

Change Management

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Abstract

Change management (CM) is a discipline that focuses on managing changes within an organization. Change management involves implementing approaches to prepare and support individuals, teams, and leaders in making organizational change. Change management is useful when organizations are considering major changes such as restructure, redirecting or redefining resources, updating or refining business process and systems, or introducing or updating digital technology.

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INTRODUCTION

What is Change Management?

Organizational change refers broadly to the actions a business takes to change or adjust a significant component of its organization. This may include company culture, internal processes, underlying technology or infrastructure, corporate hierarchy, or another critical aspect.

Organizational change can be either adaptive or transformational:

Adaptive changes are small, gradual, iterative changes that an organization undertakes to evolve its products, processes, workflows, and strategies over time. Hiring a new team member to address increased demand or implementing a new work-from-home policy to attract more qualified job applicants are both examples of adaptive changes.

Transformational changes are larger in scale and scope and often signify a dramatic and, occasionally sudden, departure from the status quo. Launching a new product or business division, or deciding to expand internationally, are examples of transformational change.

Change management is the process of guiding organizational change to fruition, from the earliest stages of conception and preparation, through implementation and, finally, to resolution.

As a leader, it's essential to understand the change management process to ensure your entire organization can navigate transitions smoothly. Doing so can determine the potential impact of any organizational changes and prepare your teams accordingly. When your team is prepared, you can ensure everyone is on the same page, create a safe environment, and engage the entire team toward a common goal.

Change processes have a set of starting conditions and a functional endpoint. The process in between is dynamic and unfolds in stages. Here's a summary of the key steps in the change management process.

5 Steps in the Change Management Process

1. Prepare the Organization for Change

For an organization to successfully pursue and implement change, it must be prepared both logistically and culturally. Before delving into logistics, cultural preparation must first take place to achieve the best business outcome.

In the preparation phase, the manager is focused on helping employees recognize and understand the need for change. They raise awareness of the various challenges or problems facing the organization that are acting as forces of change and generating dissatisfaction with the status quo. Gaining this initial buy-in from employees who will help implement the change can remove friction and resistance later on.

2. Craft a Vision and Plan for Change

Once the organization is ready to embrace change, managers must develop a thorough, realistic, and strategic plan for bringing it about.

3. Implement the Changes

After the plan has been created, all that remains is to follow the steps outlined within it to implement the required change. Whether that involves changes to the company's structure, strategy, systems, processes, employee behaviours, or other aspects will depend on the specifics of the initiative.

During the implementation process, change managers must be focused on empowering their employees to take the necessary steps to achieve the goals of the initiative and celebrate any short-term wins. They should also do their best to anticipate roadblocks and prevent, remove, or mitigate them once identified. Repeated communication of the organisation's vision is critical throughout the implementation process to remind team members why change is being pursued.

4. Embed Changes within Company Culture and Practices

Once the change initiative has been completed, change managers must prevent a reversion to the prior state or status quo. This is particularly important for organizational change related to business processes such as workflows, culture, and strategy formulation. Without an adequate plan, employees may backslide into the "old way" of doing things, particularly during the transitory period.

By embedding changes within the company's culture and practices, it becomes more difficult for backsliding to occur. New organizational structures, controls, and reward systems should all be considered as tools to help change stick.

5. Review Progress and Analyze Results

Just because a change initiative is complete doesn't mean it was successful. Conducting analysis and review, or a "project post mortem," can help business leaders understand whether a change initiative was a success, failure, or mixed result. It can also offer valuable insights and lessons that can be leveraged in future change efforts.

How to Lead Change Management Successfully

If you've been asked to lead a change initiative within your organization, or you'd like to position yourself to oversee such projects in the future, it's critical to begin laying the groundwork for success by developing the skills that can equip you to do the job.

Completing an online management course can be an effective way of developing those skills and lead to several other benefits. When evaluating your options for training, seek a program that aligns with your personal and professional goals; for example, one that emphasises organizational change.

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If there's one word that describes the process of making big changes to big-deal processes, systems, or workflows, that word might be "chaos." But here's the good news: an effective change management process – which is your plan to organise that chaos – can yield lasting, positive results.

"Change management is about managing the chaos of changing humans from one habit to another.

Whether you're planning a migration to the cloud or reorganizing your corporate structure, Perkins says that creating a human-centered plan for change management will help you increase buy-in and head off potential problems before they arise.

What is a change management process?

A change management process is a structured set of steps for moving from the old to the new. It takes into account all the people, processes, and systems that will be impacted by a transition. Whenever an organization plans to make a switch – to a different system, type of software, org structure, or even culture – they may enter into a process of change management.

For example, a cloud migration might impact legal, security teams, and end users. Working with stakeholders in advance of and during the change can minimize disruption throughout the organization.

5 critical steps in the change management process
 Do you have to be a manager to be a change maker?
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1. Get clarity on the intended result of the change

Sometimes you know exactly what you need to do – move your software system to the cloud, or use a more secure chat platform

2. Identify your supporters and skeptics

Once you've identified your end goal, it's time to wrangle your champions. These are the people who will be cheerleaders for the change and encourage others to get on board.

“When you find them, “you want to load them up with resources and empower them to go off and carry the banner.”

You'll also want to identify the people who will oppose or block your change plan. Your level of engagement with these folks depends on their power within the organization. For instance, if the head of IT opposes your big IT change, you could be in for a difficult road.

But leaders often spend too much time thinking about the people that will oppose a plan. There will always be opposition, but the skeptics can be more than offset by effective champions.

3. Acknowledge the loss

Moving to something new always involves the loss of something old. That means letting go of emotional attachment to familiar ways of working or a sunk-cost mindset.

4. Offer an honest explanation

Once team members have processed the loss, they're ready to think about the future.

Leaders need to be open and honest, “realistic with your team that it sucks to have to make a change.” Then explain the undeniable forces that are requiring it.

The lack of explanation often leads employees to believe the worst – that the change is based on ego or one person's whim.

Taking the time to describe the market forces acting on team members will help them envision the possibilities for the future. “When you can see and feel it for yourself, that's when the real change happens. And that's when people get on board.”

5. Implement the change

By the time you've gotten buy-in, implementation can be relatively straightforward. Some companies hire a change management consultant who specializes in the specific technology or corporate structure you're moving to – they can help with the actual mechanics of implementation.

“The most important thing you can do as a leader is walk your talk”. Implementation is about you and your champions engaging fully and visibly in the change. this,”

The challenge of change: Why is change management so hard?

Workplace overwhelm: how to protect your team from change fatigue

Workplace overwhelm: how to protect your team from change fatigue

This can come as a shock to leaders – especially new ones – but it's not a given that people will get on board with a requested (or even a mandated) change. Employees are especially apt to resist changes that they see as based on a leader's ego, a whim, or the latest fad. And resistance to a particular change isn't always immediately obvious.

Ever heard of slow walking?

“It's a way that people combat initiatives they don't agree with but don't feel they have the political power to actively oppose”. It's a common problem among organizations that have a history of making lots of changes that didn't work.

Employees sometimes see new change plans as short-term problems that will blow over if they wait long enough. They verbally cooperate with a change initiative but never quite get around to making the change. If you're dealing with a history of unsuccessful changes, it's important to acknowledge the past and approach the new normal with a change management process that addresses employees' resistance and accounts for change fatigue.

A leader's own resistance can stall change as well.

Particularly in situations where organizations are trying to make cultural changes, the path is long, and not everyone will get on board. A leader has to be prepared to say goodbye to people who won't adapt to change. "If you let high-profile saboteurs linger, then everybody's going to decide you're not interested in this after all. And they won't do it". "That's a hard choice for a lot of people. But if you're not willing to make that choice, you're not ready for a cultural change."

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