

A sense of urgency in your workforce business essay



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The term Change Management refers to managing change successfully in any and all spheres of our lives, not just at work. Wherever the change happens, it is not easy to handle. Most often, the change that happens tends to complicate matters rather than simplifying them. Frequently, when we talk about change, it is in the organizational context, though there are personal and social changes that can be just as hard or even more difficult to handle. Like Gandhi said, “ We should try to be the change we want to see.”

If we approach any change, whether it is personal, professional or social, with an open mind, then the chances of successfully coping with it increases.

Why is Change so Hard?

It is hard because, when we go about our daily lives, we perform most of the mundane tasks on autopilot. We hardly use our conscious mind. Imagine switching on the coffee maker in the morning. You hardly open your eyes when you do it; now imagine that you have traded your regular coffee maker for an espresso machine. How hard do you find it to make your first cup of coffee in the morning? Likewise, in our professional lives too, we get used to our routine and become set in our ways; so we tend to use our subconscious minds more than we think, even at work. So, when there is change afoot, our subconscious mind, which is primitive, is wary of getting re-programmed, to learning new ideas and functions, and so feels threatened. This elemental resistance to re-learning new ideas and functions is the reason, we are resistant to change, which makes changing so difficult.

Ch: 1 INDIVIDUAL CHANGE

“ To improve is to change; to be perfect is to constantly change.” – Winston Churchill.

Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr, Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa and Barack Obama were all well aware of the power of the individual and his ability to effect in himself and in his society. They managed to mobilize millions of people to change the way individuals, communities and governments function by just their beliefs and their tenacity. From their achievements, we know just what one person can do when he or she is steadfast in his or her beliefs and principles.

These great souls have managed to bring about mind-boggling changes in their societies and their governments, just by being strong. Each of these great men and women started off as ordinary citizens; each underwent some intense upheaval in their lives that changed them completely.

This change brought them greatness and untold benefits to the world around them. Every type of change, whether individual, organizational or societal, starts ultimately with the individual. However, most of us, in our eagerness to succeed, end up committing one of two common mistakes that people make when it comes to change: we either implement the changes much too slowly to be effective, like dipping our toes to test the waters. Or we go overboard and jump in headfirst in our enthusiasm and end up drowning.

If you try to change too much too soon, there is the likelihood of you getting frustrated and giving up. It is easy to advocate others to change than to try and change oneself. However, too slow a change might also not bring
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enough results and lead you to getting disheartened, and hence abandoning the changes. Moderation is the key to success. Everything in moderation should be the cardinal rule for success.

Change what you can, without causing too much disruption to your system and routine, and you will succeed. Whether the change you are trying to effect is trivial like your diet or exercise routine or is major like overcoming an addiction or changing your outlook, etc., try it in moderation to succeed.

For instance, if you are trying to lose weight or quit smoking, unsuccessfully, try to reduce your portions, while increasing your exercise by maybe 10 minutes, instead of going on a crash diet; likewise, cut down on the number of cigarettes or on the nicotine content, or go for a smaller cigarette with less nicotine. All it needs is a little will power to change, and change successfully.

Remember to come up with a realistic plan; also find a good outlet for your possible frustrations; try change counseling; and last but not least, try and remind yourself that the mind controls the body. Try to find inspiration from the world around you, and know that nothing lasts forever; everything is transient and change is the only constant in life!

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE:

The first thing to understand, and understand well, about Organizational Change is that it is an Ongoing Process and not a Single Event. Most organizations know the importance of being able to change with the economy and the market conditions. The economy and the market are not static; they are in a dynamic state, changing constantly. So to flourish, an <https://assignbuster.com/a-sense-of-urgency-in-your-workforce-business-essay/>

organization should also be amenable to change. If you bend with the wind, you can survive; if you stand rigid, you will break. This is true for every being in nature and it is equally true for each organization.

So organizations bring in experts who help them and their workforce to deal with the changed circumstances. Such experts are usually trained in Change Management, which can help individuals, teams and entire organizations to transition from their current state to a better future state. The many stumbling blocks in the path of positive change might be cultural, social or economic. A trained change management expert can identify such causes and address them to effect positive change. To understand Change and to help organizations to handle it better, one should first understand the factors behind the necessity to change, and how and in what form the Change is to take.

There are many types of organizational changes, which are determined by some key factors like the goal of the proposed changes, the scope of the changes, the intensity and the time frame involved. Once these parameters are determined, the style of change, namely the implementation parameters have to be decided upon.

The change can be instructional or participatory: which means that the change is dictated by the top management, or everyone brings their ideas and it is collaborative in nature; and whether the proposed change to be effected is structural or process-oriented: which goes to say if the changes are going to be in the organizational structure or in its processes. These sorts of crucial decisions, when arrived at after careful consideration of all the

factors, are the decisions that can help your organization to change successfully. There should be no room for any ambivalence when setting the agenda for change. Clarity in thought and communication will help in achieving the desired results from your workforce by motivating them in the right way.

According to Percy A. Dastur, author of *The Art of Change Management*, Organizational Change can be broadly classified into

Organization-wide - involving the entire organization

Subsystem Change - involving one small section or department

Developmental Change - involving improving the structure and processes and

Remedial Change - involving the fixing of any issues or problems that are an impediment to the healthy functioning of the business.

There are some sub-classifications called Transformational Change, Incremental Change, Planned Change and Unplanned Change. These are self-explanatory in the type of change they bring about in the organization.

The next key factor for Change to be considered is the change driver. A change driver can be External or Internal. In most cases, external change drivers can become catalysts for internal change.

For instance during the recent global meltdown, giants like Microsoft and Caterpillar were drastically affected and were forced to cut costs and lay off

employees. However, many other companies, large and small, were able to carry on, largely unaffected. This reflects the 'on the companies' structure and policies'. Though Caterpillar is the world leader in mining and earth-moving equipment manufacturing, it had to lay off almost 20, 000 employees as its operational costs had to be cut down by 25% for it to weather the downturn in the global economy. This is a classic case of unplanned change brought about by an external factor.

At times, technology ushers in change, whether you are willing or not; so it becomes a case of swim or sink. Case in point: Nokia was ruling the mobile market until 2004; then Apple came out with its iPod, that changed the way people listen to music; Sony, the world leader in individual portable music players with its Walkman, had to come up with a Network Walkman, after it realized it had to either join the mobile music brigade or lose out. After the unprecedented success of MP3 players, Sony realized that it had to come out with a similar product, or lose a chunk of the market, which might otherwise have stayed loyal to Sony. So in the case of technology-led consumer focused industries like music players and mobile phones, in which Sony and Nokia were the undisputed pioneers, external changes forced them into strategic change. This is an external driver leading to innovation and product enhancement.

To truly understand the impact of one revolutionary product on an entire industry, you have to remember that in the case of technologically advanced industries, Apple is an industry outsider in three of the above four categories. Yet it had the entire music and mobile phone industry turn on its head with one single product.

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With the technological development in many areas growing by leaps and bounds, many organizations are kept on their toes, trying to keep with the latest developments. For instance, digital photography and the advent of the digital camera, gave stiff competition to the film photography industry, both the camera manufacturers and film suppliers, with new entrants like Casio, HP and IBM dominating the market. When the camera phone were introduced I market, the digital cameras are also struggling to find space in the consumer's conscience. This is a classic example of technology being an external driver for change.

Ch: 2 THE CHANGE PROCESS

Generally, an organizational change is a complex maneuver, involving 4 core actions: appreciating the change, mobilizing support for the same, executing it and building change capability. It is the responsibility of the leadership to ensure that these actions are carried out, for successful change.

Appreciating change involves appreciating the fact that change is difficult; it is so because it involves changing our mental models. When you talk about an organization as a single entity, you might forget the fact that it is made up of thousands of individuals scattered across the country or around the globe. So the idea of the organization is abstract and emotional than physical. This mental picture of the organization has to be changed, when you talk about changing the organization and that it is not an easy task. The proposed changes might be in any of the following areas of the organization, like marketing, manufacturing, processes, quality control, technology or productivity.

Mobilizing support involves motivating your workforce to adapt the changes willingly and wholeheartedly; first the mental models of your managers have to be changed towards accepting the newly introduced changes. Only then they, in turn, can convince their teams to adopt the changes. You can opt for either imposing the changes and expect the support of your workforce, or you can expose them to the benefits of the proposed changes by addressing them and communicating the perceived benefits of the changes to the welfare of the entire organization. This will also help the workforce to develop a positive attitude towards the coming changes, which might ultimately lead to a successful change or an unsuccessful one.

Depending on the size and structure of your organization, identify Change Strategists, who can strategize on what to change and its benefits; then appoint Change Implementers who are responsible for implementing the proposed changes; then identify and train the Change Recipients: they are the ones who are directly affected by the coming changes. So their co-operation will determine whether your change succeeds or fails.

Executing change is the most critical component of organizational change and is not easy; this phase involves creating the actual new processes or procedures and implementing them; then troubleshooting as and when necessary. It is the most difficult part of the change process; many key people might not like the changes and decide to leave the organization; with a well thought out plan, and clearly outlined ideas for the type of change and scope of change, you can go to some extent to lessen the confusion and maintain some semblance of normality. Quite often, the outcome of the organizational change is decided in this phase; because if this implementing <https://assignbuster.com/a-sense-of-urgency-in-your-workforce-business-essay/>

of the change does not happen as proposed, then it is almost a sure thing that it is about to fail.

Building change capability is the long term plan for sustained changes so that the organization stays ahead of the competition in a fluid market. Just because you were able to change once successfully does not mean that from now onwards, it is going to be smooth sailing. Change has to be constant and you have to keep adapting and improving according to the fluctuating market conditions in order to stay ahead of the game. Again to help this happen, you have to identify innovative thinkers and strategists and equip them with the authority to effect similar changes and when they deem necessary, in order to sustain the advantages of the organizational change.

One of the fundamental ways to help your workforce develop change capability is to help them to learn, how-to-learn; for, over the years, they would have developed their own style of functioning and working in a certain way; for them to change to a new system, they have to re-learn their jobs in the new system. It is not easy to discard something and re-learn a different way to do the same job. It involves enormous stress and re-training and can be quite taxing on your employees. So show them how to learn, for them to cope with change easily.

CHANGE LEADERSHIP

When your organization is in the middle of a change, or is set to change, your role as the leader is the most essential and influential one. You have the responsibility to understand the need to change, identify the changes needed, identify the people who can strategize and implement, and finally

motivate your workforce into embracing that change. You are the cognitive tuner, efficacy builder, systems architect and also the people catalyser, according to V. Nilakant and S. Ramnarayan, authors of Change Management . So the importance of your role to the success of the process of organizational change cannot be overstated.

As a leader, your contribution to the organization's future and towards a successful change should be a 'value proposition'. What is a Value Proposition?

It is a couple of phrases or statement that has 3 unique characteristics: it offers something of value to the customer; it is customer friendly and it has a differentiator that sets it apart from your competitors. Some fantastic examples of good value propositions are:

Domino's offer of '30 minutes or free'. It offers the hungry customer the chance to have his meal hot and in 30 minutes, failing which, he does not have to pay at all. This revolutionized the pizza delivery business. Domino's captured the customer's mind space by giving a tangible guarantee, failing which instant reward.

Walmart's price guarantee: 'Always Low Prices, Always'.

Google's faster and wider search results.

BMW's ultimate driving experience, etc.

Depending on the size of your organization, the change can be leader-driven, process-driven, team-driven, expert-driven or change management driven.

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The first approach is successful only in the case of small and medium sized concerns. Though you, as the leader will have the decision-making authority, the team driven change has a better chance of success. The process driven one, though, will take time as your workforce has to learn the new process and get comfortable before productivity can reach previously existing levels. Most organizations favor the last method: change management method, which is the team and expert driven method. This method of change brings to the table the expertise, the commitment, the technical know-how and the ownership qualities, thereby almost creating a fail-proof method of change. As a smart leader, you should be aware of the importance of ownership, involvement and commitment of your workforce to the change process for it to be successful in the long run.

As the leader, you have to persuade your workforce to commit to the changes and there are experts whose ideas are remarkable. Consider the world-renowned social psychologist Robert Cialdini, who in his books about Influence, written after some 30 years in the field, expounds the best ways to persuade your workforce. The specialty of Cialdini's work is that it is based on research of people in industries like car dealerships, real estate, insurance sales, army recruiting and advertising, whose jobs depend on people saying yes to them. He then wrote the 6 Principles of Persuasion.

They are Liking, Reciprocity, Social Proof, Consistency, Authority and Scarcity.

Liking: When we hear a suggestion from someone we like, we tend to be positive towards that; on the other hand, when a suggestion comes from

someone we do not like, we are predisposed to dismissing the suggestion, however valid or helpful it might be. Liking also stems from and towards similarity; so if someone like you tells you something, you are more likely to listen than to someone whom you might perceive as superior or inferior. So, rather than having a mass gathering where you announce the plans for the changes afoot, you need to first inform your team of senior personnel. Let them talk to their teams and so on until the frontline staff are informed by their own supervisors or managers. This will help them to be open to the coming changes, and also help them to feel included rather than being huddled into a great auditorium and addressed by someone from a podium or a screen.

Reciprocity: This is nothing new; the Bible says it: Do unto others what you want others to do unto you. This is also Cialdini's expert opinion. When you treat people right and listen to them, they too will reciprocate. So, he recommends that in a large organization, identify those who are well liked and respected; tell them about the coming changes and enlist their help in communicating the same to their colleagues in a positive light. And generally if the workforce is treated well, and taken care of, in times of adversity, they will not mind helping by working extra hard or taking a pay cut or accepting the changes willingly and working harder to learn the new process or technology, as the case may be. However, if the organization is perceived as miserly, the workforce will be resistant to learning new processes that might be implemented as part of the changes.

Social Proof: It means validation from our peers and those around us; we are unduly influenced by the opinions of those around us, which can often lead <https://assignbuster.com/a-sense-of-urgency-in-your-workforce-business-essay/>

to thoughtless behavior. A classic example of this is the multiple car collisions that we see during rush hour; even though all lanes are moving, slowly but steadily, one driver decides to jump lanes to see if he can go faster; then the next one follows, leading to many others too trying to jump lanes; this leads to numerous collisions during rush hour, frequently. Also called the 'bandwagon effect', this is one of the best ways to influence your workforce and mobilize support.

Consistency: Here it is not used in the usual sense of staying consistent, but rather means consistency in one's words and actions; this particularly carries weight when it comes to garnering support for the proposed changes, especially when they are publicly disclosed. As a general rule, something publicly declared is thought to be incontrovertible; when someone declares something in public, people do not expect them to go back on their word. In change management, this can be a powerful tool in the hands of a skilled manager. However, it will be effective only when it is used not to intimidate or threaten, but in consultation with the workforce.

Authority: This principle goes to show that when an 'expert' shares an opinion or fact, we tend to take it at face value; we don't question it or his authority. This expert driven change can be a powerful tool to convince your workforce to adopt the proposed changes in full measure, for the benefit of themselves and the organization. E. Sreedharan, who was invited to join the Delhi Metro, proved his authority by completing the ambitious project in time and on budget. He asked for and was granted full freedom in the operations and in the hiring and firing of his team, with no political influence, which is unprecedented in the Indian bureaucracy.

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Scarcity: This is based on the idea that we want what is restricted to us. If the workforce is told that unless the proposed changes are adopted wholeheartedly, they might lose their jobs, then they are more likely to work harder to assimilate the new changes and processed. We respond to the threat of something becoming scarce, than to the promise of some benefit. Our primitive psyche responds better to the threat of losing something than to the idea of gaining something. However, a manager should be careful to not use threats when explaining the potential losses.

A leader's role when it comes to change management is never ending. One of his core duties is mobilizing support, and there are a hundred different ways, depending on the size, nature, structure and architecture of your organization. But one essential ability is the think out of the box and catch the imagination of your workforce and to be quick on your feet. To be able to out think the others is a great gift for a leader. You have to be a fast thinker, a brilliant strategist and skillful negotiator to be a successful change management leader.

Consider this story:

Just before a Presidential election, the Presidential campaign managers decided to release some three million brochures with a nice photo of the Presidential Candidate on the cover; almost on the eve of the planned blitzkrieg, in the last few weeks of the campaign, they found to their shock that the photo was copyrighted to a studio in Chicago. The campaign was in a quandary; they did not have the time to reprint the brochures; neither could they risk a lawsuit or a scandal at that late stage of the campaign; inquire

about the studio and its owner brought further disturbing news. The owner was someone who was difficult and money-minded; so, after a brainstorming session, the campaign manager had his secretary shoot off a fax to the studio owner, which read:

“ We are considering offering some studios a chance to sponsor a photo of the Presidential Candidate; when we win, it will be a chance for you to gain huge publicity mileage out of it; so what are you willing to pay us for using your photo?”

The story goes that the offer was a princely sum of \$250; which the campaign manager promptly accepted and went ahead with the release of the brochure using the photo. The candidate was Roosevelt, in 1912 and the studio was Moffat Studios in Chicago. This story was told by Professor James Sebenius and the campaign manager is George Perkins.

This shows that, if you are clear headed thinker, who can think on his feet, even major catastrophes can be skillfully avoided, just by deft handling, especially if you know human nature. This is the hallmark of a great leader!

As a leader, you can beg and barter for change; it all depends on your target audience. If your audience will respond better to negotiation, then you can offer some deal which will benefit them hugely when the changes are in place and the organization is healthier. You also have to pick your time and do whatever is necessary to maintain the momentum.

If you can get your workforce to genuinely believe and participate whole heartedly, the changes that you bring to your organization cannot help but

succeed. The commitment of your workforce is the key to the success of the proposed changes!

Ch: 3 EXECUTING CHANGE

Dr. John Kotter, one of the leading authorities on Change Management and author of 'Leading Change' says, "Accelerate". It is better to change at a fast pace in order to keep ahead of your rivals, or else, chances are that you will be stuck in a perpetual game of catch-up. And for an organization to change successfully, the behavior of its employees has to collectively change; and that is a mammoth task. However brilliantly you plan and communicate it to your workforce, and get them committed to the idea of change, unless you execute the plan equally efficiently, all that effort will end up getting wasted, and the change process will become an utter failure even before its launch.

To help in this Herculean endeavor, Dr. Kotter has devised an 8-step process, of which he says:

"There are still more mistakes that people make, but these eight are the big ones. In reality,

Even successful change efforts are messy and full of surprises. But just as a relatively simple

Vision is needed to guide people through a major change, so a vision of the change process can reduce the error rate. And fewer errors can spell the difference between success and

failure.”

Dr. Kotter recommends learning from both your successes and your mistakes:

Establish a sense of urgency in your workforce

Examine your competition and the market realities. If the market is in a slump, be realistic in your expectations. In a recession, effecting change in your organization can go only so far in bringing results. Organizational change cannot compensate for the prevailing market conditions. As the senior management, you have to identify your weak areas as an organization, and also watch out for any potential crises in the offing.

Communicate such looming crises to your employees so that they are ready and willing to accept the coming changes. Your success in changing for the better, as an organization, depends on your managers' ability to convince their teams that the coming change is inevitable and that it will benefit the organization and everyone working for it.

Plan your strategy to play to your unique strengths, and to take advantage of any opportunities. These initial steps will help you to motivate your employees and help them to adjust to the coming changes, as they have been made aware of the importance of the changes to the future of the organization.

Establish a Powerful Guiding Coalition

A guiding team made up of individuals from the teams across the board will help in promoting employee cooperation and in wider acceptance of the

changes, because your employees feel like stakeholders and also as a part of the decision making coalition. This inclusive approach will yield better results when compared to a top-down approach. This coalition should also be vested with the authority to effect necessary changes within the organization and in its policies to improve the results of any transition planned. Most frequently, failure to improve employee participation in all levels leads to fostering of resentment towards the senior management and thereby resistance to the proposed changes. However, this does not mean that the top management is not responsible for effecting the desired changes. The onus is on the top management to see that employee morale is kept high and that the proposed changes are accepted and adopted by all.

A Clear Vision & a Simple Plan to Achieve it

First you have to envision the changes you want to see in your organization, and then you will have a clear vision of the benefits that the proposed changes can bring to your organization, and then take the time to convey the same to your workforce. Then devise a simple plan to achieve that change, and convey that to your teams. This will help your workforce to feel that they are important to the company and also inculcate a sense of participation and inclusiveness. A simple and sensible plan can do wonders for an organization that wants change by motivating its employees. Simplicity will win every day over grandiose words and actions, as most people can see through them clearly.

Share your Vision and your Plan

When you share and communicate your vision of the positive changes and your plans to achieve the same, you can reap the untold benefits of <https://assignbuster.com/a-sense-of-urgency-in-your-workforce-business-essay/>

employee participation. When your workforce feels included in the decision making, it inspires them to perform better as they feel like stakeholders and not just employees. It is always better for the organization when they volunteer and work harder on their own conviction, rather than being coerced in any way. In an organization with thousands of employees, such voluntary participation and ready support can make a huge difference to the outcome of the proposed changes.

Empower your employees

Identify those of your employees who can convince their colleagues to follow in their footsteps; when your workforce receives information that is promising from their peers, especially someone they like and respect. When you allocate such responsibilities, you should also allow room for individual ideas and action. New ideas and innovative suggestions should be encouraged and adopted where ever possible. This can go a long way in improving input and in inculcating a sense of ownership amongst your employees. This empowerment will also instill accountability in your workforce, thereby increasing productivity, as the sense of ownership will give them an incentive to see that the organization flourishes. As a corollary, restrictive actions on the part of senior staff and management should be discouraged, as they can be an impediment to successful and sustainable change.

Strategize and Plan for Short Term Benefits

Any vision for successful change has to be, inevitably on a long term basis; but little successes in the short term have to be acknowledged and rewarded, as that will help your employees feel positive about themselves, their changed circumstances, and also help to boost their morale. Set <https://assignbuster.com/a-sense-of-urgency-in-your-workforce-business-essay/>

realistic short term goals and reward those who are successful in achieving them. For instance, you can set up annual reward programs for those who perform well in the newly formulated strategy, or master a newly introduced innovation; this will encourage better participation from your workforce in the changed strategies.

Consolidate and Build to Further Improve

By this stage of the change process, you should be able to see that your initial efforts are paying off; your employees have adjusted well to the changes and their productivity has increased. The changes have really helped your organization to perform better and to compete in the market, favorably, when compared to its competitors. But do not stop pushing hard, because now is not the time to rest on your laurels. Now is the time to forge ahead, firing on all cylinders and with more vigor. When you achieve positive results from change effected, you gain credibility. Use this credibility to push forward. Otherwise your sense of achievement might prove to be premature as it takes sustained effort to maintain difficult changes in an organization and change is an ongoing process. You can even hire or promote staffs who are open to change, without too much resistance fro