

Leading Change in Organizations

Part Four



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After communicating, as open as possible, the reasons for the upcoming change and explaining the 'what's, 'why's, and 'how's throughout the organization, the leader must also communicate a clear vision for the change.

He/she must be able to describe what the future will look like after the change to all levels of the organization in a positive encouraging way that will inspire people to act; and it is a big challenge.

Most organizations have vision and mission statements. However, we hardly find an organization in which all employees understand these statements; let alone even knowing them. There is a big difference between just writing vision and mission statements and communicating them effectively.

Kotter pointed out that the average leader hugely under-communicates the vision for change. Any change initiative should have a good formal communication plan in place before the change begins. The leader must explain the things that will not change, the new things that will occur, what will change, how long it will take, and the like.

Then the leader has to ensure that the support elements necessary for the change to be successful are in place. These are a realistic change project plan, guiding and

facilitating team, formal communication plan, formal training plan, obstructions removal, and a supportive management team.

It is important that the management must make sure that the proposed change is reasonable and has a realistic change plan. If not, most employees will resist the change. The success of a change initiative is largely affected by how employees see and accept it.

Leslie W. Rue, Professor Emeritus of Management at Georgia State University, and Lloyd L. Byars, Professor of Management at Georgia Institute of Technology stated that "How employees perceive a change greatly affects their reaction". Thus, affects the success of the change initiative.

They suggested that there are four basic types of employees' reaction to change. The first, employees will resist change if they cannot foresee how the change will affect them, and/or if they believe that the change may make things worse.

The second, employees will resist change if they see that the change is not compatible with their needs and aspirations. They believe, in this case, that the change will make things worse.

The third, if employees see that the change is going to take place regardless of their objection, their first reaction is to resist it. However, when they see that the change is inevitable, they then gradually accept it and go along with it.

Finally, employees will be highly motivated to accept the change if it is in their interests. Hence, employees must feel that the change will make things better.

The next step the leader should take is to establish a guiding team. The team members will act as facilitators and guides for the change. They should be those who accepted the change, and willing to execute the plan for the change.

They will also be in charge of teaching the new skills necessary for the change to be successful and establish the needed training programmes.

The leader and the guiding team members should also have plans to remove the obstructions that may prevent the change, and take action steps to remove these obstructions. These obstructions including – but not limited to - lack of budget, lack of management support, not enough people, lack of time, and the like.

In order to do so, the leader and the team members must have a full support from the organization's management.