It's Time for Change: 6 Tips to Make Your Change Program Succeed

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Let's face it — change is overwhelming, time-consuming and challenges us in ways we may not immediately appreciate. Studies have shown that we are all creatures of habit, and change, while well intended, disrupts our routine. Would you be interested in proven techniques to make change less painful and more effective?

There is actually a science to effectively executing and managing change. This science, organizational change management, is rooted in organizational psychology and solid business management fundamentals.

It came into existence as a result of actions taken to help remedy the poor enterprise resource planning (ERP) software implementations of the 1980s and '90s. As companies started implementing these enormous software packages they realized that handling the change was just as complicated as implementing the software.

Still, many organizations today embark on change — post-merger integration, process improvement, new programs, etc. — with no plan for handling the organizational and people aspects of change. In the flurry of it all, it appears as if leaders may have forgotten that people are the link between ambition and achievement.

According to recent studies by Gartner, IBM and McKinsey, 70 percent of large-scale change efforts fail.

Here are a few helpful tips for a successful change effort:

1   **Calculate the delta between where your organization is and where it needs to be.** Pinpoint gaps and make plans to close them. Prioritize. Perform a change readiness assessment.

Seek to understand the history of how your organization dealt with change in the past, as this serves as a good indicator of how things might play out today. Prepare for those.

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2 **Develop a robust change management strategy.** Create a plan to address the impact of change on your organization and make sure that people are ready, willing and able to perform effectively in the new environment upon deployment.
Ensure adequate and continuous levels of leadership alignment, sponsorship, communication, stakeholder engagement and training as part of your change program.

3 **Involve key players and naysayers.** Change does not easily happen in a vacuum. Gather-up your "A" team and solicit their thoughts and council. For meaningful input don't overlook naysayers. Through them you will obtain a glimpse into a reality you may not know exists.

4 **Execute milestones.** Don't focus solely on the overall portfolio of initiatives. Go deeper. Know the key milestones and maintain a maniacal focus on executing them on time. You've heard the saying "as your milestones go, so goes your project."

5 **Establish a reward and recognition program from the start.** It is vital to celebrate small wins to build momentum toward a successful project. Waiting until the wins happen to launch a recognition program means delayed recognition to those doing the heavy lifting of preparing for and executing change.

6 **Make change stick by focusing on your new key performance indicators.** Set an aggressive schedule to monitor and review KPIs with leaders utilizing a "plan, do, check, act" cycle. Ensure all metrics are aligned with and support your new environment.

Niki St. Pierre is the Principal & Managing Director of nsp&co. Niki's strategic approach assists clients with planning and executing organizational change resulting from post-merger integrations, new IT system implementations, new operating processes and programs, as well as culture change. Niki is a respected expert in organizational change management and knowledge management with success of more than 30 large-scale programs with Fortune 500, as well as startups, nonprofits and government agencies.

Niki's career history begins with Accenture and she has evolved to be a consultant's consultant with multi-continent accomplishments in the deployment of leading-edge solutions. Niki has a strong track record of leading and succeeding through market disruption, delivering measurable and winning results with a "roll up your sleeves" style.

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