



Topics:

- Project teams and change
- Who's in? Who's out?
- Change and project management
- Preparing the ground
- Remember the good old days?
- We've always done it this way
- This little piggy went to market
- New initiatives – practise what you preach



Project Teams and Change

As a manager you will occasionally be asked to join a project team or to lead a project team to plan and implement a change.

This checklist identifies a range of actions which will help ensure a successful outcome.

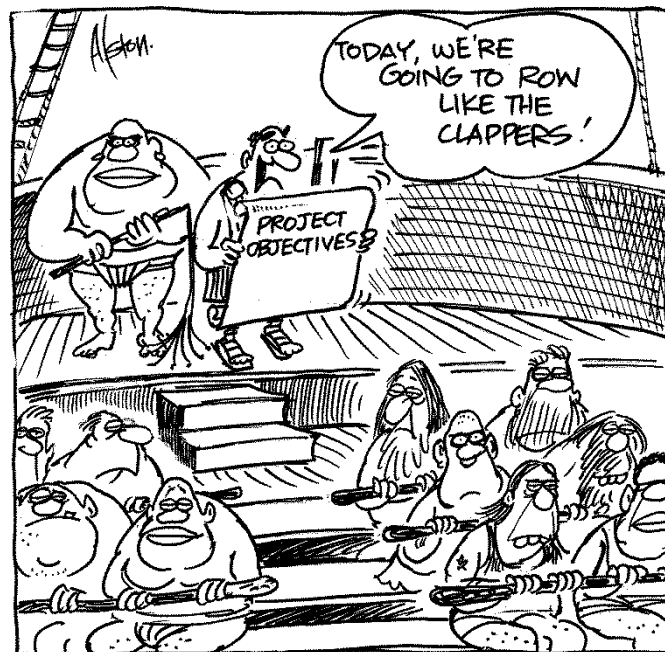
- ❑ Gather and analyse the facts regarding the current situation. What are the driving forces and the underlying causes?
- ❑ Define or re-define the problem - addressing the core issues and causes.
- ❑ Set project objectives and outcomes.
- ❑ Develop performance indicators or standards for successful completion of the project.
- ❑ Develop possible strategies.
- ❑ Identify the negative consequences of each strategy.
- ❑ Decide on a basic strategy.
- ❑ Identify the stakeholders (anybody who can influence the successful outcomes of the project) and what is required from each stakeholder - a decision, information or action.
- ❑ Brainstorm a list of project activities, tasks and functions.
- ❑ Decide priorities, sequence and time requirements for each activity.
- ❑ Develop key performance indicators for major activities.
- ❑ Decide who in the project team will do what, provide what or obtain what.
- ❑ Determine the requirement for resources including budget, equipment, facilities, etc.
- ❑ Prepare requests for proposals - consultants, contractors, suppliers, etc.
- ❑ Review, evaluate, negotiate and finalise tenders, if applicable.
- ❑ Assign responsibility, accountability and authority to project team members so they can carry out their activities.
- ❑ Identify and explore areas of high risk and uncertainty.
- ❑ Identify strategic control points - activities or events or things for which serious setbacks can be suffered if problems are not detected and prevented.
- ❑ Establish preventative and corrective measures. If....., then.....
- ❑ Define areas of intra and interdepartmental co-operation - what is the nature of the co-operation? What specifically is required?
- ❑ Prepare support documents - policy manuals, procedures, research material, etc.
- ❑ Plan meeting dates and times.
- ❑ Prepare a document (project action plan) which includes all the necessary information including a schedule of project activities for each project team member.

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- ❑ Select and train other project personnel (as needed)
- ❑ Disseminate policy, procedural documents, and information about the project to all relevant stockholders.
- ❑ Conduct project activities, tasks and functions.
- ❑ Monitor the performance of major activities.
- ❑ Monitor the performance of people on the project team - evaluate the effectiveness of the team.
- ❑ Exercise project control activities - corrective actions in response to deviations from standards.
- ❑ Evaluate the actual project outcomes against the stated outcomes.
- ❑ Write a final report.
- ❑ Implement plans for the transfer of responsibility to the client or user.
- ❑ Follow up in relation to the outcome of the project.
- ❑ Communicate the results of the project to all stakeholders.
- ❑ Acknowledge and thank all project team members and other contributing people.





Who's in? Who's out?

"Some management groups are not good at problem solving and decision making precisely because the participants have weak egos and are uncomfortable with competition."

Chris Argyris, Harvard Business Review, September/October 1986

"I don't like to work in a group. I don't get along well with other people."

Jimmy Breslin, Columnist, *Newsday* (New York), National Public Radio, March 6, 1988

"Men will find that they can prepare with mutual aid far more easily what they need, and avoid more easily the perils which beset them on all sides, by united forces."

Benedict Spinoza, 1632-1677, Dutch philosopher and oculist, *Ethics*

The key factor critical to the successful completion of a change project is the make-up of the project group or team tasked with planning and initiating the change. Careful consideration before inviting/seconing people to join a project team will prevent many problems later on. Poorly chosen project teams can waste much time and effort dealing with the problems arising from their incompetence or their inability to work well together or can produce an unsatisfactory project outcome.

To keep it simple, there are two key aspects to the functioning of a project team – process and content. Thus, when selecting people to be part of a project team look for people who can participate effectively in the process and can contribute effectively to the content.

How do we identify the players? Who has a vested interest in the project? Here are some questions to consider to help you get the right team together:

- ❑ Who is the 'client', i.e. the user or beneficiary of the implementation of the outcome? Think about internal and external clients.
- ❑ Who can influence the outcome or objective of the project?
- ❑ Who has information needed during the activity stage of the project?
- ❑ Who will gather the data, conduct the research or perform the project activities?



- ❑ Who has to provide resources to enable data gathering?
- ❑ Who has expertise or competence in relation to the project outcomes or objectives and activities?
- ❑ Who has to approve availability of resources?
- ❑ What conditions have to be met to allow implementation of the outcome?
- ❑ Who sets or administers these conditions?
- ❑ Who can influence implementation of the outcome?
- ❑ Who can potentially be affected by the outcome?
- ❑ Who has to implement the outcome?
- ❑ Who has to approve the implementation of the outcome?
- ❑ Who can block implementation of the outcome or approval or acceptance?
- ❑ Who has good relationship skills and can work effectively in a team environment?
- ❑ Who will be the project custodian capable of being responsible for driving the project through to successful completion?
- ❑ Who is the person with the clout to help the project team overcome organisational blockages requiring intervention at a senior management level?

By answering these questions you will not only identify potential project team members, but you will identify other people who can influence the success of the change project whose behaviour will need to be managed along the way.



Change and Project Management

“The best-laid schemes o’ mice an’ men,
Gang aft a-gley,
And leave us naught but grief and pain,
For promised joy.”

Robert Burns, 1759-1796, Scottish national poet, *To A Mouse*

“In every affair consider what precedes and what follows, and then undertake it.”

Epictetus, c.60, Greek philosopher, *That Everything Be Done With Circumspection*

“What we anticipate seldom occurs; what we least expect generally happens.”

Benjamin Disraeli, 1804-1881, English Prime Minister and novelist, *Henrietta Temple*

“The whole object of the organisation is to get cooperation, to get to each individual the benefit of all the knowledge and all the experience of all the individuals.”

Hamilton McFarland Barksdale, Management Executive Committee, Dupont Committee meeting minutes, October 11, 1909

The plan changes as soon as the battle commences.

Anonymous British Officer, Iraqi War, 2003

The change project manager or the process custodian (the person responsible for planning and initiating the change) has some specific responsibilities different from the other members of a change project team. The main focus of the project manager is to manage the process – the ways the project group conducts itself.

Project Manager’s Specific Responsibilities

PLANNING

- ❑ Clarifying objectives and outcomes. What has to be achieved? What has to be done. Who is the client or end user?



ORGANISING

- ❑ Allocating tasks, functions, responsibilities. Organising resources. Organising support and authority.

STAFFING

- ❑ Who is needed? Who can do what? Who will do what? Identifying reporting/liaison relationships between project team members and between other people.

DIRECTING AND SUPPORTING

- ❑ Acting to ensure that people are contributing according to their role, their capacity and their level of commitment and motivation.

CO-ORDINATING

- ❑ Team functions. Making sure that actions involving input from more than one person happen as desired.

INFORMATION SYSTEMS

- ❑ Ensuring the right information to the right person at the right time (content).

COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

- ❑ How the information will be communicated (process).

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

- ❑ Describe the end result.
- ❑ List critical steps.
- ❑ Identify potential problems/opportunities.
- ❑ Determine the likely causes of key potential problems/opportunities.
- ❑ Develop preventing and/or facilitating actions. Plan contingent actions.
- ❑ Build in alarms to trigger contingent actions.

The project manager may delegate some of these responsibilities but he or she retains accountability.



Preparing The Ground

Observe constantly that all things take place by change, and accustom thyself to consider that the nature of the Universe loves nothing so much as to change the things which are, and to make new things like them.

Marcus Aurelius, 121-180

Roman Emperor and Stoic philosopher, *Meditations*

Many of the obstacles for change which have been attributed to human nature are in fact due to the inertia of institutions and to the voluntary desire of powerful classes to maintain the existing status

John Dewey, 1859-1952

American philosopher and educator

Encyclopaedia of Unified Sciences, 1938

How often are industrial disputes, a drop in productivity or disengagement the result of change which is forced upon a protesting workforce? New changes initiated by management are only partially implemented or sometimes even totally rejected.

It's interesting to ponder that there is still a prevailing thought within boards of directors and within senior management that if employees don't "like it, they can lump it" or get a job somewhere else. Let's face it, there aren't too many boardroom decisions made on the basis of what's best for our employees - in the boardroom, the dollar is god.

Fortunately, there are pockets of enlightenment around where there is a realisation that good profits with a good return on investment to shareholders and fair and caring people management aren't mutually exclusive.

When management is intending to introduce change, the planning process can involve input from the workforce on the best way to bring about the change. After all, it is the workforce which has to actually implement the change. They are more likely to be committed to it if they see that their perceptions have been considered.

Here are some questions to consider **before** making change:

- Are resources (time, money, equipment, personnel, information, procedures, etc.) adequate for allowing the change?
- Do others possess the motivation and commitment to bring about the change?
- What are the prevailing perceptions about the intended change?

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- Is the change likely to encounter 'closed thinking' or resistance?
- What are the likely obstacles to using new procedures in the minds of the staff?
- How will you ensure that communication blockages don't impede implementation of the intended change?
- What organisation or management policies will need to be overcome to allow effective implementation?
- If the new ideas are untried or unproven, will the people responsible for the implementation be willing to take the risks?
- Are there on-going power struggles within the organisation - even if unrelated to the new changes - which might block implementation?
- Are there any people conflicts which might prevent the new procedures from being put into action?
- Is the general climate of the organisation one of co-operation or distrust?
- What are staff perceptions of the need for or the reasons behind the change?
- How will the question "what's in it for me?" be answered?
- To what degree are management and staff convinced of the need or reasons for change?
- What can be done to reduce any fearful perceptions staff may hold concerning the change?
- What support and training will staff need to accommodate the change?
- How will management act to demonstrate real support for the change?
How will management show that they **too** will do new, different and better things as a response to the need for change?



Remember The Good Old Days?

People resist change for a variety of reasons, but they can usually be categorised under one heading - fear. Fear of: the unknown, losing face, embarrassment, loss of power, loss of control, failure, loss of security, disruption to their 'comfort zone', inability to adapt, inability to acquire new skills, extra workload, peer group pressure, an attack on their own personal values, loss of dignity and self-esteem, etc.

While most of us like routine and habit, not all people resist change. Many welcome and embrace change because they view it as exciting, different and a sign of progress in responding to ever-changing conditions.

By eliminating or modifying fear-based perceptions, the introduction and management of change will be much easier and more successful. Because people act in accord with how they perceive things, the alignment and broadening of staff perceptions is essential to successfully implementing change.

Assess your situation and consider these actions:

- Inform yourself about the proposed changes - seek out facts from opinions. Discuss these with staff.
- Question the need for proposed changes so that you are clear on the reasons.
- Make a list of the questions you would like answers to and ask your manager to discuss them with you.
- Consult with staff to be affected by the change before the change is announced.
- Consult with key stakeholders during the decision making stage.
- Discuss with and gain agreement from staff as to why change is necessary.
- Ask staff to discuss their perceptions and fears about the proposed changes with you.
- Discuss with staff the benefits and likely impact of the proposed changes.
- Demonstrate your support for the intended change.
- Ask informed outsiders to talk to staff about the new initiatives.
- Ask staff what they see as the likely obstacles to implementing the changes.
- Clarify the roles of yourself and staff once the change is implemented.
- Be honest when giving reasons for change.
- Establish the facts behind rumours and discuss these with staff.
- Discuss what needs to be done to implement the changes.
- Inform internal and external customers of the changes and the reasons behind them - where this is not counter-productive.



- Involve staff in developing an implementation strategy.
- Identify the specific actions which will need to be performed during implementation.
- Determine the priority of actions before implementation.
- Budget for the change to ensure adequate resources.
- Provide training or coaching in any new systems or procedures.
- Review the progress and impact of the change on a regular basis.



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We've Always Done It This Way

To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often.

Winston Churchill, 1874-1965. English Prime Minister, writer and soldier.

Decay is inherent in all compounded things. Strive on with diligence.

Buddha (Prince Siddhartha), 563?-483? B.C.

Indian philosopher and founder of Buddhism.

The great man is the man who does a thing for the first time.

Alexander Smith, 1830-1867, Scottish poet.

Fortunately, one of the driving forces of the human race is the desire to improve; to change those things that need changing; to strive do things new, different and better than we do them today. And thus slowly we evolve as a species. In most things, there will always be a better way.

The culture of an organisation - the way we do things - is dictated by established policies, systems and procedures. Who are best placed to spot the flaws in systems and procedures and identify what needs changing? The people who apply them in the workplace and who are closest to the customer - be they external or internal.

Never take for granted that because “this is how we have always done it” it is the best way. It may well still be the best way provided none of the internal and external conditions affecting the situation have changed. There are many ways to get the same result - some ways are certainly more efficient than others.

Most staff, when confronted by a procedure which through experience they know to be inefficient, obsolete or downright stupid, will invent better ways of doing things.

Involve your work group or team in identifying the things that need to change.

- Identify, define and document the key procedures used by our team.
- Define and agree the purpose for all key procedures.
- Discuss standard procedures and their purpose with staff.
- Identify where systems and procedures are not being followed or are inefficient or obsolete.
- Determine the reasons they are not being followed or are inefficient or obsolete.
- Identify the underlying causes of inefficient systems and procedures – make sure we are dealing with root causes not symptoms.

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- Identify things we do which seem to be a waste of time
- Make sure staff are aware of how the outcomes of our systems and procedures benefit other parts of the organisation or our customers.
- Ask staff to suggest better ways of doing things.
- Ask the beneficiaries or customers of our procedures if they can suggest better ways of doing things.
- Discuss with staff the consequences of their suggestions on all internal and external customers.
- Discuss with your manager and peers the actions and support you require from them to improve systems and procedures.
- Discuss with staff how to implement agreed changes to systems and procedures.
- Provide on-going training and coaching to staff in following and implementing systems and procedures.
- Implement agreed changes to existing procedures or new procedures and monitor the application and results of the new ways of doing things.
- Inform internal and external customers of the changes and the reasons behind them.
- Recognise and acknowledge the efforts of staff who act to develop new, different and better ways of doing things.
- Encourage staff informally to always look for better ways of doing things.
- Every 6 months hold a meeting to formally review the ways we do things and to identify better ways of doing things.

Remember, small improvements can make a big difference.



This little piggy went to market

“To the place where green vegetables are brought in abundance, bring thine also to sell.”

Babylonian Talmud, Menahot.

“Every crowd has a silver lining.”

P. T. Barnum, 1810-1891, American circus owner and showman.

“Marketing.... is the whole business seen from the point of view of its final result, that is, from the customer’s point of view. Concern and responsibility for marketing must, therefore, permeate all areas of the enterprise.”

Peter Drucker, Management consultant and writer, *People and Performance* (Harper and Row, 1977)

Here is a checklist of questions to stimulate discussion amongst those people responsible for researching and developing new markets for your existing products or services or for new products or services. Or you can use it as a training tool to develop awareness amongst staff generally about aspects of research and development of new products or services. Or you could use it with the people who make or deliver your products or services or who have direct contact with your customers in a focus session to gain input from those people at the ‘coalface’ as to what changes are needed to our products and services.

- What services do you provide to what groups of customers now?
- What services and customer groups should you focus on in the future?
- What is your basis for growth
 - ❑ For each customer group, will it be less, stay the same or become more?
 - ❑ For each of your core services, will you provide less, the same or more?

How do you target market segments?

How attractive is each market segment?

What is your relative competitive position?

- ❑ Market growth?
- ❑ Market size?
- ❑ Price competitiveness?
- ❑ Quality level required?
- ❑ Level of technology and potential for innovation?



- ☐ Intensity of investments?
- ☐ Intensity of competition and structure of competition?
- ☐ Number and size of potential customers?
- ☐ Barriers to entry for new competitors?
- ☐ Possibility of substitution?
- ☐ Dependence on economic climate?
- ☐ Dependence on government contracts or two or three major clients?
- ☐ Dependence on legal regulations?
- ☐ Risk of government intervention?

What is your relative market position?

- ☐ Market share and trends in market share?
- ☐ Established track record and brand name?
- ☐ Strong corporate image of the company?
- ☐ Strength of relationship between the company and its customers?

What are your product strengths?

- ☐ Wide service range or full range provided
- ☐ Innovativeness of services and/or progressive services
- ☐ Consistent and/or high service quality
- ☐ Flexibility of services in meeting specific customer needs

What are your marketing strengths?

- ☐ Price competitiveness
- ☐ Effective and/or wide distribution network
- ☐ Location advantages

What is your relative capacity?

- ☐ Cost advantages due to modern facilities or technology
- ☐ Possibility of increasing market share with existing capacities

The responses to these questions will assist you to decide :

- ☐ What are the priority market segments?
- ☐ What are the implications for the business?
- ☐ What changes do we need to make to our products and services?



New Initiatives - Practise What You Preach

"There are many preachers who don't hear themselves."
German Proverb

Take this scenario:

The executive management group in an organisation believed all the senior management group, including themselves, required some form of leadership development. The next tier of management below had mixed feelings about this. Some thought it was a great idea, others thought there was some hidden agenda and were very cautious about proceeding.

And there was another influential component who believed there was nothing they could do better as leaders - they were as good as you get. They also believed their role was more about them doing the technical aspects of the work rather than managing the conceptual and human elements associated with their role as a manager. Basically they were unwilling to become involved. For many reasons which were not explored, they were looking for ways to 'torpedo' the program.

As the program unfolded and the pressure built on this group to start to implement some of the new behaviours and do things differently and better, lines of resistance started to appear. Obviously some of these new behaviours were challenging their current practices. They were being asked to do things they had not done before. They were being taken out of their comfort zone. They made excuses about why they should or shouldn't do these new things. Things that they had agreed were things they should be doing. One of the key excuses offered was – "if they (the executive management group) are not doing these things, then why should we?"

I've lost count of the number of times I've heard people say:

- "I'm alright but what are they, up there, doing about their leadership skills?"
- "It would be nice if they did the things they're expecting us to do."
- "It's not me who needs this, it's them"

Now, I've painted this middle management group as the 'baddies', but do they have a valid point? There is a perception, rightly or wrongly, that the people at the higher management levels do not practise what they preach.



It's worth extrapolating this thinking to frontline managers and the expectations these managers have on the staff they manage. If you are a frontline manager reading this article, then ask yourself this question - do you practise what you preach? The truthful answer to this question will depend on your level of self-awareness and your honesty.

This article highlights two key issues.

1. If, as leaders, you don't practise what you preach your credibility is 'zip' and the likelihood of initiatives working are severely jeopardised.
2. There is no 'come back' to the people you manage if you don't model the behaviours you want from them.

Being a role model means that you actually demonstrate the behaviours that the organisation and you are espousing to the people that report to you or to whom you report.

It is far easier to practise what you preach if you value what is being promoted. Before embarking on the next leadership development initiative run through these:

- ❑ Check what it is that is being promoted through the initiative.
- ❑ Explore the degree of comfort you feel about this initiative.
- ❑ If you need to, talk it through with an appropriate person to raise your level of comfort.
- ❑ Make sure you align yourself with the underlying philosophy and practice of what is being promoted.
- ❑ Confirm that this is what is needed.

Once you have done this,

- ❑ When talking to groups discuss the benefits and positive aspects of the initiative.
- ❑ Defend the initiative when it is being criticised unfairly.
- ❑ Provide time for people to plan and implement the changes they are making to improve the way they do things.
- ❑ Inform your colleagues of what your people are endeavouring to do and what they can do to assist.
- ❑ Explain the things you have done that demonstrate you are practising what you preach.
- ❑ Reward your people when they have made efforts to improve things