**Tools for Change Management**

All organizations are destined to either perish through business failure from being left behind by the competition or have to accept that undertaking change is a natural part of business life in order to keep in line with customer requirements, the need for improvements or customer or fashion demands. Whilst there are a number of models around managing change it is stressed that any change management plan is destined to fail unless supported by a main sponsor, often the senior management of the organization, the organization’s stakeholders have an acceptance that such change is seen as being appropriate for the specific organization and its customer base will respond positively to the change. There are a number of reasons for change, either through incremental drift of lagging behind others or the need for a more large-scale change initiative through evolution or revolution. However before considering change - what type of change, how to do it, identifying who is to be involved or who is affected by any change two points need to be made. Firstly it is absolutely crucial to gain the most senior level support and commitment as any Change Management Plan is destined to fail unless supported by a main sponsor, often the senior management of the organization, the organization’s stakeholders and in some cases its customer base too. Secondly, acceptance is needed within the organization that such recommended change is seen as being appropriate for the specific organization.

Even on the basis of senior management support, the change process is likely to be time consuming and the management will have to consider the type of change strategy best suited to pursue the organization’s new direction. As such there are a number of factors that need to be considered in choosing how to implement the necessary changes as each approach will be appropriate in different circumstances. It should be stressed that those that are inconsistent with the demands of the situation - the people, the cultural setting and the business environment - will undoubtedly run into problems and fail to support the long-term required changes. The process of change implementation needs to be aligned and appropriate to the organization and an example of a three-phase approach is a realistic practical method of implementing a change programme is described below:

* The first phase covers Organizational pre-positioning with a focus on the preparations for change through communications with staff and stakeholders, it concentrates on preparation for the introduction of a changes to the organizational structure and the delivery of general change management awareness training to staff. This is an important phase aimed at preparing the organization for change, gaining commitment from those involved and managing the associated risks. This pre-positioning phase typically takes around six months on any meaningful size program.
* The second phase is that of the implementation of the change management plan. This phase concentrates on bringing into the reality the changes in accordance with the agreed plans and the business objectives. Often this phase does not just about include the introduction of new working methods and processes but covers any new senior management appointments which need to be initiated as part of a new organizational structure. This second phase can be up to a year in duration.
* The third and final phase has a focus on continual support and improvements as the changes become embedded within the organization and regarded as the “way to do business”. This longer-term third phase leads to the longer term and more difficult cultural change and in programme terms is typically of the over of 18 months. This phase is important for the changes to be successful within the transformed organization and for employees to understand their new roles and their contribution to success of the organization.

There are a number of factors that should be considered by management in choosing how to implement the necessary changes, as each approach will be appropriate in different circumstances. In agreeing an appropriate strategy or combination of strategies for change, the organization’s management will need to take into account the following factors:

* The degree of the opposition expected;
* The power base of the change initiator;
* The need for information, communication and commitment when planning and carrying out the change.
* The nature of the current organization’s culture and its likely response to change.

After considering the above factors there are five broad optional approaches which can be deployed in change implementation.



**Directive strategy:** Here the management can use its authority to impose the changes required and will be able to carry them out speedily. However, the disadvantage of this approach is that it is likely to increase resistance or even undermine change implementation.

**Expert strategy:** This approach is usually applied when a ‘technical’ problem requires solving, such as the introduction of a new IT system.
Negotiating Strategy: This approach involves a willingness to negotiate with individuals and teams affected by the change and to accept that adjustments and concessions may have to be made. Opting for this approach does not remove the management’s responsibility for the direction and initiation of change, but acknowledges that those affected have the right to have some input in the changes proposed, or that they have some power to resist it if they are not supportive. The advantage of this approach is that resistance to change is likely to be less however; the implementation time may take a longer period. Changing work practices in return for increased pay and/or other benefits is a classic example of the negotiating strategy.

**Educative strategy:** This approach involves changing people’s values and beliefs so that they support the change and are committed to a shared set of organisational values. Winning hearts and minds is a complex process that involves a mixture of activities, such as: communication, persuasion, education, training and selection. The advantage of such an approach, if successful, is that people will be positively committed to the change. In general this approach typically takes much longer and requires more resources than the previous three strategies.

**Participative strategy:** This strategy has a number of advantages: changes are more likely to be widely acceptable over the others, it promotes the active involvement of people and is likely to increase their commitment to and enthusiasm for the change process. Additionally there will be opportunities for both managers and employees to learn from the experiences and skills of this wide participation. Whilst this has a number of advantages due to the participation of staff, the identified changes are likely to take longer and require additional resources to support the change.