

## The Qualities of Leadership: Leading Change

What defines leadership? Executives ask this question every time they choose a new leader or train their current leaders.

In order to be truly effective, there are five critical qualities that a leader must have. A leader must be a Visionary; A leader must be a person of Integrity and Honesty and have Values; A leader must know how to properly motivate others; and A leader must be able to lead change and finally, A leader must be able to lead a culture of change.

While each role is unique, they are also interdependent. In this series of articles, we will explore these leadership roles-what they are and how to hone your skills for each role.

### The Importance of Leading Change

Leading a change initiative is one of the most difficult tasks a leader can face. It is a double-edged sword with many risks and opportunities. For most leaders, managing a change initiative is crucial role, but the responsibilities can widely vary depending on what type of change will be pursued.

### Two Types of Change Processes

There are two types of change in an organization: planned change and “emergent” change. Planned change refers to initiatives that are driven “top-down” in an organization, while “emergent” change refers to change that

can originate from any level in the organization.

The role of a leader is critical in both types of change. In a planned change initiative, the leader must have a clear vision and a plan that both involves people in the change and ensures there is a support infrastructure for the change. In an “emergent” change, the leader must create and foster a culture that encourages and supports change that comes from “within” the organization.

See our article *The Qualities of Leadership: Leading a Readiness for Change Culture* to learn more on emergent change.

### The Role of the Leader in Planned Change

The leadership “hat” in planned change is a critical one to wear that includes two crucial responsibilities:

1. Communicating the vision for the change.
2. Establishing the support elements necessary for the change to be successful.



## The Vision for Change

As we've presented in our previous leadership articles, the role of a leader in any organization is to set direction and inspire others to attain the goal. In the case of a change initiative, leadership must first be able to have a clear picture of what the future will look like after the change. It is important for them to clearly understand how this change will affect the various roles within the organization and how it will impact the organization's policies and procedures.

## Communicating the Change

Once a positive vision for the future is clearly outlined, a leader's next challenge is to communicate the change to all levels of the organization in positive terms in order to rally everyone around the vision. Establishing a solid, formal communication plan before the change initiative begins will save you the stress of scrambling to figure out an effective communication process after the change has been made.

When communicating the vision of the future, be sure to summarize the following points in the vision itself:

- Things that will stay the same
- Things that will be left behind
- New things that we will have that we've never had before

The leader should be the chief spokesperson for the change vision. They need to ensure that all levels of the organization understand the rationale for the change and how the change will be implemented. The following five elements should be communicated to facilitate understanding and awareness of the vision:

- What is the change?
- Why are we doing it?
- How are we going to go about it?
- How long will it take us to do it?
- What will the role be for each department and each individual?

## Establishing the Support Elements

The second responsibility for a leader of planned change is to ensure that support elements have been installed that will make the change process successful. For most significant change initiatives, those support elements include the following:

### A realistic project plan

The leader ensures that a step-by-step plan has been produced in the planning phase. This should include a risk analysis and business case analysis.

### An organization structure for managing the change

The leader must ensure the structure for implementing and managing the change is installed. Ideally, this system solicits involvement and ownership of key stakeholders and consists of a team approach. For large change projects, such as implementing an enterprise-wide software package, it is not unusual to have a cross-functional steering team, a sponsor, a project leader, and sub-teams, as needed.

### Internal change agents

The leader identifies and orients a coalition of internal change agents. These agents will act as facilitators and "cheerleaders" of the change.

### A formal communications plan

The leader creates a formal communications plan for the life of the change initiative. This plan should include what information should be communicated, the frequency of the

communication, the method of communication, and the responsible party for carrying out the communication.

#### **A formal training plan**

The leader identifies the new skills or training necessary for the change to be successful and establishes a formal training program to fulfill those goals. Often key stakeholders will need new skills in either bringing about the change or in operating in the new environment once the change is completed.

#### **Barrier removal**

The leader makes a concerted effort to first identify barriers in the environment that will inhibit or prevent the change, and then develops action steps to systematically remove the barriers. Barriers can include staffing (not enough people or release time to carry out the change), lack of budget, lack of management support, competing initiatives, etc.

#### **A supportive and aligned management group**

In many change efforts there is lack of alignment and support among the management group, which hinders the change process. The leader's first responsibility is to ensure that his/her management team presents a united front about the change. Often the leader will insist that successful change performance is tied to the performance management system of the organization.

#### **A system of periodic audits and feedback**

In order to map progress against the change goals, as well as to help institutionalize the change, the leader

must install an audit process, as she/he would for quality, customer service, or employee satisfaction purposes. Psychologically, it is important to build in a "quick win" or a "quick success" to help build momentum for the change.

### **Overcoming Resistance to Change**

Through our years of working with organizations to implement change, we have found when we ask management groups the question-- "Do people resist change?"-- we usually get an immediate and resounding "YES." We have found that if the leader paints and effectively communicates a positive vision and establishes the support elements listed above, resistance to change can be minimized.



One quick and easy model we use to help remember how to manage through change is the USEM™ model. The USEM™ model is actually a generalized performance model that can be applied to several types of organization situations. The following segment shows how this model can be applied to a change initiative.

To maximize a positive response to change you must have the following USEM™ parameters in place:

**U** = people must **understand** what we're doing and why

**S** = people must have the knowledge and **skills** necessary to execute the change

**E** = we must remove barriers in the **environment** that will prevent the change from being successful

**M** = people must have **motivation** to change, i.e., they must want to help achieve the change

If the organization does a good job of putting in place the U, S, and E parameters, it is our experience that the motivation will follow. In other words, if people have the Understanding, Skills and proper Environment without barriers, then this will go a long way towards solving motivation and resistance issues.

The eight support elements listed above directly correlate with the USEM™ model. The first six elements address the U, S, and E factors, while the last two parameters directly influence the Motivation parameter.

Leading change in an organization can be a risk, but when the leader creates and communicates a positive vision and establishes the necessary support elements described in this article, the components of the USEM™ model are thus fulfilled, and a change initiative is less likely to experience resistance. Taking on the role of leading change in your organization is a step towards becoming a leader. Stay tuned for the next issue of **Impact**, where we will explore the Leadership Role of Leading Change in the Organization, Part II: Leading a “Readiness for Change” Culture.