Change 101

The pace of change shows no signs of slowing down. Globalization, hyper-connectedness, and immediate communication have changed the marketplace significantly and permanently. As a result, 81% of managers in one study report that the pace of change has increased compared to five years before. And 69% say that their companies experienced disruptive change within the last 12 months (AMA, 2007).

We know that planned change initiatives, more often than not, disappoint. A McKinsey study reports that only 38% of change initiatives were completely or mostly successful improving performance (2006). And a Gartner study showed that only 5% of the companies that had undertaken significant organizational change recently had avoided substantial disruptions and finished on time (2001). So how do we make things better?

## The Five Elements of Successful Planned Change

Active, committed leadership. People are highly aware of leaders' unspoken and understated messages. If leaders aren't committed, people will know it and put the change low on the priority list.

A clear case for change, linked to specific goals. People are most likely to change when they understand why they must and what is at stake for the organization. They need to understand what they can do individually to achieve the vision.

Embedded change, not programmatic change. Change works best when it is embedded into an organization, rather than a program that employees hear about periodically. The most potent initiatives become part of how the organization does business.

Employee participation. People enjoy being part of changes that they create. A well-designed participative process mines the inherent talent and creativity of the workforce to meet challenges and solve problems.

Successful use of hidden networks. Every organization has a hidden network of relationships and interactions that people engage to get routine work done, make decisions, solve problems, and innovate. Drawing on people in key network roles accelerates the adoption process.
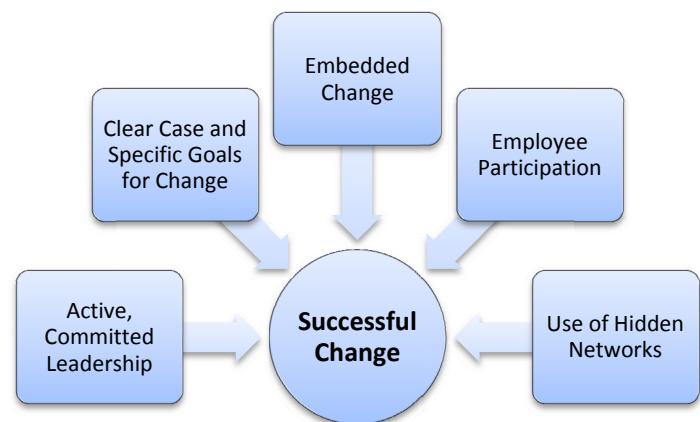
How to Make the Change Stick

One size doesn't fit all and no planned change effort can stick with only one approach. Research shows that appealing 4 or more of the following helps increase the likelihood that the change will stick.

▸ *Tying the change to what matters* – Showing how the change expresses core values and drives the mission
▸ *Building new skills* – "A robust training initiative is at the heart of almost all successful influence strategies."
▸ *Leveraging peer relationships* – Getting substantial involvement from formal and informal leaders
▸ *Making sure people get help* – Giving people the mentoring, answers, and resources they need
▸ *Aligning reward systems* – Tracking success and holding people accountable
▸ *Creating systemic support* – Removing obstacles and providing consistent reminders and reinforcement

From Grenny, Maxfield, & Shimberg (2008), *MIT Sloan Management Review*.

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Planning Your Change Initiative

So much needs to be done when planning a change—and that's just the work around creating the new product, process, or solution. Organizations that wish to be successful must deal with the human aspects of change and help people make the transition from the old to the new. Change leaders need to answer key questions in each phase before moving on to the next.

Steps	Key Questions
Laying the Foundation	❑ Why is change necessary? How can we say this so employees will understand? ❑ What is the end state vision? How clear and compelling is this vision? ❑ What pain points will the solution address or ameliorate? ❑ What is in and out of scope? ❑ What are the requirements for the end state? ❑ Who will form the powerful guiding coalition? Who will help with the change? ❑ What will tell us that we've been successful?
Learning What You Need to Know	❑ What's actually going to change? What will people have to give up? ❑ Do people have the skills needed to implement and adopt the new system? ❑ How resilient is the workforce? How do they generally respond to change? ❑ How well do people trust their leadership? ❑ Who are the informal leaders who can help advocate for the change?
Planning the Process	❑ When and how will the change be introduced and reinforced? ❑ How can we help people understand what they're supposed to do differently? ❑ How can we remove obstacles and amplify wins? ❑ What communications will we need? Who are the right people to communicate those messages? ❑ How will we draw on the organization's informal leaders to help? ❑ What training will people need?
Making It Work	❑ How well do people understand what we're saying about the change? ❑ What do our metrics tell us about our progress? ❑ How well are we reinforcing positive behavior? ❑ What are we learning as we implement? ❑ What course corrections need to be made?
Embedding in the Organization	❑ How can we make this a natural part of everyday life? ❑ How well have we addressed the problem we set out to solve? ❑ What remains to be done? ❑ What are our next steps?

Recommended Readings

Ackerman Anderson, L., Anderson, D., & Marquardt, M. (2003). Development, Transition, or Transformation? *OD Practitioner*.

Bridges, W. (2003). *Managing Transitions* (2nd Ed.). Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books.

Grenny, Maxfield, & Shimberg (2008). How to Have Influence. *MIT Sloan Management Review.*

Ibarra, H. & Hunter, M. (2007). How Leaders Create and Use Networks. *Harvard Business Review.*

Kotter, J. (2007). Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail. *Harvard Business Review*.

Townsend, M. (2007). Becoming a Change Leader. CIO.Com. Available at http://bit.ly/HIWqh.

Townsend, M. (2009). Leveraging Human Networks to Accelerate Learning and Change. *Chief Learning Officer.* Available at http://bit.ly/L4NRS

Vinitsky, M. H. & Kihng, A. S. (2006). Change from the Employees' Perspective: The Neglected Viewpoint. *OD Practitioner.*

Warrick, D. D. (2009). Developing Organization Change Champions. *OD Practitioner.*

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