

## Managing change 10 top tips

Managing any kind of change whether in our personal or our working lives can be difficult, hard work and an emotional rollercoaster. Research shows that managing the complexities of organisational change can be so taxing, that many change initiatives fail to successfully achieve their desired results. Successful change implementation relies on the commitment and support from all levels throughout an organisation, and the role of the people manager is hugely important in ensuring any transformation succeeds. This is partly because of the relationship a manager has with their teams, and partly because they can get involved and drive operational change hands-on.

We live in an ever-changing world and the pace of change at work for many of us has never been so fast or so challenging. Have a look at these ten tips to make sure that you are doing everything you can to gain buy-in from your people and that you are setting yourself on the path to successful and sustainable change implementation.

### 1. Share a common purpose

The first step in successfully implementing change with your team is to keep the team involved. Too often formal change related communications are sent to employees with the assumption that they will be read and digested. This is a foolish assumption! Many people may deliberately choose to avoid them, particularly when they are related to difficult changes. Take personal responsibility for keeping up to date with company news and regular updates, and encourage your team to do the same. Ensure you know what the rationale for transition is and share the purpose, vision and opportunities. Be open and honest about the facts, but don't give overoptimistic speculation.

### 2. Know the cycle of change

Recognise that the success of your change is entirely dependent on your people. The emotional effects of change on your employees need to be considered as understanding resistance, and working with it is crucial to overcoming it.

During a period of change, people typically move through a range of emotions (you can see these displayed in the Kubler Ross change curve). The change curve shows how early interest turns to shock before we move into a state of denial. A state of emotion quickly follows (which will of course differ from person to person), and might manifest itself as anger or upset, but what you might notice as a manager is apparent de-motivation. Eventually the feelings of instability ebb away, and as we regain elements of control we move through stages of adapting and finally acceptance. Before your people are able to drive transformation they must first accept that transformation needs to occur. How quickly the process takes is very much dependant on the individual and will be very much affected by you as the manager. Do what you can to intelligently and compassionately support your people's individual needs, as and when change occurs.

### 3. Project manage

If your team is faced with change then integrate the new world using a "systems" approach. Ensure that all aspects of your day to day responsibilities are aligned to key stakeholders and milestones. Create clear deliverables and give everybody visibility of tasks, stages and new developments – even when there is nothing new to add. Define your team's communication strategy rather than letting the grapevine take over. Ensure (where possible) that you tell everyone everything at the same time and build in one to one time for those who need it. Follow up formal communication with an open door policy where individuals can come to speak to you privately. This ensures you're aware of how to best manage individual reaction, and support each person's personal change journey.

#### 4. Focus on one change at a time

While we can learn to accept and manage change, even the most flexible of us will become overwhelmed by numerous differences piling up at once. If you know that your team or organisation is facing many changes, the lack of familiarity can be disconcerting for both you and your team. Realise that there is a tension between establishing a readiness for change and the need to get people implementing new approaches quickly. While getting people intellectually ready for change is something to be considered, it should not take so much time and effort that people lose interest and motivation.

#### 5. Focus on the positive

This may sound like a cliché, but your team will look to you to give them an indication on how they should react to news of a change and how they should behave during implementation. If your team is struggling to find some positives in a difficult situation, it is your job to help them to find them. Try to help the team look for the potential benefits related to the change, seek new opportunities and help the team to see how good things could be, rather than focusing on the things you fear or don't like.

#### 6. Mind the gap

As existing relationships and established ways of working appear under threat your team may start to feel unstable. The apparent lack of control can leave people focusing on their failings rather than their accomplishments. Ensure that you are ahead of the game and support each individual to ensure that they:

- ☒ have the capacity to change
- ☒ have the competencies needed to weather the change
- ☒ have the confidence to adapt to the change

Provide training, development or coaching wherever possible, these can be on a formal or informal basis – a well conducted ad hoc coaching conversation or a well facilitated group discussion can be really effective if timed well. Review how competent and confident your people are and offer the additional support where they need it.

#### 7. Engagement

The potential success of your change can be measured by the level of engagement or disengagement of your people. What is your engagement strategy? How are you going to ensure that you have buy-in from your team? How will you inspire them to fully engage with the change? You will need to ensure that you are able to show your passion and commitment for the change and throughout the implementation process.

#### 8. Support

Who are the people that you can rely on both within and outside of your team? How many supporters do you have? You will need to call upon a strong network in order to ensure success implementing change, so you will need to consider the different ways in which you can lobby individuals and engage them in the change. Collaborate across many stakeholders, get people involved, rally one another. Quickly identify and work with the decision makers, announcers, executors and builders to widen your own sphere of influence.

## 9. Sustained personal performance

It takes time to implement a change, and even more time for a change strategy to become finalised and for you to find your ways of working within it. Adjust your working practices and familiarise yourself with all of the related changes, but be prepared for a dip during implementation. Sometimes it feels that things will get worse before they really get better, and there may need to be further changes initiated in response.

Continue to coach and support your team to manage them and their productivity during a difficult time.

## 10. Leadership

As a people manager, it is essential that you lead from the front when managing change, you need to be prepared for the change, committed to it and you must model the behaviours that you wish to see in others. It is also important to consider how the change is affecting you emotionally and to be aware of your own position on the change curve and keep on top of your own motivation and energy. Think about ways in which you can personally facilitate the change and what you will personally need to change to accommodate new ways of working. Try to ask questions that will help you to come to terms with and commit to the change. Make sure that you look after your own needs so that you are also in a position to be able to look after the needs of your team.