

Managing Change

We take a very pragmatic view of change management. This is reflected in our training - we run workshops that help managers to manage the changes they face better. By "better" we mean achieving the desired outcomes whilst minimising disruption - disruption to staff, operations and clients/customers.

Our work in this field has been varied. For some clients we have designed and delivered training, for others we have facilitated change workshops, for yet others, we have designed and run programmes to ease the introduction of new and controversial work practices.

Our focus is upon developing structured approach based on clarity in identifying the key issues and a change strategy, planning and communication of the changes, and organised involvement of people. In both our consultancy and training we focus upon the following:

1. **Preparing the change**

Scoping the change and developing a strategy in terms of - "this is what the change is about; this is why it is needed; and this is how we intend to progress". Basing this on a diagnosis to clearly identify the key issues and the most appropriate change strategy

2. **Involving People**

How, when, and where to involve people. Using this to improve communications and understanding and get ideas and support.

3. **Organising & Planning the changes**

Using approaches from project management to plan and organise the changes. To ensure that the changes happen but also to minimise any disruption.

4. **Managing people in change.**

Organising and communicating to keep people on-board and minimise conflict and confusion. Also, handling people's reactions on a face-to-face basis.

Clients include: Crown Prosecution Service, HMSO, The Public Record Office, and MOD.

Change Management Case Study

Context

A government department was introducing new working practices and structures into each of its thirteen regions. The management of one of the regions asked us to help them design a change programme to ease the introduction of the changes into their ten branch offices. They felt that they needed a programme to help them introduce the changes effectively and smoothly, and ensure minimum disruption to the services they provided. They had done some preparatory work and had already selected one branch to pilot the changes.

Task

We worked with the senior managers to design and run a change programme involving "action workshops" at three levels:

- the regional centre management
- the pilot branch office.
- the management of the ten local offices in the region

First, we organised and ran a workshop for the regional management team. This focussed on the key change issues facing the region, how they could be best managed, and the management team's own role and that of the local office managers. During this workshop, we and the team planned the work with the pilot branch.

Next we organised and ran a workshop for all managers and staff in the pilot branch. This workshop focussed initially on discussion about the future and about feelings and concerns, and then moved onto work on the imminent changes - identifying what problems would arise, and how to resolve them. It resulted in a branch action plan for introducing the changes.

Finally, we ran a workshop for the managers of the other local offices. This focussed on the regional key change issues and their role in managing them, but also the preparations they needed to make for when they themselves needed to introduce the changes, based on the results of the pilot office. It also laid the foundations for a support network where they could call on each other for support in their own office.

Outcome

The pilot changes went extremely smoothly. Of the pilots throughout the whole country, this particular one was recognised as highly successful. In terms of less disruption and confusion, fewer errors and wasted time, fewer customer dissatisfactions, and a better staff morale. As a bonus, the management of the region had learned much that helped them to manage subsequent changes better.

Change Management Course Pen Pictures

Developing a Change Strategy

To help managers in designing and developing effective change strategies. One or two days covering:-

- Scoping the Change
 - identifying what must change;
- Establishing a Change Framework. - identifying how change needs to be introduced. Mapping drivers for change, blockages, and areas of support;
- Formulating a communicable Change Strategy
 - what is to be achieved & a “roadmap” to achieve it;
- Making it happen in practice;
- A wide various of techniques and approaches are introduced as required.

Managing Change Effectively

To help managers develop the skills to manage and introduce change effectively. One or two days covering:-

Clarifying the key change issues and developing a change strategy;

Managing people's reactions to change including best practice of communications;

Planning and organising the implementation;

Gaining and maintaining support for the changes;

Includes practical focus sessions.

Change Facilitation & Consultancy Skills

A workshop to train participants in the skills of change facilitation and consultancy. One or two days covering:-

- The consultancy/facilitation process & role;
- Establishing & building the relationship - putting clients at ease, establishing credibility and authority, gaining respect and trust;
- Understanding and using groups - how groups develop and behave; how to get them to move forward;
- Intervention Strategies - what to use; when & how?
- Key interpersonal skills - observing, listening, questioning, challenging, and influencing;
- A self-assessment helps participants identify their own strengths & weaknesses.

Managing & Leading Change Course

Overview

The course has the following themes flowing through it:

1. **A structured approach** to managing change and practice in the use of it.
 2. **Practical sessions** where managers diagnose delegates changes situations and help them develop change strategies and plans.
 3. **Experience Exchange.** Opportunities for managers to review and share their own experiences - of the changes they currently face, of their experience in managing change, and in what they see to be the key issues involved.
 4. **Approaches & Tools.** Training in practical approaches and tools that help in managing change. In particular in gaining and maintaining support, organising change projects, and handling peoples reactions.
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Example Programme

Aims & Objectives

The course aims to introduce managers to the key skills and approaches to managing and leading change in their organisations. In particular it aims to:

- introduce a practical structured approach to managing change,
- demonstrate the benefits and strengths of involving people in the change process and the means by which this can be achieved,
- provide delegates with an opportunity to develop change strategies and plans for real situations,
- give delegates the confidence to employ such approaches in managing their own changing situations.

Day 1

0930 Introductory Session

- Introduction to the workshop with group exercise to establish delegates' personal objectives, the type of changes that they face, and the change management issues that they face.
- **A Framework for Managing Change**
Covering a five stage approach to managing change:- identifying key change issues, developing a change strategy, preparing & planning changes, managing implementation, and stabilising changes.

1030 How People React to Change

- Covering the factors that help and hinder effective change, the stages that people are likely to progress through, and managing people in different states. Closes on issues of communications.

1330 Developing your Change Strategy

- Covering establishing a change strategy comprising a view/vision of the desired outcome of the changes and the key change issues involved in achieving it.
- Delegates then work in groups on one participant's change situation, helping them to develop a change strategy in terms of the key change issues, possible options, and a communicable view of the future.

1700 Close

Day 2

0930 Planning and Organising Change.

- Covers the more common implementation strategies employed in introducing change (pilots, trials, etc.), followed by a session on appropriate planning techniques.

1100 Managing the Implementation

- Covering the three key elements involved in managing an implementation:- maintaining support, handling people's reactions, and progressing the change project activities.

1330 Formulating an Implementation Strategy and Plan.

- Delegates return to their groups to evaluate the implementation issues and develop a plan and strategy to tackle them. This will cover ensuring support, planning and organising the change, and handling people's reactions. In particular, it will focus on the first steps to be taken.

1545 Change Issues

- Learning sets where delegates work in self-selecting groups, each group working on a particular change management issue they feel is important to them. Presentations and discussion.

1700 Close

Best Practice Change Management

"And it ought to be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.

Because the innovator has for enemies all those who have done well under the old conditions, and lukewarm defenders in those who may do well under the new" - from "The Prince" by Machiavelli

No changes are made without some difficulties, however is clear that some changes go far better than others. The following two experiences illustrate this.

The first was the closure of a factory. It was a good factory but there was no longer a market for its' products and it was to close in six months. Alan, was appointed to manage the closure. Not many people envied him that task and fully expected him to have problems.

In the event the closure went smoothly and somehow, even in that situation, he managed to get the respect and support of all the staff. To the extent that on the day of the actual closure six months later, a group of them pulled him from a meeting and took him to the production line where they asked him to pack the last TV set ever to be made there.

How did Alan gain such respect and support in such difficult circumstances? Talking to him during this period, three things became clear.

- **First**, he was crystal clear as to his objectives. He believed strongly that his job was not simply to close the factory but also to help all staff through the changes, and he invested time and effort in doing that. He saw it not just as humanitarian, but as "good business".
- **Second**, he realised that in change, each person has their own individual concerns and agendas. His approach was to be as open as he could, keeping them always up-to-date with progress so that they could form and update their own personal plans.
- **Third**, he developed the whole management process to support the above, getting the whole management team to the same state of mind. He asked his managers what help they needed, and then got them to do the same with their staff. He got them to be as open with their staff as he was with them.

The benefits? He gained their support in smoothing the closure and minimising the "muddle in the middle".

The second did not go so well. A national operation of local offices was being restructured and rationalised. The management team was divided about what the changes should be and how they should be introduced. The attempted secrecy, the endless political debates and the in-fighting meant that no-one was really ever sure what had been agreed - rumours were chasing each other around the grapevine. Managers were spending so much time on the politics and rumours, that no time was left to manage the changes. People became concerned and angry. Productivity plummeted, paperwork was misfiled or lost, customers mistreated or ignored.

From experiences such as these, the following list of "best-practice" guidelines has been drawn - approaches that best practice organisations employ.

Best Practice Guidelines for Managing Change

1. Think long and hard - and then act quickly

All change programmes involve two phases:

- a phase where a group (perhaps the management team) develops a change strategy in terms of what changes are needed and how should they be introduced,
- then, often following an announcement, a phase of planning and activity where the changes are introduced.

Such phases always exist, although often they may be indistinct and informal.

When organisations rush the first phase, they often end-up designing changes on-the-run - inventing ideas as they go along. When organisations let the introduction of the changes spread over too long a timescale, they often find that other problems arise - productivity falls as people try to cope with both old and new working practices, a "planning blight" develops stopping other things happening, or people that they wish to retain leave and go elsewhere.

As a general rule, organisations that manage changes well don't rush the first phase of developing the change strategy, but invest time and effort in it. Then when that is clear, they then plan and implement the changes very quickly. This allows the "old" practices to be forgotten and the new organisation to take over and become the norm.

2. Build cohesion and commitment in the top-team

Leadership from the top is key to all such change.

To do that the top team needs to signal that it is organised, committed, and considerate. If the team itself is in disarray, then the staff fairly quickly lose trust in them. Developing the change strategy, planning the changes, and communicating are three key elements in this.

3. A Change Strategy

Invest time in developing a change strategy covering:

- **the key change issues** - the problems/difficulties that we are attempting to resolve
- **a view** - of the outcome sought, of what we are attempting to achieve
- **the changes** - what changes will need to take place to achieve that outcome
- **the overall plan** - how those changes will be introduced
- **people strategy** - what issues people will face and how they will be managed
- **managing the transition** - minimising the difficulties and disruption caused by the introduction of the changes

Doing this provides a more comprehensive and robust change plan, the opportunity to build consensus in the top team, and the information needed for a communication exercise.

4. People Strategy

In radical change, people react as individuals and need to be managed as such. When the changes are finally announced, their eyes will drop whilst they think about their own agendas - career, promotion, pensions, their new team leader, who they would be sitting next to, etc. That's the reality.

At this point traditional management tools (annual appraisals etc,) lose influence - they just don't seem so relevant to people. What people do want are things like:

- Be fair about it. Be honest.
- If you must do this to me, at least be organised and efficient about it.
- Be open with me and give me the information I need to sort out my future.
- And sometimes - listen to me, at least let me help you get it right this time.

The key step is to accept this, and formulate a strategy for achieving it. Two key elements are:

- **Use the "line"**
For people in this situation, management is their line manager. If people want to know something, they ask their colleagues and their line manager. Although Project Teams and Newsletters have a role to play in change management, when it comes to staff morale and involvement line management is the best way forward.
The task of senior management is to facilitate this by creating the conditions that enable this to happen.
- **Involve People - Involvement works.**
If you can do it you get a better end-result, less muddle in the middle, and people who really understand what is going on and what the implications for them are. The best way is to get them working in workshops or project teams on how the changes affect their own work processes - an area they know better than anyone else. Its not always feasible but the benefits are massive.

5. Communicate well - continually

Most changes that run into difficulties do so because people become confused, worried, unsure what is going on, and upset and angry. Some of these feelings are inevitable but others are caused by lack of information and an enforced reliance on rumours for information. The following are the core elements of any change communications strategy:

- **Start to find-out what people really think and feel about the changes.**
There are various possibilities, the main ones being surveys, by simply talking more to people, and staff workshops. The last two are by far the most effective.
- **Help staff to have a view, a hook to hang things on.**
Although a change programme may seem to form a coherent, logical whole when it is formulated, for people in the organisation everything can become mixed up as confusing bits and pieces of detailed changes when things actually start happening.
It helps if people can have a simple view as to where it is all leading, something that helps them make sense of things. Memos and presentations can help but meetings and workshops are far better - in these situations people need to "talk and think" about the changes before they can make sense.

- **Try to be Open.**

The temptation is often to try and keep things secret until the whole picture is available, on the basis that “If we tell people they will only worry”.

Unfortunately, secrecy tends to encourage rumours, rumours that are often many times worse than the reality. People don't criticise managers for saying “We have received this, we are not sure about the implications, but we will tell you more when we can”.

6. Finally - manage to minimise the "muddle-in-the-middle"

The costs and disruption of change can be horrendous. Often hidden, they are not all inevitable - most can be avoided. In the first case there were no major disruptions. In contrast, in the second case the company paid the price with severe costs, disruption, and dissatisfied customers.

- **Be organised and efficient - Project Manage the changes.**

Otherwise you end up doing silly things that unnecessarily upset staff, like redundancy notices sent out in the week before Christmas. Such mishaps travel the grapevine at the speed of light.

- **Manage Productivity losses.**

In any change programme, time is lost because people are worried and stressed. They need training on the new arrangements, and you need some “parallel running” during the changeover. All these reduce productivity and lead to errors and work “backlogs”. Typically, productivity can fall by 25% to 50% during change.

- **Treat people fairly**

In practice, people won't feel too concerned about maintaining files and caring for their customers if they feel that the changes are being badly managed and that no-one cares.