Dealing with Change

There are five key steps to improving efficiency:

- Identify (define) what process needs improving
- Measure the problem
- Analyse your information
- Improve the process
- Control, i.e. embed the new process so it becomes business as usual

Management consultants often refer to this is as the DMAIC framework.

This Practice Note guides you through step 5, i.e. controlling the problem you identified in step 1 and have now measured, analysed and improved. This Practice Note focuses on the individual emotional impact of change and what you can do to engage with people and involve them in the process.
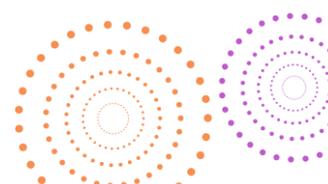
Managing Change

When faced with change people may react in many different ways, this can depend on factors such as:
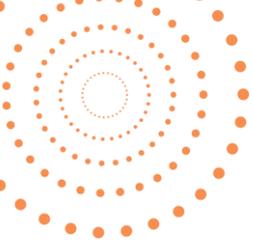
- Is the change their choice or is it being imposed upon them?
- How great is the change?
- Will they have any input into the way the change will affect them?
- What changes have they experienced in the past and how successful have they been?
- Do they agree with the change?
- What threats does the change present to them?

Typical feelings are anxiousness, excitement (it looks great on paper), denial (they'll never do it), hopefulness and fear of the unknown.

To manage change effectively, you need to have a realistic idea of how big the change will be and how it will affect people directly and indirectly.

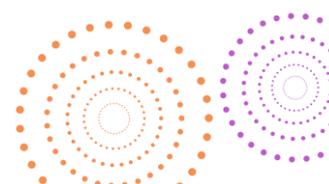| Goals	- Make sure clear goals are explicitly stated so everyone understands where you're headed - Communicate the priorities and how success will be measured - Give a clear idea of timescales
Get the Team Involved	- As mentioned in previous practice notes, involve those affected by the changes as much and as often as possible - Encourage input and ideas - Manage expectations

	• Allow people to raise concerns and issues; listen to them and give appropriate feedback • Allocate tasks across the team
Communicate	• Keep everyone up to date on progress and any changes to plans • Give feedback and be transparent about any areas that aren't going smoothly • Don't rely on one communication method, use everything at your disposal • Make project plans and schedules as visible as possible to those affected • Make clear the benefits of the change
Timescales	• Keep reminding people of the long-term goals • Identify when you can celebrate milestones along the way • Try not to rush changes through • Avoid short term fixes
Anticipate Reactions	• See the change through the eyes of those affected • Recognise that everyone will respond differently • Be prepared for negative reactions

The following table is a simple idea to help you anticipate the way members of your team might react to a change you are making. Enter each team members name in the left-hand column and then indicate where you believe their present position is and for what reason.

Name	Not Committed (Perhaps Opposed)	Allows (Neutral)	Helps (change Happen)	Makes (Change Happen)	Reason?
Fred				⟶	
John		⟶	⟶		
Jane	⟶	⟶			
Karen			⟶	⟶	
Simon				⟶	
Jean		⟶	⟶		

The Transition Curve

The transition curve is based on the work of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross who created her "five stages of grief" model after working with the bereaved.   As the emotional reactions of people to change are generally similar though less dramatic than those dealing with grief it makes a useful starting point for identifying the best methods for introducing change into the workplace.

The depth and length of the curve will vary from person to person and will be affected by the factors mentioned at the start of this practice note. Even those who are embracing of change in the first instance may go through periods of low morale and frustration as the change progresses in much the same way the excitement of getting the latest mobile phone turns to frustration as we try to get used to new menus and button combinations.

The challenge for those implementing change is that people progress through the transition curve at different rates so it's important you consider and prepare for all four phases before implementing any changes.

For a worked example of the transition curve relating to our case study see Transition Curve Worked Example attached.

The four phases of the transition curve are:

Phase One - Denial

During this phase people are often feeling OK, at least to begin with. Perhaps because they're excited about the change or maybe they're still in denial.

What people need above all else at this point is information and the points you need to consider are:

- Who needs to be told?
- What do they need to be told?
- When do they need to be told?
- How should they be told? (Email/ 121/ briefing?)
- How can you control the message to ensure consistency and avoid gossip/ misinterpretation/ rumour?
- How do you ensure you receive accurate feedback?

Phase Two - Anger

Once the changes are being implemented even the most optimistic person can start to experience doubts or concerns. As theories become realities and routines and working patterns become disrupted, it's easy to become frustrated and angry at new procedures and systems. There can be a temptation to throw in the towel and either leave the organisation or revert to the old ways of doing things. In some cases, individuals may even feel moved to sabotage the changes being implemented.
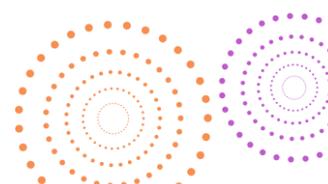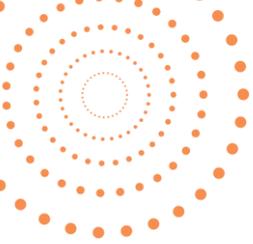
It's crucial at this stage that people are clearly aware of the support available to them to help them identify what's working and what isn't. It's rare a change is implemented without any problems so there should be some way they can provide constructive feedback about the impacts of the changes.

This stage is usually the most stressful as everyone will be out of their comfort zones and doing new things for the first time. Jobs they've being doing for years suddenly feel awkward and unfamiliar and it's easy for tempers to become frayed. People need an opportunity to let off steam without being perceived as being "negative" or "troublemakers" - the change will happen, but it may take time for them to become comfortable with it.

Things to consider during this phase:

- What support/ training will be needed?
- Who will provide that?
- What facilities will be needed?
- How much preparation will be required?
- What will you do about people who are struggling?
- How can you make teams self-supporting?

Phase Three – Resigned Acceptance

What you find most commonly here is people have accepted the change and begun to work with it, even if they are still not 100% happy with the way things now are. They know what they're meant to be doing; they just need time for it to become a familiar routine.

The important thing here is to maintain momentum and motivation and focus on achieving the milestones along the way to the final goal. Some of the points to consider during this phase are:

- How will you provide clear direction?
- Who will provide the long-term support?
- How will you communicate what is available?
- How will you keep people motivated toward their end goal?
- What will be your milestones along the way?

Phase Four - Acceptance

This is when the change is becoming more embedded and accepted as the 'way things are done around here'. The new systems are starting to make sense and people are maybe even wondering why they haven't been doing it this way all along.

Issues may still arise but the bulk of the major disruptions are now past, and things are beginning to settle down. At this stage people begin to relax and new systems (hopefully) start producing the results they were expected to. It's important at this point to review what happened identifying what worked well and what didn't. Change is an ongoing process and is likely to happen again within most organisations so it's important to learn whatever you can from the processes.
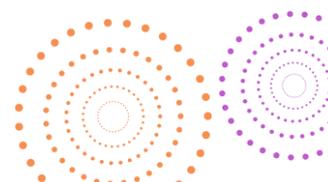
Points to consider during this phase:

- Will you reward individual/ team accomplishments?
- What will you do when mistakes happen/ people go backwards?
- How will you stop people slipping back into their comfort zones?
- How will you deal with challenges/ problems?
- What next?

Not all changes run smoothly and not all changes are for the better but most are implemented with the best of intentions. When you're implementing change it's important you find a way to encourage everyone to contribute to the process in a constructive and positive manner. Make sure you address any issues and concerns raised by those affected by the change process and focus on the positive outcomes as far as you can.