Become A Change Champion

By

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Exploring Change Management

Change is inevitable no matter where you work. On a daily basis you may need to change the workflow used by your team. Upper management may be working with executives to implement new projects or new corporate model. As a manager, it is essential for you to understand change so that you can protect your employees and help them to work through their fears and natural inclination to resist.

In order to do so, you must understand the following key principles with regard to change:

- You must be aware of the reasons for the change so that you are able to explain it.
- All members of your team, including yourself, must be willing to participate in the change to ensure it is successful.
- Each member of your team needs to display the ability, in mindset and skill, to move forward with change.
- As a manager, you must be willing and able to reinforce the changes until your employees are implementing them regularly.

Change isn't easy for anyone, but with the right mindset any team can work together to see it through. We'll talk about change and how to handle it further within this report.

The Three Types Of Change

Change is a constantly evolving issue. We face change every single day and, as managers, have the responsibility of guiding our teams through change unscathed.

In order to do so it is important to recognise that different types of change exist. The three main types are:

- Developmental change
- Transitional change
- Transformational change

Developmental change occurs when you recognise a need to make improvements to an existing situation. You aren't recreating the entire workflow but are instead refining it to make it better.

Transitional changes happen when you recognise the need to implement a completely new course of action. You have a set plan for making this change happen and are able to control the implementation process over a designated period of time.

Transformational change is one of the most interesting, though. Transformational change isn't necessarily something that you control as much as you recognise and survive. A new process or "norm" creates itself as a result of the failure of another and usually takes its own shape. You can, of course, refine it as it develops but it is not usually planned.

Being able to recognise the three types of change should help you to develop your own change management skills. If you can identify the type of change occurring in your workplace you'll be better able to control the reactions your team members have to those changes!

Diagnose & Plan For Change

Now that you understand the different types of change, you need to understand how to plan for them. Many managers have difficulties diagnosing what actually needs to change within their department or business, and then worry about how to plan for it.

When change has been recognised as a key component to successful future performance, it is time to analyse what steps you can take to implement it. There are several questions that need to be addressed at this point:

- **What are our performance gaps between actual and desired states?** You must be absolutely clear on what the current performance is and where you want it to be.

- **What are the reasons for this gap?** Do you have the right resources and people in place, and are the reasons for shortfall within your area of influence?

- **What are our specific goals?** These are different to what we want to achieve overall, as they are more specific and precise.

- **Who are the involved stakeholders?** Who exactly will be affected and involved in any changes we implement?

- **What processes will have to change to achieve the goals?** If there are process-changes needed, what implications will they have on clients or other parts of the business?

- **What consequences do we anticipate from the changes?** What other areas will be affected if we go through with it?

- **Who will be responsible for the change?** Do they know what their roles will be during the process?

- **How will we measure success?** Milestones have to be put in along the way, so we can see we are plotting the right direction for a successful implementation.

By clarifying these thoughts, you give yourself great opportunities to plan any change initiative successfully.

Effectively Implementing Change

Change can be a touchy subject within many organisations. Not only do you aspire to make a change, but the physical plan must ultimately make it through the chain of command before it can be implemented. Once it is approved you have to find an effective way of implementing the changes you wish to achieve without alienating or causing fear in the people who are used to their current procedures.

In short, if not handled carefully you'll end up with a real mess on your hands. Don't forget to keep the following things in mind as you prepare to introduce a new change to your company or even your individual workgroup.

Don't Forget The People

Don't forget that any change you implement is going to impact the people within your organisation, whether you want to admit it or not. You'll likely shuffle job roles and in some cases people will change positions or join new teams. Some may even leave the company and these changes alone will impact everyone involved, whether they're personally involved or not. Make sure you frequently communicate with everyone in the office as you implement change. Remember, your team members are human beings too and no one operates well in uncertain conditions.

Make Sure Upper Management Cooperates

There's nothing worse than trying to get a job done in an environment where upper management doesn't take the time to embrace change. I've worked in offices where certain members of management, sometimes even the sales team, feel as though they're exempt from change. The truth is that they should be the mastheads for change, not the stragglers resisting at the end. Make sure that your upper management teams and CEOs learn about the changes you're implementing first. They need to set a good example for the rest of the workgroup.

Communicate Constantly

Communicate with every member of your team before, during, and after the change implementation process. Communication means making sure they understand why the changes are necessary, making sure they understand their roles in the process, and then confirming that they're implementing the changes correctly. Make time to listen to their concerns as well. If you don't, they won't feel inclined to cooperate with you.

The theme here is the importance of your communication skills. Your team members spend a lot of their time at work and should feel comfortable in their environments. Make sure you take the time to reassure them throughout the process, no matter how much time it takes.

Getting Your People Committed To Change

Building upon the information in the last section, it is important for you to realise that for in order for you to be truly effective when implementing change you need full commitment from your team, and need to ensure that they wholeheartedly believe in the forward-looking ideas of the leadership team. Without that commitment, you will fall short of any long-lasting change you might want to bring into the business.

But how can you get people to be totally with you in any change initiative you want to introduce? Here are some tips:

Agree The Change Or Transformation Journey

Get people to tell you their fears and challenges concerning the changes you are planning. Then get them to agree what changes would be beneficial for all. This journey is then one that is looked forward to, rather than resisted.

Be Absolutely Clear Who Is Going To Be Involved & How

You need to deliberate, thinking carefully about the nature of the change you will be going through. That way, you will be providing benefits in terms of the way change is brought about and the extra motivation required for sustained implementation. So, you need a coherent involvement strategy for all who are going to be affected by the changes. Who will drive it? Who will strategise it? Who will implement it? Be clear on what the involvement will be from those who will be affected.

Model The Desired Changes You Want To See

You can't expect people to accept and drive change if they don't see you and your management team actively being involved, motivated by what the results will be, and dealing with challenges in a proactive way. Be the leader of change that all your people can follow, so they see the journey as one to be enjoyed as opposed to be endured.

Embed The Change In Everything You Do

Looking back over your shoulder at how things used to be will only distract the momentum of change from your team. Resist the temptation to look at the change as painful. Get people trying out new ideas that link in with and support the changing way of working. Change will only become the norm if people recognise how much better things are as a result of the forward-thinking opportunities that will exist.

Commitment will not come easy from people, because there is always going to be the risks inherent in any change initiative. Build people's hopes on a new future by discussing results that will come, not harping back on what used to be. That way, the level of involvement you can expect from your team will be voluntary, not forced

Why People Resist Change

You may have tried to initiate change in your team, seen the benefits of the change and even communicated it well to every team member. Then you may have been puzzled by certain people's reactions where they resisted the changes and wondered why they put up such a defense of the current position.

Well, you're not alone. Many managers have hit the wall of resistance and created real challenges by not approaching the situation in the right way.

Here are four reasons why the resistance to change may be quite large:

1. **The need for security and stability:** some people rely heavily on the current status quo for their self-worth. Changing something may affect their secure position and all they associate with change is pain.
2. **They fear the results of the change:** personal effects for themselves may outweigh the benefits they see happening.
3. **A misunderstanding of the reasons for change:** the person may lack information as to the reasons for change, or it hasn't been communicated properly with them.
4. **Disagreement as to the reasons for change:** they assess the situation differently or may disagree that change is needed at all.

Any of these reasons may produce obstacles to the changes you are attempting to put forward.

It's important to **ascertain the reasons** for the resistance before prescribing the way forward, as using the incorrect means may crank up the resistance levels and you're left with even more obstacles than before.

How To Overcome Resistance To Change

Now that you understand why people resist change, you can start to master the techniques to help you overcome this resistance.

Here are four techniques can lessen the emotional and cultural challenges of achieving strategic transformations in organisations.

So many market dynamics affect the way businesses operate today. To survive and thrive, companies not only must identify the right new strategy, but also must employ it quickly so it reaches all levels of the organisation.

Knowledge alone, though, does not motivate action. Employees can always build resistance to change. There are many reasons why they would resist, so let's take a look at four techniques that can change people's reaction to what is happening:

Ensure Employees Know The External Pressures That Are Driving Change

Staff can be energised to participate in a change initiative if they understand how their work contributes to the company's success. You can use small group meetings to reach all employees and to explain changes in what's happening in the marketplace. Make sure everyone is clear on why the change HAS to happen.

Create Motivation For The Change In People Who Have The Power To Drive It Forward

People who "own" and drive the change can serve as role models. Some will have influence because of their positions or titles; among them will be early adopters and resisters of change, and both will affect the way people around them think. Some are already demonstrating the behaviour, values, and capabilities crucial to the future operating model, and these are the ones you need to encourage and support.

Understand & Appreciate How People Feel During Change

Help people deal with their emotional reactions to change and decide whether they can thrive in the new environment. Their emotions will either drive or put a brake on the forward momentum. Be aware of what they are going through and how it will affect each person. It's surprising sometimes how their feelings can influence their logical thinking patterns.

Support The Change By Establishing The New Culture

When change is in progress or has been established, it's vital to offer support to people by employing the right tools and processes that drive change so that the foundations for the new ways of working can be built on. The changes have to be embedded into the everyday working environment so that people identify there is no going back. The climate needs to be supported so there is a feeling of permanence concerning the new ways.

These four techniques can act as antidotes to resisting change, especially if they are driven by the management team and supported all the way by the teams affected.

About MTD

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Sean McPheat is the **Chief Executive Officer** of the multi-award winning **MTD Training Group**.

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