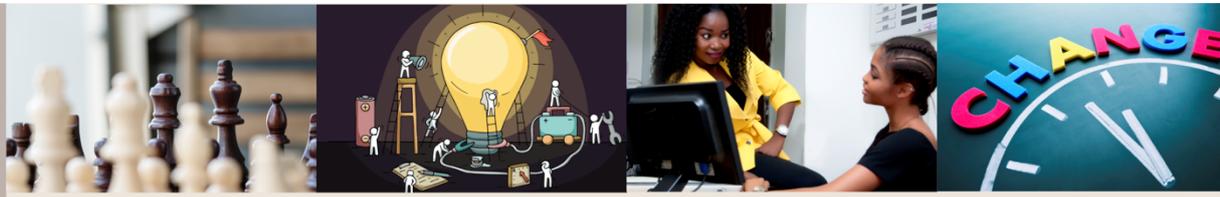




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Leading Change

By Omagbitse Barrow

There is the trite statement about the inevitability of change – “The only constant thing in life is change”. I will like you to think about this in the context of an organization for a minute. Organizations typically run on several foundations – people, strategy, culture, policies, procedures, systems, etc. From time to time, for a variety of reasons, these things change – whether we desire them or not. Many changes are driven externally based on market forces, competitive pressures, or regulatory directives. The key thought for you as an organizational leader is – what happens when change happens?

Here is what we know – when change happens some organizations are on the right side of change, they do well in adapting to change and after a few initial bumps and hiccups start to take advantage of the change. There are even some organizations who are the key drivers of the change, so they are proactively prepared to deal with it, because they in fact, created it.

Then you have those who are not prepared to deal with the change, their lack of preparedness eventually limits their ability to survive, and they get the short end of the stick when changes happen.

The difference between these three types of organizations is related to the culture and capacity of such organizations to lead change, something my colleagues and I call the “Change DNA”. The Change DNA is not bestowed on some privileged organizations and withheld from others – NO! it is built through a systematic process of learning and acculturation on the imperative of change management.

We like to think of change management as all the activities that take place in an organization to support the people in the organization to transition successfully from one state to another by paying attention to reducing the resistance to such transitions and increasing their acceptance.

To make this easier, let's identify some simple examples of transitions that people in your organization need to deal with, and as I name them, I want you to think about how some people will resist and others will accept these changes.

For example: policy changes; a new strategy; new reporting lines for your department; new products; new template for reporting performance; new performance management system; new human leave policies; new computer system for capturing sales. The list is endless. I am sure you can add hundreds of potential changes and transitions that take place at different levels in your organization each year.

Each of these transitions is required to achieve some important business goal and result that is meant to create more value for the organization and all its employees. However, if there is no proper change management, these laudable changes will either not happen at all, or will happen much later than planned and perhaps at a higher cost to the organization. Change Management is designed to help to ensure that when such changes are proposed, they happen – on time and on budget and most importantly, they create the results and impact for which they were intended.

Why do Transitions Fail?

In his classic work on transformational change efforts, Harvard Business School's Professor Emeritus John Kotter identified eight (8) powerful reasons why the best efforts of teams, organizations, and even countries to transition from one state to another fails. According to him, it is essentially because there was not sufficient attention paid to managing change or what some scholars call managing the people-side of these transformational efforts.

You see, you can develop a new automated system, back it up with funding to ensure its implementation and develop a masterful implementation plan that ensures that everything is in place for "Go live" and still end up with a failure – no one likes the system, people are still defaulting to the old one, and the investments made in the new one now seems like a loss.

Kotter says this happens because firstly, the organization did not **create a sense of urgency** – this involves selling the why of the transition and getting people to see that the current state is undesirable and needs to change.

Then, such organizations typically do not do a good enough job in putting together a **guiding coalition of leaders and influencers to champion the project**. With the right combination of political power, influence and capacity, a powerful guiding coalition will help in selling the why and the vision for the change.

In addition, many organizations do not create **a compelling vision that captures the WIIFM (What Is In It For Me)**. You must get people to see what the future holds after the successful implementation and how in particular, their future is enhanced.

Even where there is a compelling vision, you must **communicate that vision in a deliberate and exciting way** to grab the attention of the people impacted by the project and get them to participate excitedly in it.

The fifth reason why such projects fail is that organizations are not intentional about **removing all the obstacles** that may prevent the project from succeeding. Sometimes the obstacles are people, existing relationships, processes, or even cultural practices that may be detrimental to the project.

Because transformational changes often take times to incubate and translate to results, organizations need to pay attention to **creating a series of short-term wins** that will eventually lead to the final long-term result or impact. Without such short-term wins, stakeholders may become disillusioned and give up too early.

Sometimes, leaders make the mistake of assuming that because they have achieved some progress with a project or transition, they declare **victory too soon**, letting down their guard instead of pushing for more change. Finally, the famous words of Peter Drucker remind us that culture eats strategy for breakfast, so if you have **failed to anchor the change in the culture of the organization** by for example incorporating it into the performance management system which is the livewire of most organizations, then it is possible that the change will not take root in the organization, like the biblical “house that was built on sand”.

Think about a project that you undertook at work recently that didn't give you the results and impact you wanted, can you see any of these 8 reasons in play?

The Change Management Plan

While the eight reasons from John Kotter give us a clear direction of the fundamental issues that we must pay attention to, we like to rely on the ADKAR Framework from the Prosci Institute in the United States and the Three-Phase Change Model of PLAN-DO-SUSTAIN that is widely used in the change management community to develop and implement a Change Management Plan.

Our experience suggests that when transformational projects are embarked upon, most organizations can come up with decent project plans that breakdown the project into distinct activities, allocate resources in terms of budget and people and set timelines for the delivery of each component of the project.

For the people-side to be successful, we need a similar focus and discipline, and the five elements of the **ADKAR** Model can be used to create a Change Management Plan that will run side-by-side with the Project Plan. ADKAR is a mnemonic that stands for five critical actions required to ensure that individuals, teams, organizations and even countries transition properly from one state to another.

To get people to successfully transition, you need to create **AWARENESS** of the need for change and fuel **DESIRE** for the change. These first two elements align quite well with the first phase of the Three-Phase Change Model that some practitioners use where we **PLAN** the change and deal with the first three reasons of Kotter's 8 (See table below ADKAR, Kotter, and the Three-Phase Model).

The next two actions of the ADKAR Model require you to provide **KNOWLEDGE** and **ABILITY** to the people to carry out the change. This is in the **DO** phase of the Three-Phase Model and captures the next three of Kotter's 8.

Finally, you need to ensure **REINFORCEMENT** to sustain the change in a manner that deals with the final two of Kotter's 8 in the **SUSTAIN** phase of the Three-Phase Model.

Change Phase	ADKAR Actions/Goals	Kotter's 8 to be Addressed
PLAN	Create A wareness	1. Lack of a Sense of Urgency 2. No Clear Guiding Coalition 3. Lack of a Compelling Vision
	Fuel D esire	
DO	Provide K nowledge	4. Not Communicating the Vision 5. Allowing Obstacles to Block the Vision 6. Not Creating Short-Term Wins
	Foster A bility	
SUSTAIN	Ensure R einforcement	7. Declaring Victory Too Soon 8. Not Anchoring the Change in the Culture

ADKAR, Kotter, and the Three-Phase Model

Putting Together the Plan

The Change Management Plan built on the ADKAR Model will address the eight reasons advanced by Kotter and should be developed and implemented in an intentional manner and run side-by-side with the Project Plan.

The Plan should include specific tactics under each of the five actions or goals. To prepare for the plan we recommend that you carry out an analysis of the key stakeholders impacted by the change to identify points of resistance and issues they may have.

Also, we recommend that an initial change readiness assessment be carried out on as many of the stakeholders as possible to gauge their level of change readiness and identify some of those issues that will be captured in the Stakeholder Analysis and some of the measures and goals that will be set in the Change Management Plan

A typical change management plan like its project management counterpart will include tasks, timelines, responsibility, and a status tracking in a tabular format with the same discipline and focus. See Change Management Plan Template below

Change Management Plan – Template

Goal	Tasks	Timeline	Responsibility	Status
Increase AWARENESS by xx%	Task 1			
	Task 2			
	Task 3			
Grow DESIRE by xx%	Task 4			
	Task 5			
Increase Knowledge to xx%	Task 6			
	Task 7			
	Task 8			
Enhance ABILITY by xx%	Task 9			
	Task 10			
	Task 11			
Achieve REINFORCEMENT at xx%	Task 12			
	Task 13			

Creating the Change DNA

Imagine if every manager in your organization understood the imperative of change management, could relate to Kotter’s 8 reasons, and could use the tools of ADKAR, Stakeholder Analysis and a Change management Plan to actually manage the people-side of every transition or transformational project being undertaken in your organization. It will certainly make a world of difference.

A good place to start will be with YOU – believing in the efficacy of change management and taking small steps each day to apply these principles and practices within your own sphere of control.

We always challenge human resources professionals as the custodians of organizational culture to be at the forefront of leading organizational change and supporting leaders across the organization with the thought-leadership, example and coaching to inspire them to do the same.

When Dave Ulrich of Michigan State University outlined the four core capabilities of the HR Champion, one of them was “Change Manager”, and we hope that our short resource has helped to strengthen that capability.

If you would like to explore this further and get some support from us in building the Change Management DNA in your organization through our training or consulting solutions, please contact us on +234 805 195 3276.