employees in the change process?**

Research demonstrates that employees respond best to change when they are involved in it and when they can see some personal benefit. Make sure that your change plan includes regular consultation with your employees. Some organisations get confused between the words 'consultation' and 'communication' which is why we have separated them here. Communication is generally more of a one way process whereas consultation is a two way process where people's opinions are sought and acted upon. Consulting with your employees and involving them in the change is more likely to get their buy-in than simply communicating news about the change.

#### **4, What behaviours/attitudes will your employees need to change and to what?**

Once you have decided on the change that you want to bring about, the next step is to think about what this means for your employees on a practical basis i.e. do you want them to behave in a different way? Do you need them to perform different or additional tasks? Will the change require them to have different attitudes? This is an important step because it then leads you to another part of the planning process which is about how you are going to support your employees in acquiring any new skills or assist them in demonstrating changed attitudes.

#### **5, Do you have a plan to train/educate staff affected by the change?**

Once you have identified the additional skills/attitudes that you require from your employees, you will need to devise a plan to provide the necessary training/education to support them. The need for training/education may be minimal, depending on the scope of the change, or it may be extensive. Consideration will also have to be taken with regard to the best time to commence training/education. On some occasions, it may be more helpful to offer training/educations once you have achieved employee buy-in, whereas on other occasions, the training/education may need to be implemented early in order to help achieve employee buy-in.

#### **6, Identifying any potential resistance to change**

People view 'Resistance to change' as a negative aspect of change management. 'Resistance', however, can be anticipated and managed so that it does not become

a negative force. You should start by asking yourself 'Who is going to be most affected by the change and how are they likely to feel'. Within any change process there are always people who feel that they are losing something as a result of the change e.g. status and it is important to understand this and how people feel about the change. The process of consultation and involvement (mentioned earlier) should provide you with the information that you need to start thinking about potential resistance.

## **7, How will you 'communicate' the change so that you motivate and engage people?**

There is sometimes a temptation to try and 'big-up' change so that it sounds like the best thing since sliced bread. Unfortunately, human beings can generally spot inauthenticity at 50 paces. Ensure that you communicate the reasons for the change and the nature of the change as honestly as you can. Explain any benefits that will accrue and keep communicating throughout the change process. Don't just communicate facts, use employee views and stories (from your consultation and involvement) to help bring the change process to life. There will be some employees in favour of the change, use their positivity to help influence others around them.

## **8, What drivers currently make things happen the way they do?**

Part of the planning process for change management is about looking for the factors that will either drive or hinder change. One good place to start is by looking at the factors that drive the way things are currently done e.g. organisational processes and policies, customer requirements, operational demands etc. Any factors which drive the way things are currently done will have to be amended so that they drive the new attitudes /behaviours/ways of doing things that you want to implement.

## **9, What attitudes and behaviours do you currently reward?**

You will need to explore the behaviours/attitudes that people are rewarded for. This is important, as you will need to ensure that in the future, employees are only rewarded for demonstrating the new behaviours/attitudes. This sounds straightforward and you might be thinking about bonuses etc , however, there are other less tangible rewards that exist within organisations e.g. an employee may work slowly because

he enjoys the camaraderie that ensues when his team members help him catch up at the end of the day. Be clear about the rewards that exist and use them to reinforce the change.

## **10, How will you ensure that people do not fall back into old ways of doing things?**

Many organisations fall into the trap of having a plan to implement the change which ends on the day that the change is implemented. The assumption being, that the change will just continue of its own volition. Unfortunately, this often does not happen and people slip back into the old ways of doing things. There needs to be a 'post-implementation' section to your change plan to ensure that the change is monitored on an ongoing basis and that support is provided to employees. A watchful eye is needed, particularly in the early post- implementation months, to ensure that everything stays on track.