

Case for Change

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consulting services for changing organizations



Tips & Tools for Managing Change and Maximizing Success

Lessons Learned What Leaders Should Know About Change

Innovation: Does Change Management Play a Role?

$R = Q_s \times A$ A successful change is dependent on two key variables: a *quality* solution and the *acceptance* of that solution by the people who are impacted.

In most organizations undergoing change of any kind, the change management process is typically started after a quality solution has been generated. But that may be too limited a view. A competitive environment and increased customer expectations push organizations to come up with better solutions – to be innovative in their thinking about their business. Change management helps in understanding innovation and how it can be more effective.

Change management typically focuses on employees and others impacted by a decision to change. But consider the organization itself as the target of a change. Like employees, the organization can become comfortable with the “current state” even as leaders and various functions like marketing and R&D emphasize the need to innovate and constantly introduce new products and services. This drive for innovation is in constant tension with the drive to “do what we do best” and not tinker with success.

An organization *committed* to innovation will have to change itself to become an organization *capable* of innovation. And that requires effective change management.



What is it about the organization's Current State that hinders innovation? Is it the reporting relationships? The performance metrics for various functions? The process flow that prevents ideas from being implemented? A culture that believes “if it's not broke don't fix it?”



What would the organization look like if it was innovative? What changes need to be made in its structure, performance measures, processes and culture? Will innovation focus on continuous improvement or on breakthrough, blue sky thinking? Will it be triggered by the pain of competition and customer demands or be designed to anticipate customer delight even when the organization is a clear industry leader? In other words, what would the organization look like if it weren't the way it is today?



Before innovation can happen, the organization must implement thoughtfully the changes needed to support it:

- Realign organizational structure so people understand innovation IS their job
- Break down barriers that prevent the design and implementation of creative ideas
- Develop skills that foster innovation, as well as skills that encourage implementation of creative ideas
- Instill a belief of never settling for the status quo and always being one step (or two or three) ahead of your customer and the competition»

Q: What makes it difficult to be an innovator?

A: While it is critical an organization designs itself to support innovation, it also must ensure its people have the skill to be innovative and creative. In the right organizational culture and structure and with the right tools and processes, individuals can thrive and do their best work.

But innovators are challenged even in the best environment because of the specific personal qualities that contribute to their creative abilities. According to change management consultant Mitchell Ditkoff, innovators challenge the status quo, take risks and entertain the fantastic. They're curious, self-motivated, visionary and given to movement and interaction.

Q: What's the problem with that set of attributes?

A: Innovators have limited patience with those who think differently than they do. Often, innovators will clash with people who do not see the advantage of a particular change or are uncomfortable with the proposed improvement, especially those who are Targets of innovation.

Q: How does an organization help the innovator?

A: Organizations and leaders must build consideration for potential resistance into the design process. It's a delicate – but necessary – task. ▶



Here are some tips to help you build an innovative organization:

Don't start with banners and t-shirts

It is critical to build the infrastructure to support innovation before launching an announcement of its success. The most effective way to become innovative is to examine all current major transformational changes and the long-term business strategy to ensure the four quadrants of the Desired State (Structure, Process, People and Culture) will support an innovative environment. Call out the need and build the infrastructure. Then you can put up banners and pass out t-shirts.

Don't start with training

Innovation can be taught, but success rates will be much higher if people who are to learn to be innovative have the personal attributes described above. Before sending the entire organization through innovation training, take a close look at the personal profiles of the people you expect to have most of the responsibility for innovation. Where do they sit in the organization today? Where should they sit? Are there enough people with those attributes? Do they feel valued and are they able to be successful?

Everyone in the organization will need some level of skill in innovation, but spend the bulk of your training dollars on those with the greatest potential to be successful.

Do reward innovation wherever you find it

Make sure the very infrastructure meant to encourage innovation doesn't actually stifle it. Can the fork lift driver on the loading dock be innovative? If so, how will you know? Only what is recognized and rewarded will be repeated.

Do build change management into the innovation processes

Innovation is only valuable when it is implemented. Every idea must, in its incubation stage, answer the question, "is this do-able?" ▶

Believe it or not, innovation is most successful when those in an organization get out of each other's way!

So often ideas for making things better are inside employees' heads, but there is no process to get them implemented. When an employee says, "I know how to fix that," or "I know what would make that customer happy," and management doesn't hear it, it's a golden opportunity missed.

When management puts in place a process for encouraging employees to unleash their creativity, there is often a flood of ideas that have been dammed up for too long.

Similarly, when employees get out of the way and management can act on their work, they can frequently see ways to make things better that neither group could see from where they traditionally sit. ▶