REPORT on The Four Principles of Change Management

Successful change management relies on four core principles:

1. Understand Change.

2. Plan Change.

3. Implement Change.

4. Communicate Change.

Let's explore each of these in turn, along with some tools and techniques that you can use to put them into practice:

Principle 1: Understand Change

To successfully promote the benefits of the change, you need to understand them yourself. So, think about:

- Why you need to change. What are your key objectives?

- What will the benefits of the change be to the organization?

- How will it impact people positively?

- How will it affect the way that people work?

- What will people need to do to successfully achieve the change?

It can also be helpful to think about what the negative outcomes of **not** making the change would be. **Beckhard and Harris' Change Equation** shows that, for change to work, there has to be sufficient dissatisfaction with the old way of doing things. But people also need to feel confident that the new approach will be better – and that there's a clear route to get there.

Principle 2: Plan Change

Effective change doesn't just happen by chance, and any plan you make has to be right for your organization. The way that change projects are managed can vary from organization to organization. Some have very rigid change methodologies, while others are more open and flexible in their approach.

However, in general, you'll need to consider the following:

- **Sponsorship.** How will you secure, engage and use high-level support and sponsorship of the change?
- **Involvement.** Who is best positioned to help you to design and implement the change? For example, will you need external expertise? Or can you use internal resources?
- **Buy-in.** Change is most effective when you are able to **win support** from people across the business. How do you plan to achieve this?
- **Impact.** Finally, think about what success should look like. How will you predict and assess the impact of the change that you need to make? What goals do you need to achieve?

Tip

There are several tools that you can use to plan change:

- **The Burke-Litwin Change Model** allows you to formulate an approach that suits the structure, dynamics and current context of your business.
- **Leavitt's Diamond** is a useful framework for working through the impacts of any proposed change – on tasks, people, structure, and technology.
- **Impact Analysis** can help you to uncover the unexpected consequences of change.
- **SIPOC Diagrams** are comprehensive tools that you can use to check how change will impact your suppliers, inputs, processes, outputs, and customers.

Principle 3: Implement Change

So how exactly are you going to make change happen?

As we've seen, there are many different strategies that you can choose to put your change into practice. **Kotter's 8-Step Change Model**, for

example, explains how to inject a sense of urgency into your actions, so that you build momentum and encourage everyone to get behind your changes.

Meanwhile, the **Change Curve** reminds you to be mindful of people's feelings while putting your plan into action. It shows the stages that we all tend to go through during organizational change – from shock and denial, to the point where we're fully invested in the new approach.

Tip

The Bridges Transition Model is a helpful tool for guiding and supporting people through periods of change. And Mind Tools Club and corporate members can listen to **our Expert Interview with transition consultant Susan Bridges**.

Whatever tools you choose, the following steps can help you to implement change in a positive way:

- Ensure that everyone involved in the changes understands what needs to happen – and what it means for them.

- Agree **success criteria** for your changes, and make sure that they're regularly measured and reported on.
- Map and identify all of the key stakeholders that will be involved in the change and define their level of involvement.

- Identify any training needs that must be addressed in order to implement the change.

- Appoint "change agents," who'll help to put the new practices into place – and who can act as role models for the new approach.

- Find ways to **change people's habits** , so that the new practices become the norm.
- Make sure that everyone is **supported** throughout the change process.

Principle 4: Communicate Change

Communication can be a make-or-break component of change management. The change that you want to implement has to be clear

and relevant, so people understand what you want them to do and why they need to do it. But you also have to set the right tone, so that you get the emotional reaction you're hoping for.

It's a good idea to link the changes that you're planning to your organization's **mission or vision statements** . Not only will this help people to see how the change positively impacts the "bigger picture," it will also provide them with an inspiring, shared vision of the future. Also be sure to practice good **stakeholder management** . This will ensure that you give the right people the right message, at the right time, to get the support that you need for your project.
The ADKAR Change Management Model is a particularly useful tool that you can use to help communicate your change. It outlines five things you should address in your communications:

- **Awareness** (of the need for change).
- **Desire** (to participate in and support it).
- **Knowledge** (of how to change).
- **Ability** (to change).
- **Reinforcement** (to sustain the change in the long term).

What Can Prevent Change?

Even the best-laid plans can suffer setbacks, so be ready for problems when they arise. Some people may be pessimistic about your plans, so you'll need to acknowledge, understand and address any **resistance to change** .
You may even come up against **cultural barriers** to change. If your organizational culture doesn't embrace change – or even pushes against it – you'll have to find ways to reward flexibility, create role models for change, and repeat your key messages until the mood starts to improve.

Tip

Change is complex, and knowing what **not** to do is just as important as knowing what to do. Develop your understanding of the "road bumps" that can impact change by watching our video, **7 Reasons Why Change Can Fail** .

Which Leadership Style Is Best for Change Management?

There's no "one-size-fits-all" approach to change management – so there's no perfect way to lead it.

But, in general, it's important to stay authentic and to lead in a way that's right for you. You can also flex and adapt your approach to suit the particular challenges that your organization faces – and the behaviors that you're trying to change.

Successful change leaders tend to show the following characteristics:

- The ability to build coalitions and **inspire trust** .
- Strong communication skills at every stage.

- **Emotional intelligence** to pick up on resistance to change and acknowledge the personal difficulties that people have with it.
- The ability to think strategically and link the change to the "bigger picture."

Key Points

Change management is a structured approach to implementing change in an organization. It recognizes that change can be a painful process which can have a far-reaching impact on the organization and the people who work for it.

There are four key principles of change management:
1. **Understand Change:** for change to be effective, you need to understand all the "ins and outs" of the change. For example, what it is, how it will be achieved, and why it needs to happen.
2. **Plan Change:** this can include achieving high-level sponsorship of the change project, as well as identifying wider involvement and buy-in opportunities.
3. **Implement Change:** when you come to carry out your plan, you need to ensure that everyone involved knows what they're doing. This may encompass addressing training needs, appointing "change agents," providing support for people across the organization, and setting specific success criteria.

4. **Communicate Change:** everyone needs to know why the change is happening, feel positive about it, and understand how they can achieve success.