



Are You Really Ready to Make a Change?

John Moran¹ and Les Beitsch²

It is not the strongest or the most intelligent who will survive but those who can best manage change. –Leon Megginson³

According to Towers Watson, only 25% of change management initiatives have long-term success. Making significant organizational change can be quite challenging⁴. Although leadership often knows there is a need for change, frequently it starts with an unclear vision of the change, poor planning, and unclear communications to initiate the change process on the part of the management group. The lack of poor planning, unclear communications, and poor execution causes a lot of fear in the organization about what this change will do to the current status quo, and whether it will be better than the current reality.

Employees usually resist any change efforts, no matter how small, because of the following five reasons⁵:

1. Fear of the unknown/surprise
2. Mistrust
3. Loss of job security/control
4. Bad timing
5. An individual's predisposition toward change

Through our experience in making successful organizational change, we have found the following questions provide a useful guide in thinking through a change initiative before embarking, while also minimizing the resistance to change. The questions deal with issues and concerns before the change starts, during the change process, and after the change has been made on all levels that are affected by the change. The questions that are important to consider are below, and are included in the Change Management Questionnaire Checklist Template.

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³ <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/293400-it-is-not-the-strongest-or-the-most-intelligent-who>

⁴ [New Study Explores Why Change Management Fails and How to Perhaps Succeed](#), Victor Lipman, Forbes.com, September 4, 2013.

⁵ [Overcome the 5 Main Reasons People Resist Change](#), Lisa Quast, Forbes.com, November 26, 2012

Change Vision and Message Questions

- Is there a clear vision of the change to be made?
- Is there a clear and concise message about the change?
- Can the change message be articulated to all levels of the organization?
- Is there sufficient passion for this change for the team to be its champion?
- Does the message fully and concisely explain the value of the message?
- Is the message believable to all audiences?
- Is it clear what will change?
- Does the team understand the scale of the change including potential unintended consequences?
- Is there an established sense of urgency for the need for change?

Change Goals:

- Is there goal clarity and knowledge of exactly what to achieve?
- Are the change goals realistic?
- Are the goals believable?
- Can the achievements and progress be measured?
- Is there goal alignment with the strategic plan?

Change Plan:

- Is there a change plan that sets up a series of quick wins to build momentum?
- Is there a plan to deal with the technical challenges of the change?
- Are the right systems in place to support the change?
- Is there understanding of the adaptive changes people will have to make?
- Is there a plan to deal with these adaptive changes?
- Are these adaptive changes clear?
- Is the discussion focused on the conceptual side of the change (not the details of how to do it)?

Management:

- Is the management team on board and ready to support the change?
- Are people's concerns being heard and responded to, rather than dismissing them or failing to "hear" them?
- Will the management team roll up their sleeves and get fully involved?
- Will senior management demonstrate a behavior that is fully supportive of the change initiative?
- Do employees have trust in the team?

- Is there a way to anchor every change gain made and not let it slip back to the old status quo?
- Have managers and supervisors been given the information to really understand the reason for the change?
- Are managers and supervisors able to translate that message to the people that report to them?

People and Change Teams:

- Do people understand how the change will impact them?
- Do people understand what they will gain and lose in this change?
- Does the organization have the right talent to make the change?
- Does the organization have training available to assist in the change?
- Have people been given reasons to buy in and be engaged with the change?
- Have people overcome their resistance to the change initiative?
- Can people be held accountable for making or not making the change?
- Has the team received the coaching they need to help make the change?
- Is there an informed, passionate, and engaged change team in place?

Barrier Removal:

- Have barriers that derail change been identified with a plan to remove them?
- Has mid-management doubt and resistance been eliminated?
- Is there mid-management commitment to the change initiative?
- Have people's fears been addressed in tangible ways?

Summary:

Successful change comes from developing an organizational atmosphere that is creative, risk taking, enthusiastic, reflective, involved, and inspires people to change. To achieve this elusive set of critical ingredients, the organization must go for the quick wins and create a positive change momentum that contributes to a successful change process. Building and sustaining a conducive change environment cannot be achieved without careful planning before, during, and after the change initiative. It requires the change leaders to be constantly inquiring how things are going, if support is waning, identifying whether people are continually engaged, and determining if they are making clear mid-course adjustments based on what they are hearing, seeing, and sensing, which will help accelerate the change initiative.

Many questions were listed but one you should ask at the end of a successful change is – “When will be ready for more change?” Change never stops or takes a holiday. We constantly have to change to survive. Edward Deming said, “It is not necessary to change. Survival is not mandatory⁶.”

⁶ http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/w/w_edwards_deming.html

Do not fall into the trap that French journalist Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr wrote in 1849: "*Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*," or "the more things change, the more they stay the same."⁷ You want a sustained and lasting change in your organization that improves its overall performance and is response to customer needs. The change needs to look and feel different after the change initiative is completed. A return to the old status quo is not acceptable. Be part of the 25% of change management initiatives that are successful over the long term.

Change Management Questionnaire Checklist Template

<u>Change Readiness Questions</u>	When to Ask			Readiness			
	<i>Before Change</i>	<i>During Change</i>	<i>After Change</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Maybe</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>N/A</i>
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⁷ [Most Change Initiatives Fail – But They Don't Have To](#), David Leonard & Claude Coltea, Gallup.com, May 24, 2013.

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Your Other Questions:

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