10 Common Mistakes to Leading Change

1. **Miscalculating their role in executing strategic changes:** Leaders work on plans they expect others to carry out. Leaders want the results of a strategic initiative, but may not see the need to change their *own* actions to be part of the change effort.

2. **Thinking strategy is enough:** Many leaders consider strategy and project plans sufficient to engage organizations in implementing the initiative. The organization needs more, though. By itself, it cannot bridge the strategy and the plans to achieve the business outcomes.

3. **Misallocating time between creating and implementing the solution:** It is easy for leaders to spend too much time on developing the solution and then to run out of time to adequately develop and execute the plans.

4. **Implementing too many "top" priorities:** People become overwhelmed by too many initiatives that are all considered "top" priorities. Leaders need to clearly articulate how the new initiative fits in with the current projects and daily work.

5. **Believing leaders will be prepared to lead the change:** Senior leaders usually prepare for announcing the change. However, they often spend less time preparing and cascading messages, which would enable their full leadership team to consistently communicate the information. As a result, the announcement leads to more questions to which leaders are not adequately prepared to respond.

6. **Disengaging from the implementation:** When leaders are not fully engaged in the implementation, people may not take the initiative seriously. Leaders must be available or at least visible to observe what is going on and to answer questions that will support the implementation.

7. **Assuming that "telling" people what to do will produce action:** Just because people are informed about the change doesn't mean they will take action. Change usually requires people to act and behave differently. People may need additional, ongoing information, as well as guidance and feedback, before they can carry out their parts successfully.

8. **Lacking agreement and alignment across the leadership team:** Leaders don't always agree about *what* to accomplish, *why* it's important to handle this now, and *how* the organization will implement the solution. This causes confusion throughout the organization. As a result, functions, departments, and even entire regions are left to interpret how to implement the initiative.

9. **Ignoring the natural resistance to change:** When people hear about a change, it's natural for them to ask questions to clarify what's happening. Every person processes and adapts to change at a different rate. If leaders ignore or avoid people who sound as if they are disagreeing, these leaders may miss an opportunity to help them overcome any objections and move to engage in a viable solution. Leaders can reduce the churn created by a change and can accelerate progress by addressing questions and concerns upfront.

10. **Discounting smaller initiatives as inconsequential:** Leaders are inclined to think that smaller initiatives can be successfully implemented without incorporating change strategies. But all business changes, regardless of size, require behavioral changes if they are to be successful. A smaller project or a series of small projects on their own may look insignificant, but they can have a profound impact on employee actions.