

Who Is Moving My Cheese?

Understanding the process of Change Management within an organization.

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Introduction

Winston Churchill once said, “There is nothing wrong with change, if it is in the right direction”. This can especially ring true when dealing with change in business. Business change is perpetual, with IT being a nexus for much of that change. Opportunities constantly arise with advances in technology, globalization, or changes in government directives. Organizations face the challenge not to avert or decelerate change, but to learn to successfully manage it. This management is the key purpose of the change management office (CMO).

Governance

The mission of the CMO is to initiate and accept change efforts that make possible the enhancement of people, processes, and systems, while proactively generating and supporting the momentum for influential change in a receptive setting.¹ The agency has a change management structure that governs an agency’s project portfolio, including new project prioritization, active project monitoring, and existing portfolio management. The objective is to ensure that new projects support the agency’s strategic objectives and plan, that active projects are on schedule, within budget and will deliver the expected functionality; and that the existing portfolio remains applicable and functional. Oftentimes, to provide this governance, several formal and virtual structures have been established. These structures provide decision-making and decision support roles to manage change and the portfolio.

Obstacles

¹ Change Management Office
<http://www.northwestern.edu/changemanagement/> accessed September 2010.

Changes in one part of an organization can quickly produce changes, side effects, and unintended consequences in other parts of the enterprise. Recent history is witness to several factors that have introduced and accelerated the pace of change in business—and created the need for a CMO.² The need for change within organizations comes from many sources. Innovative technologies, market pressures, and regulatory changes are just a few. These drivers affect organizations in a variety of ways; many set in motion complex sequences of change that propagate effects far beyond the original point. A simple upgrade in a word processor program can change the way staff collaborate and share documents as well as introduce security vulnerabilities that eventually lead to a widespread disruption.

A well defined governance office for change initiatives, by itself, will not guarantee success. There are a number of barriers, even in high performing organizations, that present continuous challenges.

It’s vital for the governance process to be clearly defined, as well as practical and supportive of the organization’s current culture. Change must be communicated so that all involved are able to understand its importance. Constituents must see how the CMO’s goals are clearly linked to the organization’s business strategies for successful change to occur. Those who are participating or affected by the process have the power to impact its outcome, both positively and negatively. Employees who don’t offer full support or accept responsibility can cause delays in initiatives.

² Dan Sullivan. *The Definitive Guide to Enterprise Change Management*. Realtime Publishers 2010.
<http://www.realtimepublishers.com/>

CMO's are able to assist in preparing those involved for positive participation and active guidance.³

Ultimately, companies don't change, their initiatives do. By providing everyone in the business the proficiency to change, organizations can move more rapidly than ever. An organization's ability to change can turn into a competitive advantage when employees develop competencies in change that supports the company's growth and demands in today's society.

Successfully implementing your strategy means that your leaders and managers need to understand how to get people to do things differently. Lucrative change management offices set themselves apart by becoming disciplined in five fundamental spheres. These include vision, communication, alignment, engagement, and accountability.⁴

Vision:

Create a clear picture of what's changing, why it's changing, and what it will lead to for everyone. Organizational change not only can be planned and controlled, it must be. If organizational change is not carefully planned, you are no more managing it than you are rainfall. Plan so that you say where we're going and what we're going to become. This isn't a timeline marked out on a calendar, but the understanding in the minds of participants. It's the vision reduced to clear, comprehensible action steps describing how to get there and who will do what.⁵

Communication:

Continual, real, two-way dialogue not only shares the vision, but also helps employees embrace it. A great vision can serve a useful purpose even if it is understood by just a few people. But the real power of a vision is when most of those involved in an enterprise have a common understanding of its goals and direction. However gaining this kind of understanding is no easy task; managers under communicate or inadvertently send inconsistent messages. With the typical employee averaging a total amount of 2,300,000 words or numbers communicated to them in 3 months, change visions can easily get lost in translation: the outcome being a delayed transformation.⁶ Accepting a vision of change can be

both a challenging intellectual and emotional task. The goal: keep it simple. IT-speak ultimately acts as barriers to a focused, direct change message.

Alignment:

Build unity among employees by ensuring that their actions line up not only with each other, but also to the change. Oftentimes, this is overcoming the resistance that change always ultimately faces. Not only departmental resistance, but also among the people who make up the departments. People are afraid of failing, low on energy, and over-challenged. They want to know what the payoff for them will be. Encouraging people to become directly involved and participate as partners in the change will help anticipate and embrace the outcomes.

Engagement

Accelerate your results by helping employees become actively engaged in making the changes happen. Major transformation rarely occurs without the assistance of many. Yet, employees generally won't help or feel they can't help, if they feel powerless. You are able to empower a broad base of people to take action through removing structural boundaries. When the organization undermines a vision by disempowering its people, a big barrier forms to the change management process. This may also include providing the needed training so that employees are able to support the change going forward. It's important to think carefully through what new behavior, skills, and attitudes will be needed when changes are initiated.⁷

Accountability:

The change management office can achieve its goals through defining roles and responsibilities clearly, while creating a way to successfully and objectively measure the success of a project. Even when a CMO is still in its early development, roles and responsibilities can still begin to mature. Some responsibilities a CMO takes on include owning processes, continuous improvement efforts, providing support for change management resources, performing as a guiding board for leaders and project teams, and crating change management curriculum within an organization among others.

Conclusion

Change will continue to be a common element on the landscape for businesses. The benefits of managing change well, coupled with the risks associated with failed change initiatives have caused management teams across

³ Cheryl Yaeger, "Change Management Trends in Governance Structures" January 2006, <http://www.benchmarkinternational.com/Articles/Change%20Management%20-%20Governance%20Structures.pdf> accessed September 2010.

⁴ <http://www.redtreeleadership.com>

⁵ Harvey Robbins and Michael Finley. Why Change Doesn't Work. Peterson's Nelnet Co: Sept 1996. P. 82

⁶ John P. Kotter. Leading Change. Harvard Business Press; January 1996. P.89

⁷ Ibid

the industry to begin addressing more comprehensive governance structures for change management. When looked at comparatively to the classic book, *Who Moved My Cheese*, each person or department is given the choice to adapt to the change at hand, or not adapt at all. The profound truth in it all is that we will all inevitably deal with change in business. With time and experience, we can learn to process and even prosper from adapting to the change.



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