



**BEST PRACTICE GUIDE**

# Change Management: Building Team Buy-In

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***“Change is hard because people overestimate the value of what they have— and underestimate the value of what they may gain by giving that up.”***

James Belasco/Ralph Stayer - Flight of the Buffalo

## **Introduction**

Your business may recognise the need to change, perhaps by embracing new processes or implementing a new business solution. As much as the need for change is acknowledged, it's possible you may find your biggest challenge is getting company-wide buy in.

Resistance to change can be due to numerous reasons, but the underlying explanation is often connected to emotions. Perhaps it's the fear of the unknown or thought of learning different ways of working, or the apprehension that the change will result in a loss of position or control, shifting priorities or appearing inept. Other areas of concern could be that the change will bring a greater workload or cause turmoil if poorly executed. Such emotions may be new or influenced by past experiences.

It's clear that managing change is not a simple operation. To achieve buy-in, good leaders need excellent people skills such as empathy and strong emotional intelligence, coupled with clear communication skills. So armed with these skills how can Managers encourage change and ensure teams remain proactive? Read our 5 Tips for some helpful ideas.

## 1. Outline your vision

Communicate the change as a conversation. You will be dealing with people's emotions and typical corporate speak won't enable you to convey your message with sensitivity. Show employees where you are today and where you intend to be tomorrow.

Clearly state the 'what' and 'why' of the change, including the reasons why doing nothing is not an option. Try not to overwhelm your audience with too much information – go for a step change approach.

Be relevant. Present why this change matters to them, how it will positively impact their careers, how it will help the organisation, but also what is expected of various departments. Show how you plan to measure success, this will engender confidence that the project will not fizzle out due to a lack of monitoring, leaving everyone demoralised.



## 2. Establish a Task Group

Through involvement, people develop deeper understanding and commitment so form a team that will lead the charge and are aligned to the cause. You will need a coalition of influential and helpful people, whose power comes from a variety of sources, including job title, status, expertise and political importance. However, you can find effective change leaders throughout your organisation and they won't necessarily follow the traditional hierarchy.

Identify those likely to express their negativity for the project to others and cause widespread resistance. Often if you involve these people in the early stages and convince them of the benefits they can become your most useful advocates.

When assigning tasks ensure they play to the team member's strengths. It's important to be clear with each person about how their work is vital to the outcome.

### Benefits of a Task Group

- Stronger commitment to complete
- Improved project focus and management
- Ideas generation, assured decisions and direction
- Tasks and responsibilities shared
- Motivating and communicating positivity to wider teams.

### **3. “Don’t Eat the Whole Elephant in One Bite”**

To help nurture success, it’s best to implement change incrementally. Try to carry out elements of your change agenda slowly to give people time to become accustomed to your new ideas.

Set and communicate clear realistic objectives and timescales, creating short-term achievable goals to generate a number of quick wins.

Quick wins will help build the motivation to keep pushing forward, demonstrate project commitment and instil confidence in your teams.



### **4. Be Available to Listen**

Having Management on board gives a powerful message and aids credibility. The key decision makers must be visible and active sponsors, stay informed and connected. They will provide the needed resources such as funding, time and people as well as help alleviate any roadblocks or challenges.

It’s vitally important to address instances of resistance as unhappy employees can poison an entire project with their negativity. Having scheduled meetings with your teams will help, but also consider making yourself available via email or during certain hours of the day so employees can let you know when genuine challenges and concerns arise.

This shows you are empathetic to your teams concerns and are willing to work with them to find solutions.

## 5. Be Agile and Flexible

Just as your colleagues can resist change, sometimes business leaders can fail to recognise that the original plan isn't working the way they wanted it to. For a change to succeed, you can't afford to be arrogant and press on regardless, so solicit feedback. The comments you receive may mean you need to adjust your own strategy. Making changes will show you value the buy-in of your employees.

### Conclusion

Organisational change can bring many challenges. It may be stressful for all employees, from the top down. To foster buy-in, maintain employee morale through clear communication, feedback and employee involvement and active contribution. Delivering a successful project can bring wider benefits of improved team morale and productivity.



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