



Leading transformational change

Significant change can be rewarding, and the world seems to be calling for more of it. Leadership's voice signals to the organization, "Pay attention!" Yet directives alone are not vehicles for realizing change, especially if it's transformative. Organizations, like the people in them, tend to maintain the status quo, resisting all but well-orchestrated efforts to alter established processes, practices, and norms. Planning for and engaging with all levels of an organization are key to creating and sustaining large-scale change.

Managers need to remember that others may lack their level of knowledge or readiness. While some people embrace change quickly, others need time and support to process their experience. Even if the change is something they want, responding and adapting to change can result in feelings and thoughts that weaken productivity and well-being. Patience and deep listening are key tools for change leaders.

There are multiple models that inform effective change management. Below are two tactical approaches to planning for and implementing change.

Eight-step process for leading change (adapted from Kotter)

1. Establish urgency – Help others see the need for change through a significant event or opportunity, compelling a vision of what is possible if you act now to transform the current reality.
2. Build a guiding coalition – Pull together a diverse cross-section of individuals who embrace the opportunity to help catalyze, support, and communicate initiatives.
3. Form a strategic vision and initiatives – Clarify how the future will be different from the past, and how you can make that future a reality through measured initiatives linked directly to the vision.
4. Communicate the vision and enlist a network of change agents – Change happens and lasts when many people believe in the opportunity and feel the urgency to act in ways that will help achieve it.
5. Enable action by removing obstacles – Identify and remove barriers to provide the freedom necessary to work across silos and generate real impact.
6. Generate short-term wins – Recognize, collect, and communicate achievements towards goals early and often to track progress and energize stakeholders, early adopters, and beyond.
7. Sustain acceleration – Use increasing credibility to improve systems, structures, and policies, continuing with change components until the vision is a reality.
8. Embed the change – Articulate the connections between new behaviors and organizational success, making sure they continue until they become strong enough to replace old habits.

Cultural change framework (adapted from NeuroLeadership Institute)

1. Priorities – Why is this change important and where does it sit relative to existing priorities?
2. Habits – What are the current behaviors that need replacing?
3. Systems – Which processes and practices that reinforce current behaviors need adapting?

How might these models inform your approach to achieving the change you want to see in your area?

References

Kotter International. [The 8 Step Process for Leading Change](#) and [Transformation in Education](#).
NeuroLeadership Institute. (The NLI Guide) How Culture Change Really Happens. 2018.