

DEVELOPING SUPPORT FOR CHANGE WHEN THE STAKEHOLDERS DIDN'T CREATE IT



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The Art of People At Work®

Change. It can be the best thing since sliced bread. The only thing that will keep the organization healthy. A necessity. But without employee support for any process or organizational change, the full benefits may never occur. Or it will happen but not as well as it could.

We know the most effective way to develop support for change is to involve ALL the employees in creating the change. That way, the employees understand the problem and come up with the solutions they believe are the most workable. Then they own it. And because, after all, they are your major stakeholders it's important for them to create their own change.

But sometimes that isn't an option, or it doesn't happen. Maybe a change needs to be put in place quickly and there isn't time to involve the stakeholders. Or maybe people haven't had a chance to create change in the past, and now need practice in creating change – so you went ahead and made the decisions yourselves.

Here are ten guidelines for developing support for change initiatives you must lead, but without the involvement of all stakeholders (employees) in creating the change.

These guidelines have come from the experience of working with thousands of employees and managers and executives in the midst of organizational change. The guidelines include our best insight up to this moment on how to develop support for change so change works.

One of the best strategies we've learned for making change work is to rely on the concept of Natural Strengths. Management guru Kathy Kolbe has identified a process to measure that third part of the mind that the ancient philosophers talked about (thinking, feeling, doing). It's the way we naturally strive to get things done. We have instincts, Kolbe reports, in four conative Action Modes™. She calls these four modes, Fact Finder, Follow Thru, Quick Start, and Implementor (think about physical energy). What we've learned is most organizations get themselves in trouble when they plan and carry out a change without taking into consideration how people naturally get things done. So Fact Finders need lots of information, the "Why?" behind the change.

So give it to them.

The Follow Thrus need to know how their routine will change, and what the plan is. Give it to them. In advance.

Quick Starts need to be involved, and are good at "selling" the change to others. Get them involved. And the Implementors, those who work with physical energy, need assurance that tools and space will be available for quality work.

Sure, give us a call. We'll be glad to explain it in more detail.

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1. ESTABLISH AND COMMUNICATE A SENSE OF URGENCY



You begin by making certain that you've communicated a sense of urgency for the change. Without a sense of urgency, for example the need to reduce costs in order to eliminate debt, change will not be viewed as something positive and helpful to the organization. The sense of urgency must be communicated to all stakeholders in ways that "speak" to them.

To say, "The management team wants us to do it this new way," isn't communicating a sense of urgency. To say "By making this enhancement to the way we process POs we can reduce our costs by at least \$135,000 a year, which helps reduce our operating deficit so dollars can be released for other needs," is communicating a sense of urgency.

Sometimes the urgency is to stay ahead of competition, or at least keep up with competition. And sometimes the urgency is to correct something that has cost the organization customers or surpluses or...

When people understand the sense of urgency, the need for change, it becomes much easier to support. People can get behind the change and support it with their actions. Which is much more important than merely supporting it by words.

Here's an example. A major non-profit was going through a restructuring. In debt several million dollars, the senior management team realized if they realigned some tasks and departments, they could operate in the black within two years. The restructuring took place, and as part of the process workshops on Making Change Work! were held for all employees.

In one of the first workshops employees came in disgruntled, and upset that they had to take time for another training program "that probably wouldn't make any difference anyway." The CFO introduced the workshop presenters, and in his introduction talked about being in debt, and how the realignment of work would help them move to a balanced budget. There were lots of questions, and when the CFO turned the session over to the workshop leaders several participants commented something like, "Gee, we didn't know we were in debt. If we'd known all this earlier we'd have really supported the changes."

All it would have taken was for someone to share the sense of urgency at the beginning so the employees (stakeholders) could understand why the change was necessary and why it was necessary NOW.

What is your "sense of urgency?"
And have you shared it with all the stakeholders?



2. ANNOUNCE THE CHANGE BOTH VERBALLY AND THROUGH A WRITTEN EXPLANATION.

Your people want to hear a voice and associate it with a face when there's a major change initiative. It's more personal. More direct. There's a chance to ask questions (or at least there *needs* to be). And a change is more real when you hear it from someone rather than just read about it in a short memo or email.

As part of your announcement, plan for Q&A time. Ask for questions. Be candid as you respond. Share information. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so – and then add, "Let me find out and I'll get back to you." And then do it. Don't ever lie to a group of employees.

Company A bought Company B as a means to expand their business. The new president of the acquiring company came to meet with all the employees of Company B and announce some major restructuring, including a downsizing. He made the mistake of saying something like, "This is all the changes there will be." Some employees got up and left. Others laughed out loud. They knew there would be more changes. There always are. But the president lost any support and credibility (things he would need later) he might have developed because he didn't tell the truth.

Whatever you say in announcing the change must be honest and truthful. If there's going to be more change, then acknowledge it. If you think there will be more change, then admit it. If you don't know when more change will occur, be honest about it. If you lie, or the stakeholders think you're not being honest with them, you will have lost their support when you need it most.

After you've made your spoken announcement be ready to hand out a written announcement. Make sure you do this *after* the verbal announcement. If you hand it out at the same time, or as people gather, they won't listen to you. Instead, they'll be reading what you handed them.

This document will usually contain more information than your spoken announcement. The written announcement is for all the people (Fact Finders) who want something to take home or take back to their workstation. Why? They might just want to read about it later. What we have learned over the years is if you don't provide a written explanation for Fact Finders (and others, too) to take with them *employees will assume you are holding something back!*

The printed explanation begins with the bottom line. Then you explain your rationale.

The way in which Purchase Orders will be processed is undergoing refinement. The new process will be explained in a series of meetings in each work unit.

The reasons for this change are . . .

- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- Etc

Remember, don't distribute your written handout until **after** your verbal announcement. If you do, people won't listen to your spoken words because they are reading your written words.





Make your announcement early in the week and early in the day. If you wait until late afternoon, you have lost control. Why? Because your people will go home and get on the phone and will be talking all evening about the announcement. You will not know until the next morning what their real response is. If you wait until Friday afternoon to make the announcement, you know your people will be talking on the phone all weekend. Come Monday morning you may have an angry workplace.

When you make your announcement early in the week and early in the day you can stay on top of workplace reaction. If there's a problem you can deal with it immediately before it grows. If people have questions you're around to answer those questions. This is the time to walk around, do a lot of listening, and answer specific questions any employee may have.

After all, if you're walking around and very visible, and not shut off in your office, then this must be a great change and it will all work out!



3. EXPLAIN THE RATIONALE, WHY THE CHANGE IS TAKING PLACE

The Fact-Finders want to know the "Why?" behind each and every change that will be taking place. Why is the change necessary? Why now instead of later? Why this instead of that? Without the "Why?" being answered Fact Finders will drag their feet and you will not have their support. And they can be very vocal in *not supporting* your change.

Give people the bottom-line first – what the change will be and when it will take effect – and then explain why. Give them the detail they want and the numbers they want. Tell them why you selected the change you're announcing and explain why it's better than the other options. You can even talk about the other options that were considered, and why the option being implemented was selected as the *best* option.



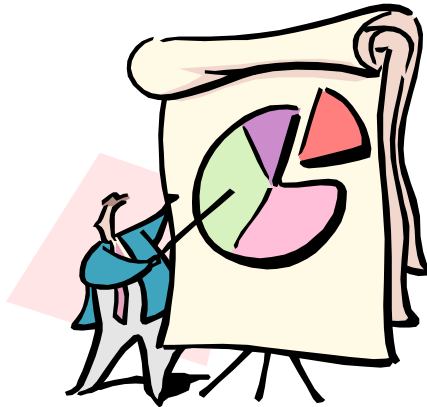
If the change you're announcing has a history to it explain the history. Tell where it has worked before and how it has worked and why it has worked. And tell them why you believe it will work here, in your organization.

Without all this information a significant portion of your workforce, your stakeholders, will not be able to fully and enthusiastically support the changes being announced.

You can start out your announcement something like this:

"You know that we've been taking a hard look at how best to organize our regions. A lot of you have been involved in looking at our options. I've called you together to announce our reorganization of regions, as we move from six to four regions, each with a hub that includes our top markets.

"Our new regions will be..."



"Now let me explain how we came to this plan..."

A major agricultural supplier was getting ready to change the compensation package for its sales force across the country. Most of their sales people were part-time, and sold the supplier's products as part of their own agricultural (farming) operations. After learning about the different ways people respond to change, the senior management team changed the way they rolled out the new plan.

They reported a new compensation plan was coming, and at their annual sales meeting made the announcement. They did an overview, including the Urgency (to meet competition and remain in the black) and they explained all the options that were considered. A leader gave the plus and minuses for each option. Then they went through their thought-process of why the final options was selected as the best.

Q & A followed. Every question was acknowledged.

Then they handed out their printed report explaining the rationale in detail. The "Why?" The Vice President of Sales remarked several months later that it was the smoothest major restructuring he had ever rolled out.



As you answer “Why?” show people how you approached the plan, and how you've considered the implications of each change. Share your rationale. Remember, you can't do just one thing. A new sales strategy with new regions impacts the entire organization: how reimbursements get made, bills get sent out, software, hardware, who signs for what, and on and on.

Are you ready to answer the “Why?” you will be asked? With all the detail some people will want?



4. Form a guiding coalition of those who support the change

As you plan the best strategies to announce the change, form a guiding coalition from the people who will be affected. And who can help “sell” the change to others. This will be a group who can not only keep you informed as to the real reactions of the unit, but who can also show others why the change is important. It is crucial that the head of the effected unit be in full support of the change. That person is a key person in the coalition. Others can be employees of all levels.

Bring these people together with you before the change is announced. Go over the change with them. Explain the details. Ask for questions. Reactions. Weak points. These people can help you identify actions that will develop support. They can also let you know what actions might derail full employee support.

And most importantly, they can help others understand why the change is necessary and how it will impact the organization's future.

A manufacturing company was facing tough competition from other global sources for its premier product. A new CEO formed a team comprised of one VP, the Union leader, and representatives from the various departments. The assignment: “Figure out how we can meet the competition and stay in business.”

The group asked for lots of information and details about costs and profits and sales and compensations and all those kinds of things. Nothing about the company's financials was withheld. It was a true open-book operation.



After about a year, the group finally made its recommendation: move the manufacturing part of the operation to Mexico and keep the marketing and sales and accounting units in the US at the existing home office.

Repercussions? Very few. The group took lots of time to explain their recommendation and why. And since they were representatives of each of the company's units, their ideas were accepted as the best way to stay in business.

Who can be your guiding coalition? And what is your rationale for selecting each person?



5. Describe the vision of what it will look like after the change is complete

You and the guiding coalition can develop a picture of the future that is easy to communicate and easy to understand. But it goes beyond just numbers. The vision describes what the unit will be like after the change is fully operational. You should be able to communicate the vision in 2-3 minutes or less and get a reaction that signifies both understanding and interest. If not, then it's time to re-think. The vision is very concrete in terms of what success looks like.

One way to describe this vision is to think in terms of a newspaper front-page article. Think about what a newspaper might report about your organization and its new vision. Or think about what such an article might report five years from now on your excellent organization. What will it say about you? What will you be known for? What impact is your organization having on clients, community, and employees? Go ahead and add your own items that you want the article to cover.

The owner of a small accounting firm started doing some serious thinking what he wanted his company to look like in five years. Earlier, in the midst of tax season, he had to let two employees go because of the disruption they were causing. The work got done because key people stayed late to make sure it got done.

The owner was faced with growing the company smaller or larger. In the process, he was challenged to describe what he wanted the company to look like. He spent a good amount of time thinking through the issues. Then he did what he needed to do to get the support of his several employees. He involved them.



He led them through the newspaper article exercise. Discussion was lively as the employees talked about what they wanted the company to be. And what the culture would be like. The owner was an integral part of the discussions and had lots of input. Everyone had input.

In their article they described the workplace culture. How people would get their work done. The kinds of clients they would seek. What the office would look like. How people interacted between themselves. But it had taken them many hours of discussion and choosing the right words to describe their vision.

They could describe it in detail, because they had “dreamed” it in detail.

What is your vision for the future? And have you communicated the vision to all the stakeholders so they can support the change?



6. Communicate the vision to all stakeholders.

Communicating the vision involves much more than just a one-time email or pep talk or announcement. The vision must be continually communicated. Huddles. Emails. Newsletters. The way leaders go about doing their business. John Kotter writes, “Without credible communication, and a lot of it, the hearts and minds of the troops are never captured.”

The Guiding Coalition can be a great help in communicating the vision. They can talk about the vision in small groups, in work teams, and departmental meetings. They can make themselves available for Q & A.

This is not the time to set in the office with the door closed. This is the time to engage the people in where the organization is going and how it will get there.



7. Develop the plan and time frame for changes to take place.

Without the plan, and the time frame for changes to occur, Follow-Thrus will not support the change. They need to know what will change this week, what will change next week, and what will change the week after. Their need to know what will happen next really benefits the key decision makers. It makes decision makers think things through before they are to happen.

If you can put it into some kind of chart people will understand the change. They may not agree with it, but you will at least have won them over because you showed you have a plan. Your plan needs to include dates – the time when certain parts of the total change will be in place. And the plan needs to clearly indicate what changes first, then second, and on.

Here's a brief example. Your chart will be much more extensive. But you get the idea. We hope.

Action	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Catalog all end-users	X			
Place all end-users into new categories		X		
Call IT to schedule reformats	X			
Schedule training on new processes	X			
Conduct training			X	X
Contact end-users with information				X

Remember that your Initiating Fact Finders and Follow Thrus, who probably comprise a significant portion of your workforce, don't like surprises. When you tell them on Friday about all the changes to take place on Monday, you create confusion. Stress. And then performance drops.

You need to give your people time to “prepare” for the change. To get ready for it. When you tell people what's going to happen and when, there are no surprises. People know change is coming. They know what the change is and what it involves. And with this information, they can support the change.

Include within your spoken and written announcements the time frame in which the changes will take place. Are the changes effective next week? Next month? And how will the changes be implemented? All departments at the same time? Different teams at different times?

You build employee support by not having any surprises! And by putting concepts and plans into charts and diagrams so people can see how it all fits together. The more you explain the changes in charts and diagrams, and how things will change this week and what will change next week, the easier it is for many of your people to support the change.

The more you can involve your people in developing the plan and time frame, the more support there will be.

When WorkLife Design moved from one office building to another, there was some mass confusion. Leigh liked plans and liked to know when change was taking place. She was asked to prepare a chart listing all the things that had to be done in order to move to the new location. She



did. And then she was asked to put it in a logical sequence. What needed to happen first and then second, and so on. She did. Her shoulders came out of her ears as she looked at the detailed chart. Then she was given permission to tell key people, “This needs to be completed by 5pm today so we can get that completed by the end of tomorrow.”

It worked well. Very well.

Let your people know what changes will take place and when. And give them time to think about it and prepare themselves before the changes take place.



8. Show how peoples' routine will change.

Those high in Follow Thru energy will be concerned about how their routines will remain the same or how they may change. Tell them. In advance. Think through how the routines of people will change and let them know, in detail. It may be as small a change as having to use a different keyboard. Or it may mean a major change, like moving to a different location or having all new processes to learn.

Showing how peoples' routine will change can be formatted similar to above. Use a chart or table or some organized way to show how routines will be changing. And when.

Follow Thrus don't like surprises and they like things to remain the same. When their routine changes, it can be highly disruptive. When you take time to explain to people how their routines will change – before the change occurs – it makes it easier to accommodate and adapt to those changes.

If you're a person who doesn't typically follow a routine, you may not fully understand why this is so important in developing support for change. After all, you're able to go from one task to another without any kind of hesitation. And interruptions? Love them!

Remember, however, that a good number of your employees need a plan, and need to know, in advance, how their routines will change. Let them know. In detail. In advance. And watch them say, “Hey, this was a piece of cake.”

Jose was getting ready to implement a new system to process purchase orders. It meant a new screen – several of them, in fact – and called for more information than before. His people were comfortable with the routine of filling out the blank spaces and knew how to do it. This would be new. Major change.



Jose called his people together and announced that there would be a change in 5 weeks. He also showed them a chart indicating what new processes people would learn each week for the next 5 weeks. Each week, Jose showed his people several of the new processes that the new form called for. Each week, Jose took time for his employees to practice on the new forms.

When the fifth week came, his people were ready. They had been shown over the previous weeks exactly how the routine of the new form would change. He had given them time to practice. They had talked about how each new form changed the routine. But it didn't bother them. Jose had made it work.

What are you doing to show how peoples' routines will change?

9. Celebrate short-term wins and successes.

Celebrating short-term successes keeps the vision alive. It enhances the enthusiasm and support for the changes. It continues to focus on the fact that the new vision is not completely in place, and there's more to be done – but at least some things have taken place that are important. Share the results as change is taking place. Was efficiency increased by 7%? Celebrate it. Were overhead costs reduced by 11.5%? Celebrate it. Were receipts increased by 3%? Celebrate it. Keep your people informed of ALL the short-term wins and successes.

As part of the celebration, be sure to reinforce the changed behaviors. That means recognizing people who work to make the vision reality, telling them “Thanks,” and letting them know how important they are to the success of the change.

The best time to recognize extra effort is when you see it. Don't wait for a monthly gathering, or even a weekly gathering. **Recognize good work when it happens, not later.**

“Huddles” are a great way to celebrate daily successes and recognize people for their accomplishments. What's a huddle? It's when you call your people together and you stand (never sit) in a huddle, just like a football game. Well, you don't need to hold hands. And then you talk. You talk about the short term wins and successes. Everybody has a chance to speak. Ask questions. Celebrate.



Research supports that goal attainment is higher, and more reliable and sustainable, when people know what the progress is, what's working and what isn't, and have a voice and potential for impact.

How will you celebrate short-term successes?



10. Listen to all suggestions for enhancements and refinements.

The quickest way to make sure change doesn't happen is to not listen to suggestions and ideas for enhancements and refinements. Or to downplay anyone's ideas but your own. You must listen to others' ideas. Seriously listen.

Why? Because someone's suggestion might just be the refinement that really makes things work!

And the best suggestions don't just come from leaders. The people doing the work are going to have the best ideas for the best refinements. Tell the people "Thank You!" for ideas and suggestions, even if those ideas aren't put into place.

Reward people for thinking about how to get things done that aren't being done or could be done better! And don't forget the old, but highly effective, management process of managing by walking around. And listening.

The VP took his key managers away for a two day strategic planning retreat. He wanted his leaders to come up with the strategies and tactics for the next two years. In the morning he divided the people into smaller work-groups and asked each to come up with their vision and general objectives.

The discussions in the groups were energetic. Lots of pros and cons. But still, a striving for consensus and excellence.

After lunch the VP asked each group for its preliminary report. After the third group had reported, the VP said something like, "No, no, that's not what I had in mind." Then, going over to a box and pulling out printed and stapled reports he announced, "Here, this is what I'm thinking about." He gave everyone his vision, his copy of what needed to happen – according to him.

The group sat silent. They read through what the VP wanted to get accomplished in the next two years. There wasn't much discussion for the rest of the retreat. Most comments were questions asking for clarification, like "What do you mean by....?" What had begun as an energetic discussion of visions and ideas and strategies and tactics quickly turned into a quiet acquiescence.

Each suggestion that is made needs to receive, "Thank you for your suggestion – please be assured that it will be considered."

