

Top Tips for Leading Change

In order to be successful, significant change initiatives or programmes require a confident and competent change leader at the helm. The following top tips set out the strategic, operational and people management approaches that will help to ensure you are a successful change leader.

Be prepared to challenge the status quo

Considerable change requires strong leadership – someone who is not afraid to question the way that things have previously been done. This might prove unpopular with certain people in your organisation, but if you have ideas about what could change, how this change would work and the benefits change could bring, then it is important to put your ideas forward. Talking through your thoughts with a senior manager, presenting a paper to the Board, or offering to head up a pilot study are all great ways to get your ideas noticed.

Devise a robust strategy for change

If you want people to get behind change, it is important to be clear in your own mind about:

- what the change is designed to achieve
- who will be affected by the change
- the resources required to see the change through
- the key milestones you need to achieve along the way

When you are at the planning stage you might wish to gather a cross-section of employees from the organisation to **ask for suggestions and feedback** to help you draw up a suitable plan for action.

If this is not possible, it might help to imagine yourself standing in front of a roomful of people, each of whom represents each department and grade of employee likely to be affected by your change. What would they need to know and expect you to do before they would be happy to sign up to the change? Putting yourself in the shoes of others affected by your change will help you to develop a robust strategy for moving forward.

Build strategic alliances and networks

Leading change requires a fair degree of political skill. You will need to secure buy-in from an often disparate range of groups, from employees to customers and even industry experts. If you are not sure who the key players are, you may wish to consult with others in your professional network to help you find out. You may also wish to engage the efforts of people who have shown early support for your ideas in order to motivate others and inspire further buy-in to your change effort.

Take some calculated risks

In order for change to work, a change leader will have to take some risks. This doesn't mean throwing all caution to the wind; merely replacing some tried and tested ways of doing things with some different ideas and approaches. A 'safe' way of doing this is to look at how other organisations have successfully managed change. What, if anything did they do differently? What risks did they take and what were the results? There are plenty of business case studies about change around. So why not think of some companies you find inspiring and look them up online?

Build expertise across the board

As a change leader, your main role is in directing and shaping the change effort. It simply will not be possible for you to do everything yourself. It is therefore paramount that you enable others involved in the change to develop the requisite skills to ensure success. At the customer-facing level, this might mean providing training on new systems or different ways of working. For managers, this may mean offering training in change management approaches to enable them to best support their team, and to manage resistance to change.

Be persistent and resilient

The mark of a true change leader is a person who is not fazed by setbacks, whatever their magnitude. Particularly with large-scale change, you will inevitably hit problems and encounter resistance from different quarters along the way. Creating and re-emphasising a compelling vision of the future is essential to helping you to pitch your plans and ideas to

others, and to keep the appetite for change high. When things are tough, it is important to remind yourself of what success will look like, and the reasons you embarked on the change in the first place.

Acknowledge contributions

Successful change requires considerable effort and commitment from all those that the change affects. It is important to acknowledge efforts at all levels of the organisation when leading change. Sincere and heartfelt praise from you as change leader can help keep motivation levels high, and inspire enthusiasm and commitment for future change projects.

Related Items

Related Resources

- Leading Change
- Buchanan and Boddy on Change Management Competencies
- Change Management Competencies - Self Assessment
- Creating the Dream Team