

# Making change happen

Being ahead of the market and adapting to evolving client requirements means change is becoming the norm for many businesses, says Donnie MacNicol and Brenda Hales. So it makes sense to do it well and learn from your experiences

**T**hought, planning and energy must go into making change if you want it to be successful and, more importantly, sustained. Here are 10 ways to make change happen within your team, organisation or alliance.

- 1. Generate an exciting vision** that everyone can imagine being part of. Moving to a new office is a major hassle for most people, disrupting work and family. You must help everyone to imagine the upsides, e.g. job security, better working conditions or being closer to their customer base to help generate more work.
- 2. Accept that change is inherently complex.** Anyone that says there is a simple solution is a snake oil salesman. Change involves people and people are complicated – they perceive and react to change differently. For example, successfully moving from a traditional to partnering form of relationship will require a change in attitude and practice from individuals and organisations.
- 3. Be creative about how to achieve your outcome.** Have fun and think laterally by getting other people's viewpoints. Challenge the normal approach – is it the most effective way to deliver a sustained change? For example, rising profitability may lead to short-term refocusing of marketing efforts to more profitable areas but may damage long-term relationships and unsettle surveyors who may feel exposed.
- 4. Identify a leader,** not a manager. A leader will own the vision, believe in the change, provide the direction, utilise all their personal characteristics and make it happen. Ensure they have adequate support and are free to commit sufficient time and energy to it.
- 5. Identify and involve stakeholders.** Identify all those who will be affected by the change. Assess their attitude (from advocate to blocker) and their ability to disrupt or help deliver the project. Put your energies into changing those who are disruptive but can benefit the project most.
- 6. Plan for the effort.** It is always going to take more effort to design and manage a change than you first think. Keep in mind the available capacity of key resources, plan to a sufficient level, monitor (expecting things to change) and take action. Where possible, deliver the change in a phased manner to deliver quick wins.



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- 7. Communicate more than you think you need to,** and then do more. No matter how much you do it will never be enough. Too often, people are bombarded with messages that do not address their issues, which causes alienation. Remember that listening is the basis of communication so allow time for it. Be as open as you can – make people feel part of the change.
- 8. Identify and deal with the underlying problem,** not the symptoms. Don't distract yourself from what you perceive as difficult to tackle. Fear may exist about the personal implications of a major programme coming to an end. It is not this completion, but 'how' you undertake it that will let people know whether you just talk about being fair or whether you are, in fact, trustworthy.
- 9. Work with resistance** as it is inevitable. What may be a golden opportunity for you to broaden your services may be threatening to others. The important thing is to find ways for people to express their opposition and not allow it to become subversive. Underground resistance is much more destabilising to the foundations of any change than anything expressed. And remember, sometimes the resistance is your best risk detector – they might just be right!
- 10. Differentiate between the important and urgent.** It can be too easy to feel that progress is being made by working on the aspects we are more comfortable with and those screaming for our attention. Typically, these are not the underlying problems, which are nearly always people based.

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