

# Leadership style

[Business](#), [Leadership](#)



Using a mix of Kotter's 8 step model for transformation and the ADKAR (Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, Reinforcement)<sup>1</sup> best practice for change, which we superimposed, we will analyse the change management process. Our analysis will focus on the initial steps necessary for transformation, particularly the lack of awareness, urgency and desire to change - all hurdles the project is failing to take. Furthermore we will look at the application of these theories along the hierarchy-axes upwards and downwards from Elisabeth's perspective, taking into consideration the stakeholders on both ends of the process.

After identifying the breakdowns and omissions that have left the project in danger of collapse, we will combine these insights with ideas on remedial action, focussing on how Elisabeth may steer the project clear of failure in the six months remaining until the deadline. These recommendations are made in form of an action plan at the end of the analysis. Awareness of the need for change within the department might be present but there seems to be no clear idea of its implications and hence a sense of urgency, the first crucial step in an organisational transformation<sup>2</sup>, does not seem to exist.

Best is referring to the necessary change simply as a "task" which is not likely to increase the urgency level and her chances of "getting through" to the directors within the Environmental Standards Division. In addition, her not knowing the internal workings and hidden agendas within the department will further reduce the probabilities of her successfully getting the message across. First, Elisabeth missed the opportunity to contact the outgoing undersecretary in order to find out his reasons for departure and to gain a better understanding of his previous leadership style.

Second, due to her subjective sense of urgency, she failed to take the time to get to know and build a network among the department heads and inspectors. Since her success in the past had relied heavily on these networking and influencing skills the "lets get right to work" approach was likely a hindrance rather than a benefit. Looking up the " stakeholder chain" a different picture emerges. The Secretary of Environmental Affairs shares Elisabeth's painful concern for the negative image that would fall back onto the department, should it fail to produce the necessary input for the new legislation in time.

Best is hence on the right track to forming a " powerful guiding coalition" for the change effort, the second step in Kotter's theory, but fails to build this working relationship with her subordinates. This top level support will be crucial for some of our more " aggressive" recommendations should they be put into action. Given the interrelated nature of the situation it is useful to also consider the lack of Desire to participate and support the change (step two in the ADKAR model). Not surprisingly 4 months into the project Elisabeth Best has no clear idea of the Directors' motivations for " stonewalling" her change initiative.

There are two types of possible causes, on the one hand related to her as a change-agent and on the other hand based on internal factors frequently associated with a typical civil servant setting. Both lead to a reluctance to participate and support change. Due to her lack of authority, expertise, gender, status and seniority, Elisabeth may not have the change-agent credibility necessary for driving the initiative. Conversely moving down the

hierarchy-ladder the majority of the stakeholders either hold a " Civil Service position, or ( ... ) received the position due to a strong reservoir of political support".

With little risk of losing their jobs, and a prevailing organisational culture driven by politics rather than objectives and by lacklustre attitude rather than results, the directors and staff will need a much stronger push to be driven out of their " comfort zones" 3 than Elisabeth Best had initially anticipated and exercised. Looking at Best's management style of democratic leadership and consensual goal setting, her initial approach to get the directors " to move" does not surprise, but nevertheless fails to meet the requirements for initiating change in this case.

Considering the past track record of the department, namely that of little or no concern for the quality of the audits, it seems logical that there is an enormous lack of Knowledge on how to implement the change as well as the Ability on how to handle the subsequent day-to-day tasks properly. On the part of the inspectors this means that they need to know how to " do an audit right" (third and fourth steps in ADKAR), they hence need to be empowered to act on the changed environment. Clearly without the right tools and lacking relevant expertise, none of the inspectors will be likely to jump onto the change bandwagon.

Similarly the directors are not likely to have faced such a large scale change in direction recently (K) and may furthermore be alienated by the fundamentally different leadership style and by Best being a " woman in a position of authority". Furthermore the directors will not be excited by the

idea of taking on any responsibility for a project which they do not know how to handle properly (A). Hence Best's approach to "give the director and his two assistants the responsibility for supervising the inspections and ensuring that they took place effectively" was bound to falter.

In essence both stakeholders have a strong need for education and coaching, a requirement which is not adequately addressed by Best. This is an unfortunate oversight as it may pose one of the highest barriers to change. Since the change process is failing during the initial phases, little information is available on problems stemming from the last steps in the change process which stress Reinforcement or as Kotter puts it the "Consolidation of Improvements" and the "Institutionalisation of the New Approaches". These initiatives are hence included in the overall action plan but do not appear as part of the analysis.