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Arianna Campbell • Nov. 20, 2017



Why are some organizations so successful at implementing changes while others fail, time and time again? It's not that those successful organizations have people that naturally thrive on change. It's that their leaders have learned to recognize and master the emotions of those who stand in the way of change, including their own.

Change evokes many emotions: fear, curiosity, exhaustion, loyalty, paranoia, optimism, rage, and revelation, to name a few. Unfortunately, management often

overlooks or underestimates the emotional impact of changes such as mergers,

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Before the decision to change is made, the organization is in Stagnation mode. Management may assume the organization is “safe” because they’ve been profitable for a while and don’t feel the effects of any serious threats or compelling opportunities. Or perhaps people know change is needed, but are unsure of what direction to take. People have difficulty making decisions and there is a general lack of motivation.

The challenge in Stagnation mode is to create a healthy dissatisfaction with the status quo and start building an appetite for change within the workforce.

#2 – Preparation

Once the decision to change is made, the organization moves into Preparation mode. This is the time to be wary of rushing into the wrong answers. Some may jump into action, only to find that they failed to clarify the scope of the project, develop a plan, or appreciate the complexity of communicating the reasons for the change with their constituents.

To navigate this stage successfully, leaders must ensure that their plan is aligned with the firm’s vision and strategic plan and develop a plan of action that will generate energy and enthusiasm. Also, prepare to be tested by detractors. Everyone in the organization will not jump on board. If you anticipate this and plan for the detractors, you’ll be better able to manage resistance.

#3 – Implementation

The Implementation phase is an exciting time. Many of your people are ready and raring to go. However, this is a time when it’s crucial for leaders to manage the expectations. Some early wins may generate unrealistic expectations that it’s all

smooth sailing from here on out when in reality there is still potential for things to

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occurs. It may be tempting to take easy actions while leaving the hard work unaddressed. In the worst cases, people start imagining gloom and doom scenarios and blaming others for failures.

At this moment, the project can only be successful if top management stays involved and focused. They need to continue validating the vision, driving action, and addressing morale issues to increase motivation.

#5 – Fruition

If you made it through the Determination phase and didn't abandon your change initiative, you'll reach the Fruition phase. Your change is in place, and it's crucial to celebrate and reward or recognize your employees for their hard work. Take some time now to reflect and harvest lessons learned from the experience. You can leverage that learning to build change capability for the future.

Now that you've reached success, start preparing for the next cycle. The company needs to continue moving forward to avoid re-entering a period of stagnation.

While every firm's experience with strategic change is unique, each will go through the same five phases. Understanding these phases is what makes the difference between success and failure.

Firm Management

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