

Leading Change in Organizations Part Three



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Leading a change is one of the most difficult tasks and crucial roles a leader can face. It is accompanied by many opportunities and many risks at the same time and most organizational change initiatives fail or deliver poor results.

In order to drive a successful organizational change, leaders must first create a sense of urgency throughout the entire organization. The entire organization must understand that it is living in a state of complacency, which is too dangerous in the long run.

Creating a sense of urgency is getting people to actually see and feel the need for a change. This can be accomplished by explaining not only what is needed to be changed but also why the change must happen.

Understanding the 'Why' is too important for leading and coping with a change. When people know the 'Why', they can figure any 'How'. The management, team leaders, supervisors and the operative employees must know the reasons behind a change. They must be convinced that a change is imperative for the organization's sustainability, growth and in some cases its survival.

John Kotter, the leading author on leading change, suggests that for change to be successful, employees must be convinced that business as usual is no longer a viable plan. This means that leaders must be awakened to the gap between the way things are and the way they ought to be.

Most changes are generated by the top or middle management and then they are passed down. Thus, a sense of urgency amongst employees helps harness the necessary cooperation to start moving toward the expected results.

Building trust between the management and the employees is too important to establish a sense of urgency and then drive a change. If the employees trust and have confidence in the organization, they are more likely to accept a change.

Communication is always important especially when change is about to take place, and so it is when creating a sense of urgency. Therefore, the management should communicate, as open as possible, the reasons for the upcoming change throughout the organization. It should explain what the change is, why the change is needed, whom the change will affect, when the change will take place, where the change will occur, and how the change will take place.

This will let employees understand the change, recognize that the change will take place, see the big picture as the management sees it, and make them feel that they are valued by the organization. In addition, some of them might have experienced the same change in previous job or position; thus, their advice is also of value.

However the management must make sure that the proposed change is reasonable, avoid threats to implement the change, follow sensible time schedule to implement the change and implement the change in the most logical place.

There are two types of change in an organization, planned and emergent change. Planned change is the change that driven from the top down – management to employees and the emergent change refers to a situation in which change can originate from any level in the organization.

In a planned change, the leader must have a clear vision realized and understood by the employees, create a plan that involves people in the change and ensures a support for the change.

In an emergent change, the leader must create a readiness for change culture that encourages and supports the change process.