

Setting up the Change Management Process for Success

Imagine this scenario: your company is preparing for organizational change now or in the coming months. Maybe you need to restructure in order to drive greater productivity and revenue. Or perhaps change management is necessary at your firm to complete a large merger or acquisition, smoothly and effectively. Regardless of the reason(s) for business transformation, it's rarely an easy process.

In fact, the Harvard Business Review reports that there's still a relatively low success rate for these types of programs. "Corporate transformations still have a miserable success rate, even though scholars and consultants have significantly improved our understanding of how they work," the source states. "Studies consistently report that about three-quarters of change efforts flop - either they fail to deliver the anticipated benefits, or they are abandoned entirely."

This of course can lead to a large waste of time for your organization and deeply impact the company's bottom line. Therefore, it's crucial to put a strong change management process in place, so your company and its employees complete the change efficiently and with little difficulty.

Marquis Parker, vice president of business services for MRINetwork, adds that an organization needs to always put employees first during any transformation processes to ensure the best results. "If you want to see the changes at your organization occur smoothly and without fault, it's important that you always consider how your decisions will affect your employees, the heartbeat of your company," he says.



To help, here are three strategies your business can use to change effectively and achieve your goal easily this year and beyond:

1. Design the change management program for your company's needs.

The first step in successfully setting up a change management program for your company is to execute a process based on your business's unique needs. For example, don't strive for "quick wins" or make other hasty choices that may end up facilitating a faulty plan of attack. Instead, take the time to think through your process, only after having a strong case for change.

You also need to understand three crucial elements of your change management strategy, according to the Harvard Business Review:

1. The catalyst for transformation
2. The organization's underlying quest
3. The leadership capabilities needed to see it through

Take a step back and ensure that you have a solid understanding of why your organization needs change, which problem(s) change is attempting to solve, and whether you have the leadership resources to be effective. Doing so will greatly enhance your company's ability to manage a large strategy shift without failing.

2. Communicate with key stakeholders.

As part of any strong, well-organized change management process, you should feel empowered to communicate effectively with your company's key stakeholders. This is defined as speaking with and proactively alerting leadership, employees, shareholders

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and others who have a profound impact on your business and who may be affected by these decisions.

In order to communicate with these key stakeholders, you shouldn't only discuss important change processes with senior staff, according to one Forbes Magazine article about communicating change.

"If you think your company's strategy conversations should only take place at the most senior level, you could unknowingly be crippling your company's bottom line," the source states.

Instead, you need to craft what's called a strategic narrative. This will serve three purposes: it communicates the upcoming changes, shares the reason behind those changes and discusses the future process for the organization and its key stakeholders.

So, what are strategic narratives? According to Forbes, they are a "form of storytelling, and like all good stories, they need a compelling plot, characters, a climax, and a conclusion. By telling this story, employees and other stakeholders will understand their place in the larger narrative and how they can take an active role in shaping the future of your organization."

As a result, communicating in this manner will greatly increase the chances of your change management process being a success. It will also position the changes in a clear and concise way, make company leadership appear more humane and create an environment of inclusivity.

"Make sure that you put together a thoughtfully executed communication plan so that key stakeholders feel knowledgeable about the upcoming and already completed transformations at your company," says Parker. "Let them ask questions too. After all, the last thing you want is someone to feel left out because of a lack of foresight or planning during such a crucial period for your organization."

3. Identify the resources to lead change effectively.

Along with designing a powerful change process and communicating those changes clearly, you also need to define the resources necessary for success. While this isn't always easy, it is crucial for the organization's future.

For example, you need to recognize whether or not you have the human resources function in place to proactively and efficiently implement the decided-upon change management plan, according to Forbes.

"If you do not have the right understanding or team to manage the plan, then you may want to consider an experienced change management consultant, because having the wrong person in this leading role can mean the difference between success and failure in a merger," the article states.

You should "share financial information, customer feedback, employee satisfaction survey results, industry projections and challenges, and data from processes you measure" to service whether or not any other resources are to implement change, according to an article on thebalancecareers.com.

Once this data has been tabulated and you have a measure of what's likely to occur as a result, you'll have a greater understanding of necessary resources. "Spend extra time and energy working with your frontline leader staff and line managers to ensure that they understand, can communicate about, and support the changes," according to the article. "Their action and communication are critical in molding the opinion of the rest of your workforce."

By using the above strategies, your company will be ready to manage organizational change in a structured, cohesive and efficient way. "You'll be thankful that you took the time to brainstorm and draft a comprehensive plan of action, based on these strategies, before enacting any changes," says Parker. "Your company will be stronger for it."