

Helping Organisations Change

Introduction

My 'Ten Steps to...' series provide a simple overview to a subject. They focus on the actions and areas I think are most important in order to deliver an effective solution.

In this guide I provide an overview of what your organisation needs to consider before you embark on any change. This preparation and understanding is key to ensuring your change succeeds and is embedded into your organisation.

Understand your organisation

What is your organisations strategy? The strategy identifies 1 or 2 promising opportunities for the organisation and focuses energy and resources in achieving them. Once identified you need to:

- ☛ **Diagnose** the critical obstacles to these opportunities
- ☛ Develop an **over-arching approach** to overcome the obstacles
- ☛ Create a set of **aligned actions** to accomplish the approach

What is your culture? The history & culture of your organisation will set the default reaction to change. For instance a perception of several previous failed change initiatives will set the tone for the next initiative. If change has been led by a group or individual who has a particular reputation this will impact how the change is received

Your organisation's culture can be viewed as "**how things are done around here**" or more importantly "**what people do when no one is looking**". For more information on diagnosing your culture read [Ten Steps to Diagnosing your Organisation's Culture](#)

Understand your problem

How has the need for change come about? Is it driven by external forces (e.g. competitors or regulation) or internal forces (e.g. expansion into new geographies, product diversification).

What is the problem that must be solved? How has the diagnosis been done and has it identified the root cause. Often organisations will identify the 'wrong' solution to a problem which will lead to a large change programme being initiated and months later the root cause will still exist.

What needs must the change satisfy?

Often the need for change can be obvious to all stakeholders. Sometimes it is clear to the leadership of the organisation or to people closely associated with a specific area of the business.

Communicating the need may involve changing people's perception of an existing issue within the organisation.

Some organisations take a parental approach with their people, wanting to protect them from what they regard as 'unpleasant truths'. Others may be focused on doing the tasks rather than the people. Both approaches generate different needs within the organisation.

How will the organisation benefit from the change

What specific benefits will the organisation see from the implementation of this change? This clarity will **show how the change links to the organisation's purpose** and supports the strategy.

Understanding these links provide a foundation to the communication of the project to the rest of the organisation and serves to underpin attempts to engage all the stakeholders.

How will people benefit from the change?

- ☛ How will the solution align with organisation's history & culture?
- ☛ Will people's lives be easier as a result?
- ☛ Will some teams have more complexity for some 'greater good'?

People want to know "what's in it for me" and how it will affect them. Be realistic and honest when it comes to telling people what the impact is on them. If there is a misalignment between people's view of the benefit and the benefit you communicate your change will not be successful.

How does the solution fit with business processes & HR practices?

Are you in an organisation where many of the business processes are defined and documented? **Any change involves moving from the 'as is' current state of the organisation to the 'to be' future state.** If you don't understand all the business processes that currently exist it becomes very difficult to map how they need to change.

- ☛ How do your current HR practices work?
- ☛ Do you have a clear, well defined performance management process, are people held accountable for their decisions?
- ☛ What behaviours are rewarded (both explicitly and implicitly) through manager's actions and reward policies?
- ☛ Is failure a concept that is rewarded or punished. Is there a culture of risk taking?
- ☛ The answers to all these questions will fundamentally impact on your ability to successfully embed the change within your organisation

What is the relationship with key stakeholders?

Before the detailed stakeholder analysis is started, you should have a good idea who the key people who are affected or own parts of the organisation that will be affected by the change. It is key to build trust with these stakeholders, for you to understand what makes them tick, how you can influence them and what are their needs and drivers.

The role of the sponsor

Identifying the right sponsor for the change has been shown over several studies to be one of the critical factors to your project's success. The sponsor's role has 3 key areas of focus:

For Programme Board	For Project Manager	For other stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides leadership on culture and values • Owns business case • Aligns project with organisational strategy • Optimises costs / benefits • Provides assurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides timely decisions • Clarifies business priorities and strategy • Communicates business issues • Provides resources • Supports PM role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages all stakeholders • Governs stakeholder communications • Directs governance of suppliers • Arbitrates between stakeholders

Summary

Before starting the preparation stage of your change initiative check that you:

1. Understand your organisation's culture
2. Understand your organisation's strategy
3. Understand your problem
4. Know what are the needs that must be met by the change
5. Know how the organisation will benefit from the change
6. Know how people will benefit from the change
7. Know how the solution fits with business processes & HR practices
8. Understand the relationship with key stakeholders
9. Have identified the right sponsor?
10. Your sponsor understands their role?

If you would like more information on how to make change succeed in your organisation or talk through specific issues please get in touch:

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