

Assessing and Planning Change

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The necessity of change is seldom debated. The effectiveness and implementation of change process will limit the effectiveness and motivation needed to lead. There are six key elements that must be addressed that are essential to creating the educational change that we want.

Vision & Direction	Knowledge & Skill	Motivation Buy-In	Resources	Action Plan Blueprint	Assessment Feedback/Data	Happiness Quality/Change
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The diagram on page three illustrates, not only the importance of effectively planning for change, but the possible results of failing to direct time and effort to each element. The diagram may be used as a diagnostic tool to help identify an area of focus in a business, classroom, school, district or agency. It may also be used as a planning tool that highlights areas that should be addressed prior to the implementation of any new program or system change. Leadership must be present throughout the entire process. From whatever point you find yourself, leaders must assume responsibility for removing the barriers to correcting the problems.

Effective planning, including these six components will reduce fear and allow workers more opportunities to find satisfaction in their work which translates to better relationships and a more productive workforce.

Vision and Direction

The "Aim, Purpose, Vision and Values" are all terms that are used for Vision and Direction. They relate directly to the notion that everyone must be focused on the Constancy of Purpose (Deming). This is primarily the leaders responsibility. Without a common purpose, people will do their job to the best of their ability "as they understand it". Therein lies the problem, if everyone is working hard, but working in opposite or contradictory directions, there will be little cohesion for the group. The group, whether an individual class or a school district, will be unfocused and confused as to what it is expected. Alignment is crucial! As Bill O'Brien, Former CEO of Hanover Insurance Company stated, "To empower people in an unaligned organization can be counter-productive. Unless people share the same "mental models" about the business reality in which they operate, empowering people increasing the burden of management to maintain coherence and direction."

Values, like the Aim, Purpose and Vision, must be embedded into the organization. In successful companies and market leaders, the day-to-day management focus on the delivery of customer values is tantamount to organizational success. The organizational values must become guiding principles for major decisions and the day to day operations. As Yogi Berra, former hall-of-fame catcher for the New York Yankees once said, "If you don't know where you're going, you might end up someplace else." How true this is in organizations that lose their aim or fragment their efforts.

Knowledge and Skills

Providing everyone with the necessary knowledge and skills is, obviously, a necessity. In practice this is not understood and/or properly resourced. Initial training is seldom the problem. A lack of understanding of the time, complexity of the knowledge and skills and appropriate follow-up creates an inequality of knowledge and an excessive variation in skill and ability. An additional pitfall is assuming that the workers have the requisite knowledge and skills, just because they were employed and have the right credentials. Everyone must receive the training that they need to perform the job that is expected of them.

Workers need to comprehend all of these components to be properly trained and highly effective. How else will they be able to be productive in helping to improve the system, if they don't understand the function of all departments, not just their own.

This area must also include problem-solving, conflict-resolution and relationship building skills. If people don't know how to get along, cooperate and work for the good of the system, there will not be much chance of becoming a market leader.

Motivation and Buy-In

Motivation and Buy in refers to the belief that the change will improve teaching and learning. The aim and purpose are closely tied to the motivation and buy-in. The program implementations and/or changes must be consistent with the aim of the system. Leaders that are congruent in action and words increase the belief that this specific change process will be embraced.

Customers and employees want to know "How does what you want me to do benefit me? The answer to this question, in most cases, will have a direct correlation to the amount of "Motivation and Buy-In" to all of the components identified in this article. Throughout the change process, everyone should see opportunities for a greater sense of belonging, accomplishment and recognition, freedom of expression and creativity and enjoyment. These needs must be addressed in order to provide the motivation to continue through the difficult, sometimes tedious, times. Additionally, people want to know that their hard work and dedication will be not only recognized, but remembered.

Resources

Resources refers to the commitment and delivery of the time, money and materials to create and implement the change. This is often planned for, but with budget cuts and new priorities, it is imperative that management creates contingency plans to help "stay the course" and provide long term resources. This may be the simplest of the components to present and understand, but it is not easy to find or provide all of the necessary resources.

Action Plans

A well-written plan is essential for long term change. Leaders often assume that everyone understands the "how" and "why" of continual improvement plans. As with Vision & Direction, it is the leader's responsibility to continually emphasize, focus on and/or remind others of the plans that are in place. The plan should include, but is not restricted to the following questions:

- How will we implement and/or change?
- How is this program or change consistent with our aim or purpose?
- What will be implemented or changed?

- How will the implementation take place? What steps?
- What knowledge and/or skills do we need?
- What do we already have?
- What will we need to acquire?
- What is the motivation or buy in?
- What resources will be needed?
- How much time?
- By when? What is the deadline?
- How much money?
- What materials technology, etc.?

Feedback, Assessment & Data

This would appear to be an obvious component, but meaningful data is not always a priority, nor is it always easy to come by. Without data to tell us how we are doing, we have an illusion of effectiveness. One needs only look at the technology field to know that what once was effective, is no longer the case. Building a quality product and counting on it to provide long-term revenue is laughable. Not only does the product become technologically obsolete, the prices drop dramatically when the newer product is released.

The following questions are provided as a guideline for determining what data is needed and how to collect it.

- Are we doing what we say we are doing? How do we know?
- Is what we are doing cost effective?
- Who has the information that we need?
- What is the best method (Statistics, surveys, etc.) of gathering the data?
- What data do we have to support the need for change?
- What data do we have to support the projected effectiveness of this change?
- What data do we need to collect to determine the effectiveness for our program?

The purpose of data is not to blame, but to determine if the business or school is on course to accomplish the goals in a manner that is consistent with the Aim, Purpose and Values.

Some businesses and schools may find themselves lacking in several of the areas. This is not uncommon. This diagram is intended to help determine where a classroom, school or district is in the change process. Dr. Deming taught that up to 95% of all our problems are based in system difficulties. With that in mind, the diagram is not intended to fault find with others, only to identify any components that must be addressed to continually improve teaching and learning. It is the responsibility of all concerned to work together to correct any deficiencies or "holes" in their processes.

As Henry Ford was quoted on many occasions, **“Don’t find fault, find remedy.”**

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Vision & Direction	Knowledge & Skill	Motivation & Buy-In	Resources & Materials	Action Plan Blueprint	Data & Assessment	=	Happiness Quality
	Knowledge & Skill	Motivation & Buy-In	Resources & Materials	Action Plan Blueprint	Data & Assessment	=	Confusion Conflict
Vision & Direction		Motivation & Buy-In	Resources & Materials	Action Plan Blueprint	Data & Assessment	=	Fear of Failure
Vision & Direction	Knowledge & Skill		Resources & Materials	Action Plan Blueprint	Data & Assessment	=	Passivity Mediocrity
Vision & Direction	Knowledge & Skill	Motivation & Buy-In		Action Plan Blueprint	Data & Assessment	=	Frustration Overload
Vision & Direction	Knowledge & Skill	Motivation & Buy-In	Resources & Materials		Data & Assessment	=	Resentment Divisiveness
Vision & Direction	Knowledge & Skill	Motivation & Buy-In	Resources & Materials	Action Plan Blueprint		=	+/- Emotions Illusion