



Randel Consulting Associates

Leading Organizations through Change and Growth



5 CRITICAL MISTAKES THAT CAN THREATEN YOUR CHANGE INITIATIVE

Implementing organizational change doesn't have to be challenging. Get our insider tips to overcome these 5 common problems.

Supporting leaders and teams as they navigate the complex challenges of change.

Change is the only constant, the old adage goes.

Organizations *need* to change to meet new demands, and an evolving marketplace. When navigated successfully, change encourages innovation, develops staff members and their skills, leads to better business opportunities and improves staff morale. It helps you retain a competitive edge, and remain relevant in your business area.

The unfortunate reality though, is that large-scale organizational changes often fail. More than one study has suggested that 70% of these transformations do not meet their objectives, and can result in far more negative consequences than positive ones. This is demoralizing for those involved, and can foster stakeholder skepticism towards future change initiatives.

There is another way.

With over 25 years of experience in supporting hundreds of organizations globally, our focus at Randel Consulting Associates is to support and enable transformational change among leaders and organizations. What we do best is design holistic and tailored interventions that suit each organization as they implement and navigate change. With that in mind, we have created this guide to help you recognize 5 critical mistakes that might threaten your change initiative, and what you can do to overcome them.

If you have any questions, feel free to get in touch. We'd be happy to support you through a change initiative that works for you *and* your people.

Talk soon.

Michael Randel



MISTAKE #1

SPRINGING CHANGE ON PEOPLE

PROBLEM:

Springing a significant organizational change on your employees will catch them by surprise, leading to negative reactions and resistance. When caught off guard, they may feel confused and uncertain about the future. This in turn can lower morale, increase anxiety and reduce productivity among your workforce.

SOLUTION:

As your workforce is used to the status quo, they will need to be prepared for the change that is going to take place. Build anticipation for the upcoming announcement, and as far as possible, *communicate the context and reasons for the change*. This will allow people to shift to a space where they are open to new possibilities. When confidentiality is crucial, such as when announcing layoffs, be clear and decisive in your communication and have a well-thought-out plan in place. This indicates that leadership has considered the implications, and is ready and able to guide the organization through the transition.

BENEFIT:

Gradually introducing the idea of change minimizes the shock factor, and gives people time to process the upcoming shift. It also helps them better understand the context and reasons for the change, mitigating confusion and resistance. Introducing change in a structured manner helps reduce anxiety and uncertainty, and gives people the opportunity to align themselves with the new direction. Finally, preparing the ground allows for transparent discussions, which are essential for change acceptance.



MISTAKE #2

OVERLY CONFIDENT PLANNING

PROBLEM:

A common pitfall is to place your confidence in an overly ambitious and detailed plan. As a leader, you might prepare a plan assuming everything will proceed flawlessly, without any interruptions or complications. This unrealistic sense of confidence can then create a perception of 'magical thinking' among staff, leading to skepticism and distrust towards the leadership's approach. Assumptions and risks are also missed during the planning process, further complicating change implementation.

SOLUTION:

A balanced approach towards planning is crucial. Start by outlining the overall structure and approach, then identify key phases, timelines and major milestones to be achieved. However don't delve into minute implementation steps, which could make the plan overly rigid and unresponsive to changing circumstances. Adopt a '*rolling planning process*' that is specific about the starting point and the next 6+ months, but remains flexible for the long term. Regularly review and update the plan based on real-time feedback, emerging challenges and new insights.

BENEFIT:

Not locking in every detail of the plan leaves room to incorporate feedback from stakeholders, fostering a sense of ownership and collaboration. As the plan is continually updated, a wider range of voices and perspectives can be included. This allows for a comprehensive exploration of potential risks and assumptions. Staff confidence in leaders will build as the realism of the plan becomes evident. Allowing people closer to the operational issues to contribute their insights enhances problem solving and solution development.



MISTAKE #3

HOLDING ON TO CONTROL

PROBLEM:

In the dynamic landscape of organizational change and growth, a common challenge arises when leaders presume they can control and dictate the pace of change. Employers and stakeholders directly impacted by the change are therefore excluded from participating in the planning and decision-making processes. As leaders tend to be removed from the ground-level intricacies, the lack of perspective can lead to unrealistic expectations. Feedback loops from those at the operational level become slower and less candid. Staff become disenchanted and disaffected as they perceive a top-driven process that overlooks the day-to-day realities faced by them.

SOLUTION:

Acknowledge that no single person or senior group can fully grasp the entirety of the change context. *Delegate responsibility for planning and implementing change to diverse sub-groups* that include representatives from various levels and departments. Create a steering group or a change monitoring group consisting of a cross-section of stakeholders – employees from different levels, departments, and roles to provide holistic insights.

BENEFIT:

Involving staff in the change process creates a sense of ownership and responsibility, leading to higher levels of buy-in and commitment to the change initiative. This also creates champions across your organization who will advocate the benefits of the change to their peers. This experience will expose employees to an organization-wide perspective on complex issues, contributing to their professional development and growing their skill sets. This enhanced visibility increases the likelihood of recognition from senior leaders and opens up promotion opportunities.



MISTAKE #4

MISUNDERSTANDING RESISTANCE

PROBLEM:

In the context of guiding an organization through change, a common mistake is when leaders misunderstand resistance. Questions, challenges, pushback and disengagement are considered a direct threat to the change initiative, and even to the leadership itself. Along with taking it personally, this tends to be a misreading of the situation when considering challenge as defiance rather than what it really is – confusion and a search for clarity.

SOLUTION:

Keep an open mind and stay curious – listen to what your staff are saying to understand the motivations, concerns and underlying reasons behind the resistance. Apply Maurer's framework of understanding resistance, which has 3 levels:

Level 1: I don't get it. Some resistance stems from confusion or lack of clarity about the change. Engage with staff and give them the necessary information and explanations.

Level 2: I don't like it. People might resist because of the perceived negative impacts of the change. Address these concerns by highlighting benefits and mitigating drawbacks.

Level 3: I don't like you. Resistance is sometimes directed at leaders personally. Focus on building trust and relationships to address this.

Finally, respond thoughtfully to what people are saying (or not saying /doing), and use these insights to adapt the plan.

BENEFIT:

Engaging people authentically helps gain their support and trust for the changes underway. This is especially important for maintaining morale during transitions. Developing and applying relevant responses to the feedback you get increases the overall effectiveness of the plan. This ensures that the change initiative is better aligned with your organization's needs, and open dialogue improves communication between leadership and staff. This goes a long way to dispel misconceptions and build mutual understanding.



MISTAKE #5

OVERLOOKING KEY STAKEHOLDERS

PROBLEM:

When assessing the need for change and planning how the initiative will unfold are done in isolation by leadership, key stakeholders are overlooked. This can lead to blind spots in the change strategy, missing out on critical considerations. Further, change initiatives are sometimes approached from the lens of what the organization or leadership perceives as necessary. This narrow perspective doesn't consider the unique needs, concerns and viewpoints of those directly affected by the change, and these aren't considered in the initial plan.

SOLUTION:

Undertake a comprehensive stakeholder analysis early on, when you are preparing for change. Identify and involve all relevant stakeholders who have a vested interest in the outcome of the change initiative. Delve deep into understanding the interests, concerns and expectations of each stakeholder group. This analysis will provide crucial insights into their unique perspectives and requirements, allowing for a robust and inclusive plan that increases buy-in.

BENEFIT:

By including key stakeholders early, you will have a comprehensive understanding of the challenges, opportunities and priorities that need to be addressed. This leads to a more robust and adaptable plan for the change initiative, making it more responsive to real-world needs and can be adjusted as needed. Stakeholder groups will feel valued and acknowledged too, when their voices are heard and considered. This also goes a long way to build trust that the leaders have the best interests of all affected parties in mind.





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TO TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR CHANGE INITIATIVE

Getting Started Is Simple

1. Schedule A Call With Us

Tell us what's going on and what challenges your organization is facing.

2. Clarify Next Steps And Roadmap

We'll help you develop a holistic change strategy, bespoke to your organization and its needs.

3. Successfully Navigate Change

Lay the foundation for sustainable transformation, as we guide you through the change process.

SCHEDULE YOUR CALL