Leazer
Business Consulting

Quick Tip

Seek out trusted champions and leverage their point of view to make your projects more successful. Read more about how to Leverage Trust for Successful Projects.

Leading Change

In the middle of a transition, people need to know: "Why should I follow you?"

In one situation, a company wanted to shift their business operations and culture toward a greater sense of urgency in serving customers. Most employees anticipated a positive change that could propel the company forward. As the program progressed, senior leaders drove several top-down initiatives that were unpopular. Employee suggestions were ignored and key personnel started leaving the company. Six months in, senior leaders

communicated new company-wide leader behaviors based on employee feedback, including: an openness to ideas, humility and transparency. However, these same leaders didn't embrace the feedback and change their own behaviors.

Even the best executed business transformation may be unsuccessful if organizational change isn't adequately managed to ensure employees or customers can and will make the transition. My past writings on this topic have highlighted my experience that leaders often don't fully grasp what is required to implement a business transformation.

* By aligning all the key elements, a business change becomes "unavoidable". This requires understanding the downstream impacts and making the necessary modifications to systems, processes, end user instructions, and company policy, if necessary.

* By preparing employees or customers, a change is more likely to be accepted. This requires adequate communication, education, resources and motivation to help people be successful.

Finally, a change effort can't be sustained unless leaders exhibit influencing behaviors and engage other change leaders in the business to do the same.

Document the impact of change

Most of us have experienced an implementation where leadership didn't consider how a project would impact various teams in the organization. No one knew what to expect or what to do and the implementation created chaos. This part of managing change requires conducting research and engaging stakeholders and leaders to make sure you have a clear picture of the business requirements for:
* Integrating technology
* Modifying processes and procedures
* Aligning policies or governance
* Preparing people

If you are interested in a free change assessment template to document this work, attend my best practice session. See meeting details in the segment below.

Educate and convince users

In several of my transformation projects, a critical element was the adoption of online tools for employees to request technical, financial or HR support. You

may have experienced this type of change in your company and been frustrated because you weren't adequately educated and motivated. Some key elements to help people adopt a change:

* Break the change into manageable chunks. Help people master new skills over time. For example: use an online support tool for simple tasks before graduating to more complex tasks and issues.
* Fit education to the task. Make the change enjoyable or at least not painful. For example: simple questions may be addressed with an FAQ, more complex tasks or problems may require an online wizard or educational video, and complicated issues should be directed to a knowledgeable person for assistance.
* Allow for choice. If possible, provide an "offramp". For example: some people may be comfortable with online tools, while others may need more assistance to gain confidence.

Different people adapt to change at different rates. Be thoughtful about how to meet your employees or your customers where they are and educate and motivate them to make the change you need them to make.

Create and sustain change

Substantial business transformations require a well-defined and well-executed implementation plus visible leadership commitment. When considering if leaders are serious about a change, employees will ask, have they:
* Shown their commitment to the change and embraced the change themselves.
* Risked their personal reputation, sacrificed their time, and/or prioritized resources to make this change happen.
* Convinced opinion leaders in the organization to embrace the change.
* Held people accountable to the new way of working.

These are some visible behaviors and actions of trusted and respected leaders that help convince people to follow them through a business change.

Returning to the company transition in the introduction, we can see that the senior leaders in that example didn't exhibit important behaviors. Unfortunately, but not unexpectedly, this business transformation failed and the company was in a worse state than before the initiative was started.

Leading change requires a clear picture and execution of the business requirements, effective education and motivation, and visible leadership commitment. What stories do you have for leading change effectively?
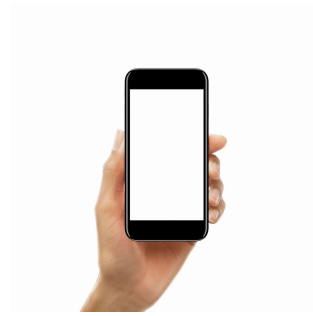
Talk to Me!

Attend a Leading Change Best Practice Session to share templates and discuss best practices. Time: Feb 18, 2022, 12:00 PM Mountain Time

Go to: Zoom Link
Meeting ID: 816 0053 5142

Or dial in by phone
• Dial-in: (669) 900-6833
• Access Code: 816 0053 5142

Additional Resources

To increase personal influencing skills, build trust and respect, consider reading "Real Influence" by Mark Goulston and John Ullmen.

Learn how to leverage trusted champions to lead change in a low-trust environment. Read Leverage Trust for Successful Projects.

As excellent resource for effective change management principles and approaches is "Influencer" by Joseph Grenny, Kerry Patterson, David Maxfield, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler.

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About Annette
Annette is a business transformation coach focused on creating more effective operations and greater business value. Both vision and execution are key to motivate people to transform work. She guides leaders to develop transformation vision and strategy, structure implementation projects and roadmaps, and mentor project teams to be successful. Her blog and newsletter share transformation tips, resources and best practices.

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