

Hey! What's New? 2025-30

How to Succeed at Change Management

Nicola Heath writes, in the March 2025 edition of *IBTHEBLACK*, that “more change initiatives fail than succeed. Despite constant technological advancement and innovation — which may make implementing organizational change seem like an easy undertaking — research shows that organizations fail at transformation in 70% of cases.”

But there are strategies organizations can adopt to help change programs deliver on their aims. According to change and leadership coach Louise Gilbert, “change isn’t about following a recipe or ticking boxes. It’s about understanding human dynamics, creating the right conditions and being willing to adapt as you go.”

Heath writes that change is more likely to succeed when an organization has invested in creating a change-ready culture from the outset, as improvements in culture require time and commitment. Gilbert adds that “it’s about creating the conditions where change can emerge naturally.

Heath notes that one of the features of a change-ready culture is psychological safety, “which creates an environment where people feel secure to speak up, experimentation is expected and failure is a learning opportunity. Fostering this type of culture begins at the top.” Gilbert points out that “leaders need to model the behaviours they want to see. If you want people to embrace change, you need to show them what that looks like.”

Robyn Johns, associate professor at University of Technology Sydney (UTS) Business School, is quoted as saying that leaders must build trust well before initiating any major change program. “Senior leaders need to be seen to be transparent. They need to be authentic in their communication, particularly in times of uncertainty.”

She says even meticulously planned strategies fail at the implementation stage when there is an absence of trust. “Implementation relies on your people on the ground, and if they don’t believe in you, don’t trust you, and don’t think you’re authentic, then (organizational change) tends to fail.”

Lena Wang, associate professor at RMIT University’s School of Management, urges organizations to consider whether there is a clear rationale for change before launching any change initiative. “A lot of the time change fails because people are changing for the sake of change — there’s no clear reason that this is something that we need.”

Change has a greater chance of success when staff have been involved in the decision-making process. “Co-create the change experience with your people,” Gilbert says, adding “remember, energy is contagious. If you’re genuinely excited about the possibilities, that energy will spread. Just don’t try to manufacture fake enthusiasm — people can smell that a mile away.”

Always expect some degree of resistance to change. “Not everyone’s always going to agree — you’re never going to make everybody happy,” Johns says. Seeking buy-in from staff can help overcome resistance, which means inviting feedback and responding to it, even if it’s critical.”

While change can deliver benefits to individuals and organizations, it also creates loss and uncertainty, which helps explain the human tendency to resist it. “Even when the change is good, it still means giving up something,” Gilbert says.

Wang recommends stepping into others’ shoes to understand the source of their resistance to change, and tailoring support to address their concerns. “Sometimes that may be having individual conversations to help people see change as an opportunity for career development,” she says. “It also involves ensuring there are good support structures in place, such as training or counselling.”

A framework such as the 5Cs — which stands for communication, commitment, culture, capability and coordination — can help guide organizational change management. Gilbert points out that “communication needs to be clear and authentic, not corporate jargon. Commitment comes from genuine belief in the change, not just compliance. Culture shapes how change lands — you can’t force culture change, but you can cultivate the right conditions. Capability-building should focus on what people need, not just tick-box training.

And remember, change isn’t a singular event but an ongoing process, Wang says. “Getting ready for change starts with the way leaders manage their team on a day-to-day basis to create an adaptive and resilient culture. If we leave it until something major happens, then it’s often too late.”

Lear more at [How to succeed at change management | INTHEBLACK](#).