

Want a Successful Corporate Transformation? Focus on Change Leadership Engagement.

By Dr. Shannan Simms, Director, Organisational Change Management



Depending on how close you are to a transformation decision will influence your perspective on transformation as visionary or scary. Boil transformation down to its essence and it's just another word for 'change.' Change is, on the surface, a simple process that replaces the old with something new.

As simple as change is to define, it can be extremely difficult to execute. This difficulty to shift direction is rooted in the fact that change occurs within the construct of an established ecosystem (your organization) and rooted in how our brain processes and challenges new ideas.

Humanity's evolutionary success has been based on balancing the need for change with prosperity of stability. Yet people are reluctant to leave what they know behind, and with good reason. Our ancestors' survival was based on the ability to provide food and shelter.

Our ancestors conducted regular cost-benefit assessments for survival on learning how to use and master new weapons and tools. Fast forward to today and our modern business culture and your employee resistance to change is rooted in this evolutionary process.

Each individual impacted by a change goes through a similar cycle of testing the rationale and value of a change, starting with leaders.

When change is introduced within organizations, no matter how positive, there is always a dip in productivity and performance. Leaders often falsely believe that employees will embrace transformation immediately after a solution is introduced.

However, affected employees take different lengths of time to adjust to what has changed in the way they are to perform their jobs.

While we should expect this performance

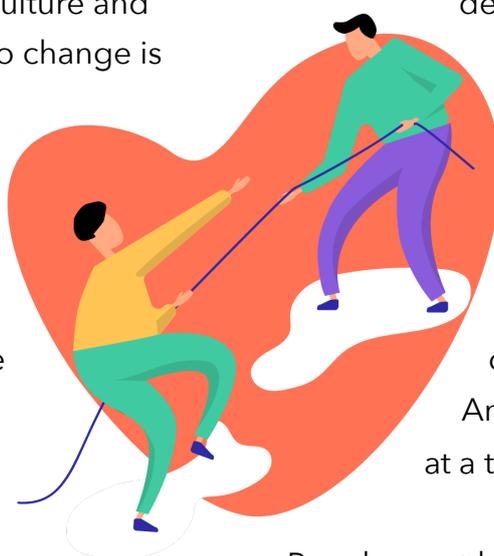
and productivity dip, you can minimise the disruption to your people by addressing the people side of business transformation.

That's where Organizational Change Management comes in.

Organizational Change Management is a discipline that focuses on being as deliberate about helping employees to be ready, willing, and able to make a transition as we are about designing, delivering, and developing the solution.

As you face a corporate transformation, the key to success is remembering that organizations don't change. People change.

And they change one person at a time.



People react best to change when leaders, at all levels of the organization, create a sense of urgency that employees feel as well as understand.

As John Kotter explains, developing a coalition outside the hierarchy of the traditional structure helps to permeate the change across boundaries, up, down, and across the organization (Kotter, 2008).

Change leadership coalitions focuses on deliberate high-touch engagement with three key stakeholder groups:

1. Leaders (executives and business)
2. Managers
3. Peer opinion leaders/change champions.

Leaders - Executives and Business

Executives and business sponsors are critical change champions in any organisational change effort. With often competing priorities and limited resources (time and money), what the executive measures and monitors is what employees pay attention to.

Engaging executives and business leaders will revolve around preparing them to understand the rationale behind the organisational change, the benefits this transition brings to the business as a whole, and the benefits it brings to them specifically.

Prosci (2018), a global leader in change management best practice research, has found through their 20-year longitudinal

research that the number one indicator of project success is active and visible sponsorship for the change.

Conversely, the number one indicator of project failure is lack of active and visible sponsorship. This isn't limited to the CEO or the executive sponsor of the transformation.

This includes the coalition of leaders responsible for driving the business. Leaders need to be aligned and demonstrating active and visible support - in public and in private - that show they support the transition and will role model the expected changes.

Managers

Managers and line supervisors are your most effective tactic to help drive corporate transformation. However, most organizations forget to involve managers in the conversation, or to equip them to serve in their frontline capacity.



Employees look to their manager and/or supervisor for information about what to pay attention to in an organization. But managers are employees first. They need to work through their reaction to the change before they can help their people make the transition.

Managers need to have enough information and clarification to support their leadership, as well as an understanding of issues that can be expected from employees.

Too often, however, managers find out about organisational changes at the same time as their employees. This leaves them ill-equipped to answer questions or to provide support for the change.

Equipping managers with adequate change leadership skills and tools empowers them to be more effective leaders. Taking the time to engage and equip managers helps to decrease middle manager fear of how the change will impact their performance and productivity as well as increasing their buy-in.

Peer Opinion Leaders/Change Champions

We are a “Yelp” nation, where peer opinion has significant impact on our perceptions on product value. This is also true in the workplace when it comes to change and transformation.

Research shows that peers can have the greatest impact on the perception of a

change and the ultimate transition to the new way of working (Kim & Kankanhalli, 2009).

In addition to a strong, well-prepared management team, local change champions can influence change adoption from within the workforce.

Change champions play a crucial role in change initiatives by providing employees with a peer role model who demonstrates adoption and acceptance of the change.

Change champions should be selected based on their ability to serve as an opinion leader, their knowledge of the business, and their reputation in the business. Individuals with reputational collateral should be equipped, similarly to managers, with enough information and clarification to support their leadership as well as an understanding of issues that can be expected from employees.

The change agent team is a critical source of ongoing information about how the



change is received and can provide valuable insights to help lead and foster faster benefits realisation and reduce the angst associated with transformations.

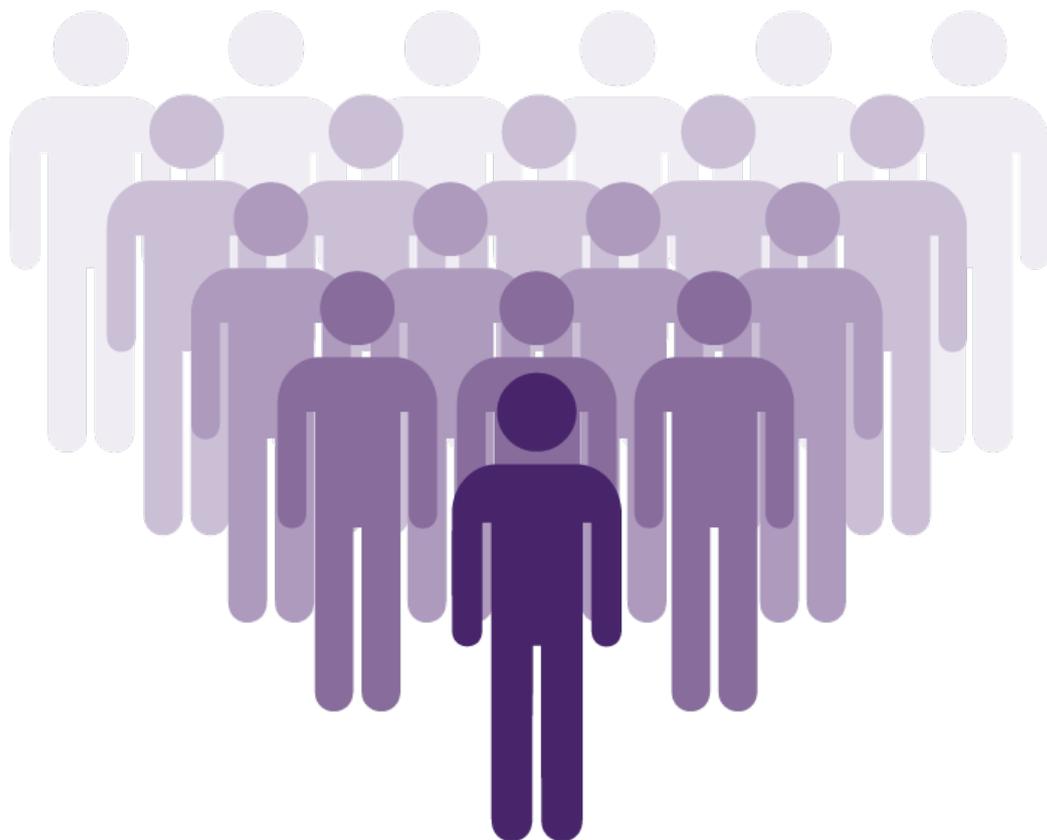
Closing

Successful corporate transformation is reliant on more than communicating through emails and newsletters. The real work of managing transformation occurs in engaging stakeholder groups as part of the process.

This includes supporting leaders to remain active and visible throughout the life of the transformation, not just at the beginning. This leadership presence is

supported through deliberately building a change coalition at all levels of the organization including managers and peers.

Employees look to their managers to understand what the impact of the change is to them and look to their peers for indications on opinions about the change. Both groups need to be invited to be part of the solution working as part of the larger change leadership team.



References

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Shannan speaks at industry events and authors articles on how using a deliberate approach to manage the people side of change can increase the likelihood of achieving desired project results and business transformation.

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The name Avaap is inspired by the five elements,
written in the language of Sanskrit.



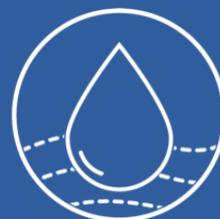
agni
(fire)



vayu
(wind/speed)



akash
(sky)



ap
(water)



prithvi
(earth)

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