

CHANGE MANAGEMENT

WE PUT A DIFFICULT CHANGE MANAGEMENT PROBLEM TO THREE EXPERTS

Q You have just been brought in on a project that is implementing organisational change. There are pockets of resistance within the organisation, including the project team. As a result, the project is behind schedule and several key team members have quit, plummeting the morale of the rest of the team who fear they will have to do the extra work without compensation. How would your approach to people management change under the conditions described in the scenario?



1.

CATHERINE SMITHSON
Managing Director, Being Human



This is a classic case of the high cost of not managing the people side of change successfully.

Greatest challenge

Lack of effective change leadership has caused resistance and delays, which have the double whammy effect of reducing the final benefits realised and increasing the project investment costs. The staff turnover in the project team will increase recruitment and training costs.

The temptation is to call in a team development expert to 'fix' the project team's morale. But I would take a different approach.

Methodology

I would start with the number one success factor for change – executive leadership/ sponsorship. Find out who the senior executive accountable for this project is and:

- If they have the authority to mandate change throughout the organisation;
- What their views are on how the project is tracking and the reasons for resistance; and
- Their motivation for leading this project. How active is the sponsor in building commitment among key executives and their direct managers? Or have they delegated this to the project manager?

I would then meet with the sponsor, and/or my direct manager, and review the risks to the project's success and expected outcomes of not acting on these issues. I would develop a change

«SOMETIMES RESISTANCE CAN BE A RATIONAL REACTION TO A POORLY CONCEIVED OR TIMED CHANGE»

management plan together, which involves key leaders as the drivers of this project, to ensure the right people deliver the right messages. Sometimes, a rethink of the project itself is needed, as resistance can be a rational reaction to a poorly conceived or timed change.



2.

**LOU MARKS, Senior Consultant
blueVisions Management**



Transformational projects require the project leader to set a clear destination, as well as motivate, engage and inspire the project team and the organisation as a whole throughout the journey.

Greatest challenge

Communication and team engagement should be the focus of the project manager. Ensure the team is aware of the vision, the plan is realistic, and the expectations and accountabilities are clear.

Methodology

To manage this scenario:

- Re-establish and articulate the project vision;

- Address reasons for team resistance, fears and current team dynamics (how the team works together); and
- Manage pockets of resistance across the organisation with a united team.

Organisational change projects will attract resistance. The project team must believe in the initiative. To engage the team, a project manager must assess:

- the root cause of poor team engagement and morale;
- dynamic interrelationships of the project team; and
- project status with team members and stakeholders – what is the root cause of the delay?

Then a Recovery Plan can be developed with clear accountabilities, realistic targets and quick wins that the team can celebrate together. Follow up by focusing on the pockets of resistance within the organisation.

THINKSTOCK

3.

**GEORGE SLOAN, Senior
Consultant UXC Training Group**



The priority here is the project team. If the team is falling apart then what hope is there for the rollout of the change. The red flag to be raised to the project sponsor is that we need to clarify why there is resistance in the organisation and the project team. The team needs direction and support.

I would workshop a health check with the team (and then with other stakeholders) on why they believe the resistance is occurring. Dr de Bono's Six Thinking Hats or Dr David Rocks' SCARF model would be useful here. The project manager will need to be honest and transparent. Looking for positives within the team will help to reassure and build resilience.

Some other questions that need to be asked are:

- What has been communicated and how to the organisation?
- Has the 'why' of the change

been articulated in a positive message – a positive vision supported in a visible way by the sponsor?

- Are the project objectives clear with a plan to deal with process, organisational structure, technology and culture?
- Is the project setting people up for success through training and positive reinforcement when the change is operational?
- Is it perceived as being out of control – are the leaders assuming employees are on the same page despite the digestion time for employees being very short compared with the leadership team?

Recent research from McKinsey & Co suggests that fear-based change is not productive. It narrows the focus and creativity of employees. To capture minds we need to appeal to the left side of the brain to convince us of the logic, the facts and a clear path or process forward, preferably simple. To capture hearts we need to appeal to the right side of the brain that wants to know how we will be supported and is there a brighter future.

THINKING BLOCKS

- 1 The de Bono Hats system is a thinking tool for group discussion that helps groups to work together more effectively.
- 2 Dr David Rocks' SCARF model explores the five domains of human social experience.
- 3 The FourSight model gives insight into the different ways people approach challenges.