

Working with Change

Description:

This tool provides a checklist that will help identify whether your organization is comfortable with change and a list of recommendations to make the change process easier.

How it can be used:

If there is one thing in organizations that can be counted on, it is that change is constant. This can cause organizations to feel like they are always in a state of flux. It is important to understand whether your organization sees the need for change and is prepared, or whether it is 'change averse'. To reduce the challenges, incorporate a process that determines readiness, identifies possible pitfalls and outlines some required steps.

Honestly respond to the checklist to determine whether or not your organization is comfortable with change. Be prepared to identify areas that require improvements. Use the list of recommendations to help create your ideas.

SITUATION	Does this describe our organization?		Action Required
	Yes	No	
Adopting only 'proven' solutions and avoiding innovation.			
Trying to get full consensus and ending up with results that will not make the necessary difference.			
Absence of leadership and lack of support from board or management.			
Failing to establish and sell a clear vision and plan.			
Lacking a credible change process for implementation.			
Underestimating the resource demands on people.			
Failing to provide ongoing, open, two-way communication.			
Failing to provide the training or tools to get the job done well.			
Failing to reward excellent performance.			
Failing to recognize the importance of dealing with resistance.			
Failing to align organizational systems, structures, culture and people to the changes that are sought.			
Failing to involve staff in the implementation aspects in which they are knowledgeable or directly affected.			
Using a leadership style that does not acknowledge the challenges of change.			
Failing to recognize that transformational change is required.			

Use these recommendations to help your organization adapt better to change.

1. When a change is identified, ask why it is needed. How best could the benefits be communicated? How does it solve a persistent or difficult problem? Is it consistent with the organization's values?
2. Present the change in a clear and easy-to-understand manner. Show how it can be implemented to reduce confusion or fear.
3. Establish the change process as a series of small steps. Make it easy to get started.
4. Ask how it can be more easily implemented and who will champion the change. Find early adopters.
5. Ensure that the final product of the change (i.e., change in vision, project outcome, etc.) is clearly articulated and integrated with strategy. Show how it supports the mission of the organization.
6. The change must be led by a respected individual or team with a high profile and demonstrable commitment.
7. Set change goals that are attainable and measurable. Goals should be challenging but achievable.
8. Leaders should use a leadership style that is humble and courageous.
9. Create a 'learning' organization which understands that some things will fail; invest in training to create a climate of support. Make it safe to make mistakes.
10. Set up opportunities for consultation and feedback. Provide forums for people to ask questions of the change leaders. Encourage participation so people can be more involved and in control of their professional lives.
11. Provide communication with a clear understanding about why the change is necessary. Show how it will help people personally and meet their needs. Provide road maps for those who might lose their way.
12. Celebrate the past and provide opportunities to talk through feelings. Sympathize with negative feelings. Provide a graceful transition to the anticipated change.
13. Seek and work closely with informal leaders or 'influencers' within your organization.
14. Ensure the process is continuous, linked to outcomes, and has a realistic timeline. Understand that people often need a significant amount of time to adapt to change.
15. Recognize and understand how to deal with resistance factors. Seek out the resistance and address the factors with strength and understanding.
16. Use project/process teams that include participants from across the organization to assist in integrating the change across workgroups.
17. Empower staff and teams; link with accountability and performance indicators.
18. Ensure volunteers understand the process and have clear and specific roles.
19. Celebrate success in reaching milestones as well as the achievement of the overall process. Establish small wins and rewards early in the process to encourage and maintain momentum.
20. Conduct an assessment on the change process.
21. Have leaders model the attitude, skills and thinking desired by your organization.