

Effective change implementation: Managing relationships in the change team

Those who fail to challenge and build a culture of continuous improvement will, in all likelihood, be putting their organisation at risk. If we are not creating a readiness for change all the time then we are probably doing very little on our 'organisational change agenda'. If we are not making strides to do this right now it means we are probably standing still. And if we are standing still –we are actually going backwards says Philip Atkinson.



The success of any change initiative will tend to depend not only on a clear methodology or roadmap for change, but also on the relationships that exist within the 'change team'. Their relative health is critical in bringing about meaningful change. It is vital to energise the change team to take full ownership and support change implementation. We know a lot of change projects or initiatives fail because, after the 'change' is introduced, little focus is applied in maintaining the energy and momentum of that change. In many cases the 'change' is not successful, is diluted and fizzles away over time.

To create successful change, you have to ensure that the key players know and deliver to their key roles and responsibilities. Our change strategy focuses on all the actors in the change team including 'sponsors' for the changes, internal and external change agents or facilitators, key stakeholders in and of the process, and the implementers who have to introduce, implement and make the change work. Working with the implementers is important because they need to be part of the process, rather than change being imposed upon them. Changes

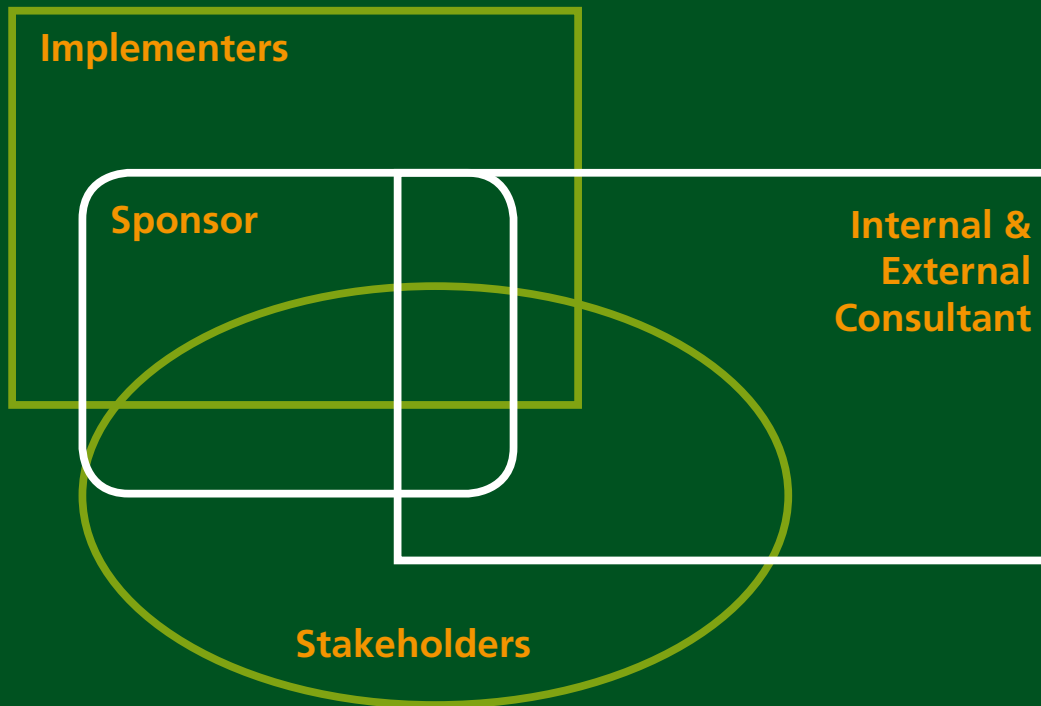
work well and are consolidated into 'business as usual' (BAU) when they directly participate, contribute to the design and implementation of those changes. Change is not 'done to' or delivered to them without their ownership and their support.

80% of culture change fails

Many change projects related to business transformation, culture change and continuous improvement fail for very simple reasons and are related to communication and engagement with those expected to live with and make the changes work. In our eyes, too much is done 'to them' without their consent or 'buy in' – so there is little hope that the changes will be willingly embedded in the organisation.

80% of change initiatives will fail if these four groups of people are not managed well. Many fail because all the responsibility for change resides with the facilitator or consultant. The main reasons for failure are not related to the quality of training or the robustness of solutions, but to the maturity and the inter-relationships within the larger change team.

Actors in the change process



Roles in the change team

Who are they?	What do they do?
Sponsor or project hosts	They own the key issues that need resolution or transformation. They include senior management team members and key individuals responsible for service delivery.
Facilitator or consultant (internal and external)	These are people who have the responsibility to design and deliver the change. Their role is vital in ensuring that a high level of coordination and interaction exists within the larger change team.
Stakeholders	These can be internal and external suppliers and customers to any process, and may include regulatory, statutory, consumer, lobbying and special interest groups, including the customer or end user.
Implementers	Ensure those changes are brought about and implemented. These are teams of people who work the key process and should always be part of designing and delivering change in organisational processes.

Top reasons why change fails

- Sponsors do not own projects – in many cases senior managers have projects foisted upon them, and, consequently, don't support them.
- Sponsors underestimate the energy necessary to inspire others in the change team to action and then implement the change.
- Projects are not properly scoped by consultants and facilitators working with sponsors. Too many assumptions are made, or ambiguity in project requirements are not voiced or clarified.
- Sponsors give too much responsibility to the internal and external 'facilitators' or 'change makers' to introduce the change, and fail to open doors for them and make change easy.
- Consultants and facilitators do not challenge the 'sponsor' when they need to do so – they fail to develop and nurture a 'win-win' relationship.
- There is little shared engagement between the key players in the change team.
- The change team fail to include key 'stakeholders' in the process or consult them only as an afterthought.
- Facilitators can often fail to engage with those people, (the 'implementers') who have to live with and embed the changes.

The change team can be composed of a variety of people, but for simplicity let us assume we have a 'sponsor' and an internal and external change maker, facilitator or consultant. It is important to recognise that 'externals' often will have some part to play in the process. Their input can be vital, and they have a special edge due to experience of implementing similar approaches (perhaps within the same industry), or because the nature of the change is critical and only a few people have seen the project through from start to finish. Occasionally, an external is needed to say those uncomfortable things that make the sponsor sit up and pay attention. At other times, the external occupies no more than a technical role to get a project initiated and up and running.

Critical issues in the consulting relationship

It is wise to outline some of the issues to be confronted when the team of players in the process of change have to interact. In the larger scheme of things, we have many actors in the change arena. Notably, the sponsor is probably a senior staff member who has ownership of the project. There may be also some external guidance, with varying degrees of control exercised by the internal facilitator or consultant. Our target audience is the implementers. These are the people upon whom we focus our energies. The facilitator is charged with persuading, influencing and 'activating' these people to take the ideas and concepts, tools and processes and implementing these changes throughout the organisation. The term 'implementers' is chosen because it best sums up what the facilitator or consultant is expected to achieve – the 'activation' of the energy and the transference of ownership to implement change.

Others refer to these people as 'targets'¹ but the use of this terminology implies they have only a passive part to play, and are instructed what to do. We prefer the 'implementer' description because it is more positive, empowering and suggests that those taking on the role of 'implementer' have a strong participative role, rather than just being the subject, the 'target', for change.

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We would like to keep the key people in the change arena discrete to these players, but in reality others are involved, including OD and HR professionals, the management team and others who have some bearing and influence on the situation. At this stage, it may be appropriate to view the agenda of those people taking part. We need to review the relative health of 'culture' and 'politics' in the organisation and particularly in the wider change team and issues include:

- Are we all focused on the same deliverables?
- Is what we are doing conflicting with the priorities and success of other change initiatives?
- What are the 'gains and losses' for the change team if it does or does not work?

Understanding the undercurrents in the sea of change can have a significant effect on the outcome and the decisions to which the change team commit.

Orchestrating roles

The major concern to arise when implementing change is the timely and seamless orchestration of events amongst those within the change team, to ensure that each of the five stages of the rapid improvement model² are fully actualised.

The internal facilitator or consultant must learn to work with, and manage the relationship with, the external consultant. The responsibility of the internal consultant is to achieve the best value from the external. Issues around the interaction of the external and the internal consultant are critical for the change team. When an external consultant is used, they should be a very strong 'connector' between the sponsor and the internal consultant. The role of the internal consultant is not to do the work – and take 100% ownership – that is the job of the sponsor.

Ownership

Ownership for change rests with the sponsor. The internal consultant is the facilitator to make that happen. The internal consultant may have ownership for the process delivering the change, but ownership for the project must lie with the sponsor. The 'sponsor' has to feel that they are the driving force behind the project. It is up to the sponsor to bring pressure to bear on

parts of the organisation that don't want to change.

It is really important to win the commitment of the sponsor to support the drive and to open the necessary doors as things progress. It is critical that the sponsor fully supports the internal and external consultant. We think it critical to examine the relationships that exist within the change team and, in particular, between the sponsor and the consultant. It is necessary to identify and highlight the areas and issues where they need to work together to make things happen.

Managing expectations

Each individual member of the change team should answer these questions themselves:

- What are the three core and specific deliverables that the change initiative will create for the organisation?
- Specify the role and the contribution to which you will personally commit to these ends?
- Where are the potential and realistic barriers to meeting the deliverables?
- What action will you take to prevent these barriers becoming no more than a nuisance?

The change team needs to discuss specific responses and identify potential conflicts within the team, thus ensuring that all political and 'nuisance' factor issues are discussed before the project commences.

Encountering resistance

Often, when a sponsor embarks on a change programme they may believe that everyone else in the enterprise is as committed to the process as they are. It is not usually the sponsor who encounters resistance at first hand. Rather, it is the consultants, when they make their first steps to initiate progress with those they seek to influence to implement the 'processes' within their own function, operation or locality.

The value of developing internal capability to drive change

No matter the quality of the internal facilitator and their external colleague, the only real success in change is brought about when the organisation ensures that change strategies and skills are drilled down to and held by those who work key processes. This means developing an internal capability to bring about change. Success in any endeavour is achieved when the internal and external facilitator or consultant can walk away from a project knowing it is in safe hands. This means equipping staff with superior change management skills.

A way forward to develop capability is a learning process. In most organisations, people will have a varying degree of commitment demonstrated as a 'attitude to change'. We prefer the 1-3% of staff who we consider to include 'change champions' and 'early adaptors' who account for a further 3-7% of the population. We will work with 'late adaptors' the 'fence sitters' and 'resistors' later on³. We aim to develop these people as key facilitators and equip them with skills through which they can deliver continuous improvement and support transformational change.

Attitude to change	Commitment to Participate in organisational change*
Change champions	Highly committed to change, keen to initiative progress and always chosen for new projects – 1-3% of staff
Early adaptors	Committed and quick to take the initiative – approximately 3-7%
Late adaptors	Eager to get involved, but need to see the direction, 8-15%
Sitting on the fence	Varying commitment due to seeing change initiatives not always succeed. They can be convinced and should be given the benefit of the doubt, 40 -70% of staff
Resistors	Cynical and had bad experiences of change, probably 5-10%
Terrorists	Not interested in improving performance, 2-3%

**Dependent on the sector and change readiness inherent to the organisation. Please contact us for our Change Readiness Instrument – www.philipatkinson.com*



Change leadership: Transformational and transactional

Transformational Change Leadership	Transactional Change Manager
• Empowerment orientated	• Command and control oriented
• Visionary and inspiration in motivating others to achieve	• Technically focused – analysing solutions to complex problems
• Strategic thinking, forward planning, focused on the future	• Short term orientation – more concerned with operations
• Intuitive and creative – thinking outside the box	• Advanced analytical thinking – looking for the right answer
• Active and energised	• Passive and reactive to events
• Change orientated	• Maintaining stability
• Challenging	• Clarifying

Typical approach to develop internal capability

As a case study we are working on a strategic project to transform the services provided by local authority.

We are focusing on delivering better services to the residents and citizens of that local authority using lean business transformation (LBT). We have worked on this and similar projects for over two years and in that time have delivered many business transformation and lean projects, rapid improvement events (RIEs) focused entirely on promoting effectiveness and efficiency in processes, increasing responsiveness to customers, removing waste and rework. We have won the support of a variety of staff to support us in the wider business transformation team.

Lean organisation development (OD)

We started the process by training a selection of staff from internal audit, OD and HR in lean Six Sigma OD. We have trained to ISO certification level. Initially we had six Green Belts and three Black Belts and one Master Black Belt through a combination of an online learning management system (learning strategies LMS) with direct 1:1 and team coaching. In recent months, we have trained up a further 24 staff to Yellow Belt status and are currently providing advanced training for at least another 20 staff to various grades on Lean OD.

The role of these staff is to support key business transformation projects that fit within the culture change agenda which is fundamental to the Council's programme.

Although we provide a foundation in lean Six Sigma OD, we focus almost entirely on bringing about behaviour change using simple, but highly effective cultural and OD techniques in change and team development. The transformation that has taken place is amazing and our commitment is to expand the programme so that this becomes the standard 'BAU' way of managing and leading improvement. We have challenged the old traditional style of change leadership and adopted a more transformational model.

Transformers and transactors

Research would tell us that public sector organisations have traditionally encouraged the 'transactional' type of manager to flourish and predominate over their counterpart – the transformational leader. The 'Transactional' type is someone with a keen and detailed knowledge of a function, probably more committed to 'command and control' than 'empowerment', who is good at transacting business, getting into the detail, reliant on analysis, focused upon short term goals, committed to ends rather than means, and will use established business knowledge to fix things when they go wrong. It is difficult to challenge the value and contribution of these people since this is how a great deal of this sector is managed. We rely on them for providing continuity and consistency. However, to bring about change required we need to even up the balance with transformational leaders who are willing to challenge the old ways.

Transformational change

Consider now the benefits of committing to a different way and training people to become more transformational in their outlook. Because of their challenging, independent,



ambitious and achieving outlook, they are keen to promote improvement. This dominant management style soon has a significant positive impact on the business culture. These people are referred to as 'transformational' managers, who adopt a stronger and more assertive role, who are committed to achieving results in the longer term and may appear to be a 'little off the wall' in terms of their ideas and creativity. They are complementing the good work of the more 'transactional type'.

Transformers are much more difficult to manage than the 'transactional' manager and their lead and challenge can be a headache for the top team member who prefers conformance and compliance, to challenge and the pursuit of creative ideas. Transformational managers will think out of the box and take action even before thinking things through. They will be impatient for success. Adopting a transformational role is critical if the organisation has to change, and change quickly. But simply replacing the safer transactional with transformational managers does not work. What is needed is a combination of these two varieties – one group to transact, to deliver to results, the other to transform the business. Ideally, we need a mixture of the two approaches in the same person and that is probably the ideal role for the internal consultant – transformational in outlook and transactional in delivery.

Every organisation must assess if it has the correct mix to ensure continuance while meeting the challenge of change. It is important for the organisation to consider the variety of change manager they want to sculpt and develop to shape their business for the future.

Review

The glue that holds the relationships between the four actors in the change arena: sponsors, consultants, implementers and stakeholders, is vital in supporting the effective implementation of change. Of course we need a firm structure to guide continuous improvement and culture change and that can be found in the use of 'Rapid Improvement and the Change Acceleration Process' (published in the Summer 2016 edition of *Management Services Journal* – see footnote 2). A structure for bringing about change must be accompanied by a firm commitment to work together in our respective roles in the change team.

Clearly, that success in change management does not reside in strict adherence to a methodology – no matter how sophisticated. Although the method, or roadmap, is important for guiding actions, the really important factor is managing relationships, expectations and the chemistry of the change team. This resides fairly and squarely with the internal consultant. It might entail being brave and taking a few risks, but this is the investment required in order to make change work. Finally, committing to building a strong change team is inspiring, motivating and a fantastic opportunity to shape a strong future for the organisation.

THE INTERNAL TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE LEADER

- Challenges, inspires and provides personal energy to a team
- Is an expert in change management (OD)
- Understands what makes people tick and understands how to change behaviour
- Is politically adept and can manage conflict
- Can present unpopular viewpoints
- Influences and persuade others with integrity
- Is a Coach and an educator
- Designs learning experiences
- Facilitates discussion
- Coaches others to improved performance

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Footnotes

1. *Managing at the Speed of Change*, Daryl Conner, Wiley 1997.
2. *Change Mastery*, Philip Atkinson. See *Management Services Journal* Summer 2016.
3. *How to Become a Change Master* Philip Atkinson, Spiro Press, 2006.

About the author

Philip Atkinson specialises in strategic cultural and behavioural change. For the last 25 years he has been engaged as a consultant supporting organisations in strategic development, leadership, organisational design, post-acquisition integration, Lean six-sigma, quality management and culture change. He has partnered with a variety of blue-chip companies in industries ranging from pharmaceutical to genetics, the automotive industry to finance and banking and from NHS bodies to Local Authorities. He regularly presents at conferences and workshop sessions and has written seven books on change management. His articles and can books accessed on www.philipatkinson.com Philip is Director of Learning Strategies Ltd. Tel 0131 346 1276 M: 07999 799286.