The Change Management Life Cycle:
How to Involve Your People to Ensure Success at Every Stage

Every organisation is affected by change and must adapt in order to survive in today's dynamic environment, yet organisational change initiatives still fail at an alarming rate.
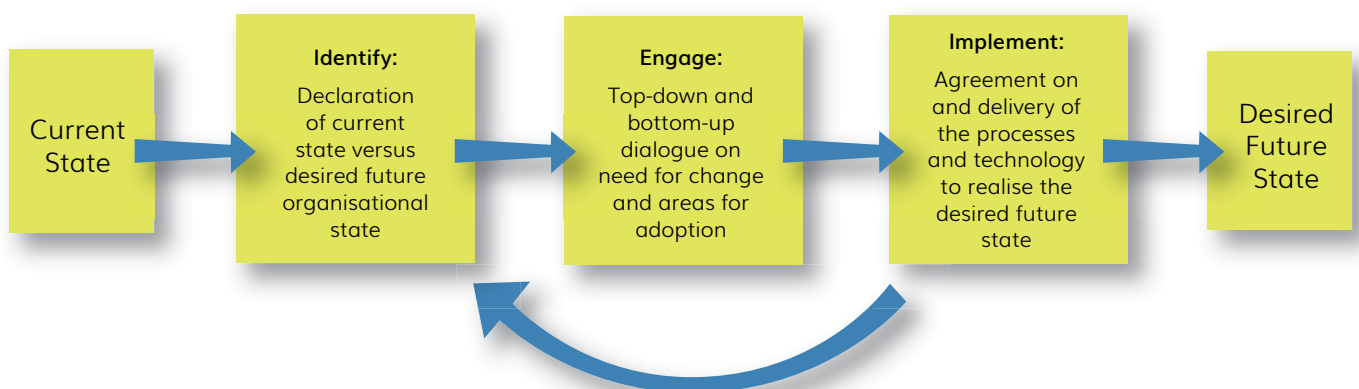
This is because most initiatives fail to consider how changes affect the people within an organisation.

To successfully implement change initiatives, organisational leaders must first identify the need for change and communicate it throughout the organisation.

Next they need to engage people at all levels of the organisation by involving them in the design of the implementation strategy, and finally to actively involve the people most affected by the change in its implementation.

The three phases laid out in the Organisational Change Management Life Cycle help to guide organisations on how to minimise the impact on people.

By paying close attention to how people are engaged in each phase of the lifecycle—Identify, Engage and Implement—organisations can ensure that employees at all levels are in a better position to embrace the proposed changes.

Current State → **Identify:** Declaration of current state versus desired future organisational state → **Engage:** Top-down and bottom-up dialogue on need for change and areas for adoption → **Implement:** Agreement on and delivery of the processes and technology to realise the desired future state → Desired Future State

TwentyEighty Strategic Execution's Organisational Change Management Life Cycle

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Phase 1: Identify the Change

The fundamental first step in successful change adoption is to identify and communicate the need for change in a way that is understood and embraced by people working at all levels of an organisation.

Many leaders, however, do not adequately consider how a proposed change (or even the rumour of one) may be received by the people it will impact the most.

Organisational leaders should therefore consider using the following techniques during the Identify stage to introduce a change effort:

- Bring people out of their daily routines to an off-site location in order to create a shared sense of urgency for change, and help them to concentrate on the change message.

- Craft and continually communicate a compelling vision of what the future will look like when the change is implemented.

Identify: Declaration of current state versus desired future organisational state

Phase 2: Engage the People

Once the need for change has been identified and communicated, the next step is to engage people in planning for the organisation's response to the change.

Successive levels of people within an organisation must be allowed an opportunity for intellectual, emotional and psychological reaction to the desired change.

Providing this opportunity enables people to become accustomed to the idea of change and to align their thinking in ways that will help both identify potential problem areas and contribute substantively to process improvement.

One technique to encourage people's adoption of a change is to conduct organisation-wide response/adoption alignment workshops. When practised effectively, these sessions allow people to contribute their own ideas about how a deliverable should be used within the organisation.

Engage: Top-down and bottom-up dialogue on need for change and areas for adoption

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Once these contributions are aligned — through multi-party conversations — an aligned approach for managing and adapting to the change will emerge.

When reactions have been aligned and individuals within an organisation are asked to be involved in responding to change, typical human behaviour moves to addressing the problem — creating a desired direction to facilitate change.

The implementation strategy for responding to the change is then developed at a high level. The people who will be executing the strategy, as well as the people who will be impacted by the strategy, should be included in the strategy development.

This strategy needs to be seen by all as a flexible plan so that the organisation can adapt to changing conditions once implementation is initiated.

Phase 3: Implement the Change

Change strategies developed during the Identify and Engage phases are translated into tactics, or actions, for moving toward the desired future organisational state.

As before, people are critical to how processes and technology are created and implemented. They should have direct experience with these processes and technology, and consequently, become knowledgeable on how these components must be customised for best results.

During implementation, change leaders should continually remind people with formal e-mails, progress celebration and, informal conversations, what the change is and why it is so important.

Additionally, organisational leaders should ask themselves the following people-related questions to help ensure successful implementation:

- Does the individual have the ability or desire to work in the new?

- Are additional skill sets needed to transition to the new job?

- Are changes to job descriptions needed?

Implement: Agreement on and delivery of the processes and technology to realise the desired future state.

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- Are job grades or pay impacted by this change?

- Does the change impact short-term productivity? If so, will additional support be needed to ensure business success?

If organisations successfully complete the first two phases in the change management life cycle, the implementation phase becomes essentially a monitoring activity for leaders.

They should ensure that:

- Change-oriented tasks are being accomplished as planned

- Energy and enthusiasm are present

- Alignment still exists among the people

Prototyping: A Fluid Implementation Strategy

For change efforts to be successful, the implementation strategies must be fluid enough to allow sufficient flexibility in the process, in order to respond to shifting circumstances.

These mid-course corrections often take the form of rapid prototyping or alternative responses to "what-if" scenarios—considerations that are not typically included in a detailed master plan.

Prototyping monitors the thinking and activities of people—both users and implementers—as processes and technology are put into action.

Its purpose during the implementation phase is to help organisations avoid getting mired in highly detailed plans that have the potential to stall change efforts.

Essentially, prototyping is another way to get people involved in the change as opposed to being recipients of the change. It gets the change underway, in small increments, rather than waiting for the master plan to be identified.

Prototyping is critical to successful change management. It is virtually impossible to plan for all contingencies in the development of an overarching strategy and yet, any successful strategy for change must be able to accommodate unforeseen challenges.

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INSIDER INSIGHTS

The benefits of prototyping can be seen at every level within an organisation. Executives benefit from a greater likelihood of adopting change (through incremental buy-in), while staff members benefit because, as a result of prototyping, the best approach will likely be used when implementing the change.

In summary

The human transition that is required to move from a historically acceptable way of working to one that is completely new or radically different is not to be underestimated.

Successful change management comes down to improving the relationships between people in the organisation in the attainment of a mutually desirable end state.

Ultimately, an organisation's people will have greater ownership of the change when their insights, ideas and actions are used in building the response to the change.

Executives who neglect the human transition required in change management will be less successful at implementing change, while an organisation that is too focused on objectives runs the risk of losing sight of personal relationships.

As well as understanding and addressing the three phases of the Change Management Life Cycle, organisational leaders should ask themselves the following questions:

- Has the organisation thoroughly identified and communicated the impending change?

- Are disturbances acknowledged and aligned?

- Has the organisation engaged all of its stakeholders—at every level of the organisation—in the change that will need to be adopted?

- Is the intent and direction of this change aligned throughout the organisation?

Effective change management in organisations begins when its people have ownership of their insights, ideas and actions in building the response to change.

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INSIDER INSIGHTS

- Has the organisation developed a flexible plan for implementation that allows for prototyping to move continually toward the desired future state?

- Are the organisational responses aligned and institutionalised?

Good leaders will make the reasons for change personal for everyone, not just for executives or shareholders. End-user benefits, down to the day-to-day experience of the individual worker, will create a more receptive environment for fostering new ideas—and a receptive environment is essential to creating any lasting, positive change.

If an organisation can answer yes to each of the questions above, the chances that its change initiative will be a success are good.

GLOBAL HEADQUARTERS
901 North Glebe Road
Suite 200
Arlington, VA 22203, USA
+1 888.374.8884

EMEA
7 Bishopsgate
London, EC2N 3AR, UK
+44 (0)20.3743.2910

APAC
111 Somerset Road #10-06
TripleOne Somerset
Singapore 238164
+65 3158.9500

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