

CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Defining Change Management

Change management has typically been defined as a process involving unfreezing, moving, and refreezing values, practices, and procedures within organizations.¹ Unfreezing refers to the creation of a perceived discrepancy between the existing and ideal state of an organization that generates a desire for change and lowers people's resistance to change. Moving refers to the various processes such as training, education, and restructuring that lead to the development of new behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs. Refreezing regards reestablishing a new state of equilibrium within the organization by stabilizing the new patterns through a variety of support mechanisms.

Change and Resistance

Change is often resisted by organizational members. The primary reason for resistance is that change requires employees to alter their existing individual and organizational identities. Changing one's identity can be anxiety provoking and it is common for employees to use strategies such as denial, rationalization, idealization, fantasy, and symbolization to resist change.²

The Role of Communication in Change Initiatives

Communication is key to developing change initiatives and implementing them. Communication can serve many functions during change initiatives.³

- **Information sharing:** Communication may be used to announce organizational changes and to provide stakeholders with information about the nature, timing, and significance of the change.
- **Participation:** Change agents may create communication processes that actively involve lower-level employees in the planning and implementation of change initiatives or may construct communication processes that emphasize the role of upper-level management and limit lower-level participation.
- **Vision and Motivation:** Communication can be utilized to convey the vision, set the goals, and highlight the important drivers for changing existing organizational attitudes, beliefs, and practices.
- **Social Support:** Change efforts can produce high-levels of anxiety, and communication may be needed to determine employee responses to change, alleviate potential fears, and encourage the establishment of social support systems among employees.
- **Evaluation/Feedback:** Change efforts require the structuring of communication processes that provide employees feedback about their performance during change initiatives and provide feedback to implementers regarding strengths and weaknesses of the change initiative.

1 Lewin, K. (1951). *Field theory in social science*. New York: Harper. Seo, M., Putnam, L. L., & Bartunek, J. M. (2003). Dualities and tensions of planned organizational change. In M. S. Poole & A. V. de Ven (Eds.), *Handbook of organizational change*, 73–107. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

2 Brown, A. D., & Starkey, K. (2000). Organizational identity and learning: A psychodynamic perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 25, 102–120. Fiol, C.M (2002). Capitalizing on paradox: The role of language in transforming organizational identities. *Organization Science*, 13, 653–666.

3 Lewis, L. K., & Seibold, D. R. (1998). Reconceptualizing organizational change implementation as a communication problem: A review of literature and research agenda. In M. E. Roloff (Ed.), *Communication yearbook 21*, 93–151. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Selected Strategies for Managing Change Communication

Lewis, Schmisser, Stephens, and Weir (2006) highlight several general strategies to consider for communication during change initiatives.⁴

- **Ask for input:** Participation is generally regarded as a key success factor during organizational change. Input can be obtained through a variety of processes including multi-stakeholder dialogue, listening sessions, and the establishment of planning teams.⁵
- **Use informal networks and knowledge of key stakeholders:** Involving key stakeholders in the change process is important because they have access to important information from their networks that may be useful in determining how well the process is working and what challenges and difficulties exist. Key stakeholders can also influence the change process by disseminating information through their network and acting as opinion leaders.
- **Disseminate information:** Keeping stakeholders informed about the change process is critical. When disseminating information, it is important to use multiple methods for communicating the message as well as repeating the message consistently throughout the initiative. A variety of media may be used such as team meetings, email, newsletters, posters, public presentations, and Websites.
- **Manage the style and content of communication:** Change messages need to be credible, clear, and motivational. Formal and informal organizational rewards should be structured to encourage and support the desired behavioral changes.⁶
- **Create and communicate vision:** Visions should be clear, unambiguous, personally relevant, simple, and vivid.

Problem Centered and Appreciative Models of Change

A variety of models have been developed that change agents may select when designing and implementing change initiatives. Change models may be divided into two types: (1) problem-centered, and (2) appreciative.

Problem-centered models: A gap between an existing and ideal state of affairs is identified, and change processes are designed and implemented to reduce this gap. Problem-solving steps normally include defining the problem, determining evaluative criteria, generating alternative solutions, evaluating solutions, and implementing solutions. Once the problem has been clearly defined, a structured set of steps needs to be followed in order to facilitate the change process. John Kotter's 8-step model of change is one exemplar of a problem-centered model.⁷

1. *Establish a sense of urgency.* Cultivate awareness among organizational members regarding market and competitive realities, existing or potential crises, and major opportunities in order to create a compelling reason for change and lessen resistance.
2. *Create a guiding coalition.* Put together a group of key stakeholders that will lead the change.
3. *Develop a vision and strategy.* Articulate the guiding vision that will inform the change initiative as well as the strategies to accomplish the vision.

4 Lewis, L. K., Schmisser, A. M., Stephens, K. K., & Weir, K. E. (2006). Advice on communicating during organizational change. *Journal of Business Communication*, 43, 113–137.

5 Littlejohn, S., & Domenici, K. (2001). *Systemic conflict*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

6 Anderson, A. L., & Anderson, D. (2001). *The change leader's roadmap: How to navigate your organization's transformation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.

7 Kotter, J. P. (1996). *Leading change*. Boston: Harvard Business School. Kotter, J. P. (1998). Leading change: Why transformation efforts fail. In *Harvard Business Review on Change*, 1–21. Boston: Harvard Business School.

4. *Communicate the vision.* Determine the appropriate media for disseminating the vision and constantly broadcast the message to the organization. The guiding coalition must “walk the talk” and model the vision for other organizational members.
5. *Empower broad-based action.* Assess potential obstacles that inhibit change. Discard or modify existing systems, policies, or structures that undercut the change vision. Create an organizational environment that recognizes and rewards risk taking, nontraditional thinking, and innovation.
6. *Generate short-term wins.* Create opportunities during the change process for viable performance improvements. Creating “small wins” along the way heightens organizational members’ motivation and demonstrates that the change process can be successful.
7. *Consolidate gains and produce more change.* The credibility from generating “small wins” is leveraged to continue the change of systems, structures, and policies that don’t fit the vision. Hiring and promotion policies are aligned with the vision, and individuals are brought into the organization who can implement the vision. New projects, themes, and change agents are brought in to reinvigorate the process.
8. *Anchor the new approach into the culture.* Articulate the connections between the new behaviors and organizational success. Create a culture of leadership and program of leadership development and succession to support the new vision and further its development.

Appreciative models: Appreciative models of change begin with the premise that the organizations are doing something right and promote inquiry into the organization’s moments of excellence, life-generating values, and best practices. This is typically referred to as the positive core. Appreciative models affirm the “best of what is” in the current organization by building on the organization’s existing strengths and developing processes that elaborate, develop, and enlarge the organization’s capacity. Appreciative Inquiry is the dominant exemplar of an appreciative change model and is structured according to the 4-D Model of Change.⁸ The four D’s are:

1. *Discovery:* The Discovery phase uses organization-wide interviews among members to appreciate and value the best of “what is” regarding the topic of inquiry. For example, an inquiry could be created that focuses on delivering high-quality customer service. Organizational members typically interview each other regarding the strengths, values, core competencies, best practices, wishes, and dreams concerning the particular issue the organization wishes to address.
2. *Dreaming:* During this phase, organizational members envision “what might be.” They create a future-oriented focus by imagining what a future would be like where they are at their best and performing at a high level.
3. *Dialogue:* Organizational members discuss “what should be” in light of the information they have developed in the Discovery and Dreaming phases. Provocative propositions that summarize what allows the individuals and the organization to succeed and perform well are articulated. Dialogue on how to create an organizational architecture and structure that supports these provocative propositions is conducted.
4. *Destiny:* Organizational members discuss “what will be” by determining what processes and procedures need to be in place to accomplish the visions and dreams that emerge from the Dialogue phase and create action plans.

⁸ Watkins, M., & Mohr, B. (2001). *Appreciative inquiry*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Preiffer.

CommGAP

The **Communication for Governance and Accountability Program (CommGAP)**, a global program at the World Bank, seeks to confront the challenges inherent in the political economy of development. By applying innovative communication approaches that improve the quality of the public sphere – by amplifying citizen voice; promoting free, independent, and plural media systems; and helping government institutions communicate better with their citizens – the program aims to demonstrate the power of communication principles, processes and structures in promoting good and accountable governance, and hence better development results.

CommGAP is funded through a multi-donor trust fund. The founding donor of this trust fund is the UK's Department for International Development (DFID).

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