

# The Hard and Soft Sides of **Change** **Management**

Tools for Managing Process and People



**Kathryn Zukof**

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**atd**  
PRESS

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*For Max and Will*



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# 1

## The Challenge of Change Management

### **Managing Change From the Hard Side With Bervin Cares**

*To Mary, vice president of administration, the plan to restructure finance jobs at Bervin Cares seemed perfect. Bervin was a large social service agency with more than two dozen sites across the county. Each site employed a junior accountant who handled routine financial transactions, such as reviewing and approving invoices, submitting payroll hours for processing, and responding to finance-related inquiries from the agency's social workers and staff. The idea was to create a centralized finance service center that would manage these tasks for the entire agency. The junior accountant position at each site would be eliminated, and the employees who currently held these jobs would transfer into newly created roles in the service center. Junior accountants with less experience would be assigned to finance service representative jobs, fielding incoming calls from social workers and staff. Those with more experience would process transactions and research and address complex inquiries that service representatives were unable to resolve. And one junior accountant would be promoted to the job of service center leader, charged with managing the newly assembled team.*

*The idea made so much sense from a business perspective. According to reports from other social service agencies that had implemented the same structure, after deploying a service center Bervin could expect to resolve routine financial inquiries with greater speed, consistency, and accuracy, as questions would now be handled by a dedicated team that focused exclusively on responding to incoming calls. Bervin would process financial transactions faster and more accurately too, because the employees handling these tasks would no longer feel distracted by social workers and staff who stopped by with simple questions.*

*The plan ensured better coverage during periods of vacation and sick time, because service would be provided by a service center team, rather than by a lone individual responsible for supporting an entire site. And there might be opportunities for cost savings as service center operations became more efficient. Although no one would lose their job due to the restructure, the agency expected that over time it might be able to reduce overall headcount through attrition.*

*Convinced that this was the right path, the Bervin executive team set an aggressive schedule to begin service center operations. They asked Mary to act as project manager for the initiative, and she assembled a small team, comprising the agency’s financial controller, a space planner, and her assistant, to get the job done. Mary’s assistant created detailed project plans that helped them track progress. Table 1-1 provides a summary.*

**Table 1-1. Mary’s Action Plan for Change**

Action	Completed?
Announce the plan to the administrative director at each site, and let them know that the junior accountant who currently reported to them will transfer into the service center.	✓
Decide which junior accountant will be assigned to which job.	✓
Notify the junior accountants about the new structure and the new jobs they will be moving into.	✓
Renovate the physical space where the service center will operate.	✓
Configure the new phone system.	✓
Train service center staff on the new phone system.	✓
Send an email to social workers and staff announcing the service center and the new phone number they should call for service.	✓
Brief the executive team on a weekly basis to keep them up to speed.	✓

*Despite the aggressive schedule and the need to coordinate so many moving parts, the finance service center launched right on time and without a hitch. And everyone involved seemed so supportive and accepting. No one voiced any pushback. In fact, the junior accountants and administrative directors said nothing at all to Mary as they were informed of the changes. Not a peep.*

*And yet, one year later, Mary and the Bervin executive team wished that they had never heard of the service center concept. Since the day the center launched, social workers and staff grouched about being forced to call “an anonymous hotline” just to get a simple answer to their questions.*

*“Why would you think it’s more efficient for me to call the hotline?” Anisa complained when she ran into Mary at a Bervin fundraising event. Mary knew she needed to keep Anisa happy. Just last year alone, Anisa had raised*

more than \$500,000 in donations. “I used to just stop by Ernie’s desk,” Anisa continued. “He knew what I needed. He understood how we worked here.” Mary surmised that Ernie was the junior accountant who had been assigned to Anisa’s site before the restructure. “Now I call the hotline,” Anisa grumbled. “I’m put on hold, and when some stranger finally gets on the line, they have no idea what I’m talking about. I have to explain everything to them. They say they need to research my questions. They’ll call me back. And that takes hours. Ernie used to have an answer for me in minutes. How is this better?” Mary had to admit, she had heard this objection from staff at some of the other sites.

Complaints from the administrative directors at each site had reached a fever pitch too. Apparently, some social workers and staff refused to call the service center, turning instead to their administrative directors for answers to even the most basic questions. “I can’t get any work done anymore,” an administrative director griped to Mary during a biweekly status call. “I don’t know what you think service center staff are doing,” he continued, “because no one here is calling them. I get all their questions now. I can’t do my job when I have to play junior accountant too.” The other administrative directors on the call murmured their assent. “That’s happening here too,” one reported. “Here too,” yet another concurred.

Mary was worried. Absenteeism among service center staff was through the roof, and almost 40 percent of the original service center staff had already resigned. The first resignation came just one month after launch, when Ava, the new service center leader, a real up-and-comer handpicked by Mary herself, explained in her exit interview that managing a service center just didn’t fit with her career plans. “I love Bervin,” Ava explained. “But I want to be the CFO of a nonprofit someday. I’m not getting the kind of experience I need managing the service center.” Mary wasn’t sure she agreed with Ava’s assessment, but Ava’s decision was firm. So she left.

The grumbling quickly extended into other areas across the agency too. As soon as the finance service center was announced, rumors started circulating about more “shoes to drop.” After all, if Bervin was setting up a finance service center today, could an HR service center, or an IT service center, be far behind? And forget accuracy. New service center employees had been hired to replace exciting team members, and these rookies were making mistakes—big ones. Just last month the agency had to shell out more than \$10,000 to fix an error made by a new hire on the service center team. “How could things go so wrong,” Mary sighed, “when every step in the project rollout seemed to go so well?”

Mary was right. In some respects, the project was executed flawlessly. There was a clear vision of what was supposed to be accomplished and a convincing rationale for moving forward with that vision. Executive leaders supported the change and were kept up-to-date throughout the entire rollout. The assembled project team seemed to have all the right technical competencies required to get the job done. And even with an aggressive schedule, the project team plotted out all the key tasks and managed them closely to ensure they were completed right on time. There was a training plan, and that worked without a hitch. There was a communications plan, and at least some of the people who needed to know about the change were notified right on schedule. When viewed purely from a perspective of planning, assigning resources, and managing project tasks and deliverables in a disciplined way, the initiative was a spectacular success. Except, of course, it wasn't.

Unfortunately, the project team failed to consider the pervasive sense of loss, threat, and uncertainty that members of the Bervin community might experience as the finance service center launched. They didn't stop to think:

- Will junior accountants feel like they've been demoted when we assign them their new service representative job titles? Will they resent losing the opportunity to perform a variety of job tasks as they transfer into roles where the work is more focused and specialized? And will they feel like they have lost their sense of self-determination and control when they are merely informed of the positions they have been assigned, rather than being offered the chance to apply to service center roles that fit with their career interests and aspirations?
- Will the administrative directors at each site balk at losing direct reports? And will they experience a loss of job status and lose precious time in their busy workday if social workers and staff start directing basic inquiries to them?
- How will social workers and staff feel when we tell them they will no longer receive personalized attention on-site and instead need to call a hotline? Will they become less efficient? Will they lose their sense of status?
- Will staff across the agency feel threatened as they speculate that more restructuring might be planned? Will they question how we made the decision to proceed with the service center approach in the first place? Will it feel "top-down" to them? Will they wonder

how that fits with the culture of collaboration and inclusiveness they previously have enjoyed at the agency?

In short, when viewed from the perspective of anticipating and accounting for the sense of loss, threat, and uncertainty the new structure might present, the initiative at Bervin Cares was a spectacular failure.

What the project team at Bervin Cares seemed to miss is a lesson I figured out over the course of many years helping to lead change initiatives at work. There's a hard side to change management and a soft side, and you need to address both, simultaneously, for your change initiative to succeed.

Fundamental project management principles need to be in place to drive your change initiative forward. These are hard-side practices, such as setting achievable deliverables and timelines; securing the right resources; establishing clear roles, responsibilities, and authority; and putting in place sound mechanisms for monitoring progress and making adjustments. And steps need to be taken to establish an environment of psychological safety, trust, and predictability, wherein the sense of threat and loss associated with the change is acknowledged and appropriately addressed. These are soft-side practices, such as engaging with and involving those most affected by the change, establishing frank dialogue and discussion, and providing multiple channels for expressing ideas and concerns. The project team at Bervin Cares seemed to master the hard side of change as they implemented the finance service center, but they flubbed the soft side. And it cost Bervin dearly as a result.

Now, let's consider an organization that focused effectively on the soft side of managing change and see how well it fared.

### **Managing Change From the Soft Side With ProxyCo**

*When ProxyCo hired Anil to serve as director of the company's newly formed learning and development team, Anil understood that the situation was sensitive. The company didn't have a professional L&D function to speak of. Sure, there were Patty and Nasma, both engineers by training, who led technical and compliance education programs for the company, but neither of them had any formal L&D background or expertise. That didn't stop them from applying for the director position when the opening was posted on ProxyCo's employment website. But the company needed someone with leadership development and learning technology experience, so ProxyCo hired Anil away from the top L&D position at one of its competitors.*

Anil knew that Patty and Nasma might resent not being selected for the director role and might even feel scared that they lacked the skills ProxyCo seemed to value now in the L&D function. So, Anil wanted to make sure Patty and Nasma felt appreciated and recognized for the knowledge and experience they did bring to the department. Although neither was selected to be the director, Anil wanted them to have plenty of opportunities to lead anyway.

Now, as part of the L&D transformation, ProxyCo executives wanted to launch a leadership development curriculum and introduce some new learning technologies to their compliance training programs. “This is your chance to really shine,” ProxyCo’s vice president of HR, Marisol, announced to Anil one afternoon, about two months into his tenure with the company. Anil reported directly to Marisol, and he appreciated how much space she had provided to him so far to explore what ProxyCo employees might need from L&D.

Anil was surprised to see Marisol being unusually direct with him that afternoon. “There’s a lot of pent-up demand for leadership development at all levels,” Marisol explained. “The entire executive team is behind this. Start with frontline supervisors. Then expand the program to include midlevel managers. Then move on to the senior executive team.” Anil nodded as he listened to Marisol. “And we need to get moving with the compliance programs,” Marisol continued. “Your background is perfect for all this. We’d love to see you convert the compliance program to an e-learning platform, maybe develop some micro-learning sessions. And we need online performance support tools too. This is important to us. And you’ll be great.” Anil appreciated Marisol’s encouragement. He had to agree with her—his background was perfect. And he knew just where to start.

Anil met one-on-one with Patty and Nasma and summarized the conversation he’d just had with Marisol. “This is a terrific opportunity for you to broaden your L&D skills,” he counseled each of them. “We’re—you’re—going to transform L&D! Go out and research ideas for leadership development programs and learning technologies, and then let’s talk.” Excited by the opportunity to contribute to real transformation at their company, Patty and Nasma reached out to organizations known for their L&D best practices. They interviewed L&D leaders in these companies and enthusiastically reported their findings to Anil each week.

Meanwhile, Anil embarked on what he affectionately dubbed his one-year grand listening tour. He met with leaders at all levels across the company and solicited their ideas for establishing a leadership development curriculum. He

*set up a supervisory task force comprising new supervisors and asked them to research and brainstorm ideas for frontline supervisory training. And he established a technology committee with the company's engineers and asked them to investigate and recommend technology-assisted learning programs.*

*Marisol checked in with Anil from time to time, typically asking him how he was adjusting to work at ProxyCo. Anil reassured Marisol that things were moving along well and that the L&D transformation was under control, so Marisol never asked for details. After all, they could cover specifics during Anil's annual performance review.*

*Initially, the buzz was incredibly positive. ProxyCo wanted to transform its L&D function, and here was everyone across the company eagerly participating in that change. Everyone had ideas to share, and it was clear that all suggestions were welcome.*

*Of course, there were a few collisions. The supervisory task force contacted a company known for its leadership development best practices, and was surprised to learn that Patty had met with representatives from the same company just a week earlier. And one day during her one-on-one meeting with Anil, Nasma complained bitterly: Apparently, the technology committee had recommended an e-learning vendor, and Nasma disagreed with their selection. "Who do they think they are?" Nasma protested. "They don't work in L&D. We do. We get to pick. Not them."*

*Still, for the most part, Patty, Nasma, and the various committee members welcomed the opportunity Anil had provided to contribute ideas. And Patty and Nasma seemed to support Anil's leadership and the direction he said he was taking the ProxyCo L&D department. They wondered when the company would get there. But things still looked and felt good . . . or at least OK.*

*Looking back at his first year with the company, Anil sighed with a mixture of satisfaction and relief. He had handled a delicate situation, one he had seen other leaders stumble through, with finesse. So Anil was stunned when he received what seemed to be a barrage of critical feedback during his annual review. Marisol told Anil she was deeply disappointed that the company still wasn't offering training to its frontline supervisors. In fact, there weren't any new programs to speak of—nothing for supervisors, midlevel managers, or executives, and no movement on technology-assisted learning either. "We have new supervisors making rookie mistakes, and it's our fault we haven't provided them with the tools they need to succeed," Marisol complained. "You haven't*

*even announced that there's a program coming. Sure, there are lots of committees. But we're just spinning here. Nothing is actually moving forward."*

*Anil objected to the feedback about nothing happening. "You wanted transformation," Anil argued. "Just look around you. I have everyone talking about leadership development. Everyone is talking about technology. Everyone feels included. Everyone is participating."*

*"But what are they participating in?" Marisol snapped back. "There's all talk and no action. That's not what we needed at all."*

What did Anil miss in his efforts to transform the L&D function at ProxyCo, especially when on the surface he seemed to get so much so right? After all, Anil solicited input and ideas from across the ProxyCo community, and he knew that effort would help build buy-in and support as the L&D transformation unfolded. Anil understood that ProxyCo supervisors and managers had valuable information to share about the challenges they faced as leaders, and he focused on listening to these key stakeholders' needs and concerns. Anil created opportunities for the company's engineers to get involved; he wanted to make sure they felt excited about, and included in, what was changing too.

Within his own department, Anil focused considerable attention on addressing and minimizing the sense of threat and loss that the change initiative might represent for Patty and Nasma. Anil understood that Patty and Namsa might resent not being selected for the director role, so he found ways for them to lead anyway. Anil sensed that they might feel like their jobs were at risk, because they lacked the kind of experience and expertise ProxyCo needed in its new and improved L&D organization, so he provided them with opportunities to contribute and build needed skills.

Anil did an admirable job managing the L&D transformation from the soft side. He created an environment of inclusion, involvement, and psychological safety. He ensured that those most affected by the change had opportunities to contribute, felt like they knew what was going on, and had the chance to develop competencies needed to succeed in the new L&D organization.

Unfortunately, Anil—and his manager, Marisol—ignored the hard side of change management, and that led to an unacceptable delay in producing needed results. At its core, the L&D transformation could have been viewed like any initiative that needs oversight from a project management perspective. Anil, in his role as project leader, and Marisol, as project sponsor, could have clearly defined expectations and deliverables—what exactly needed to be accomplished,

by when, and what steps needed to be taken to get there. Marisol provided a hint about what was needed, but she didn't really explain the rationale behind her directives to Anil, nor was she clear about expected timeframes. And Anil didn't seem to ask either. That led to confusion and disappointment as Anil and his team failed to move the transformation forward fast enough for ProxyCo's executive team.

Anil could have set clearer roles, responsibilities, and decision-making authority for the various employees and teams contributing to the transformation effort. But he didn't, and team members were understandably annoyed when they discovered that multiple people were working on the same thing.

Anil could have assembled a project team with enough expertise to develop and deliver supervisory training—perhaps hiring a vendor to supplement Patty and Nasma's developing skills. But he didn't, and so Anil's project team lacked the skill set it needed to deliver results in the expected—albeit fuzzy—timeframe.

Marisol could have required that Anil provide periodic updates on the status of the leadership development and learning technology implementation, so they could discuss adjustments Anil needed to make to meet expectations. But she didn't, and so Anil was blindsided by the feedback he received during his annual performance review.

When viewed from the hard side, the L&D transformation at ProxyCo failed. Sure, people felt good, at least for a little while. But that feeling began to fade as employees realized they weren't receiving the L&D services they expected and deserved.

## **Change Management—A Dance of Hard and Soft**

A lesson we can learn from Bervin Cares and ProxyCo is that effective change management requires focus on both the hard side and the soft side of change. We can manage an initiative like clockwork—clearly defining project deliverables; assigning roles, responsibilities, and authorities; establishing a team with the right skill set; and tracking and monitoring progress—and still stumble with our change management efforts. And we can focus purely on managing the people issues—finding ways to minimize the sense of loss that change might present for others, ensuring that those most affected by the change understand what is going on and why, and providing opportunities for people to be heard and to contribute—and stumble here too. Change management, done effectively, requires us to integrate the hard and the soft.

But let's take a step back. What is change management anyway?

We can find many definitions by doing a quick search on the internet. Here are just a few:

- “Change management is the capability for enabling change within an organization by using structured approaches to shift individuals, teams, and organizations from a current state to a future state. Once initiated, change follows its own nonlinear path in response to uncertainties, reactions, and guidance from those involved. There are tools, resources, processes, skills, and principles for managing the people side of change that practitioners should understand and implement in order to achieve preferred outcomes” (Association for Training Development 2019).
- “Change management is the process, tools and techniques to manage the people side of change to achieve its required business outcomes. It is the systematic management of employee engagement and adoption when the organization changes how work will be done” (ProSci 2020).
- “Change management is the systematic approach and application of knowledge, tools and resources to deal with change. It involves defining and adopting corporate strategies, structures, procedures and technologies to handle changes in external conditions and the business environment. Effective change management goes beyond project management and technical tasks undertaken to enact organizational changes and involves leading the ‘people side’ of major change within an organization. The primary goal of change management is to successfully implement new processes, products and business strategies while minimizing negative outcomes” (Society for Human Resources Management 2020).

Whichever definition you prefer, some common themes appear. Change management in the workplace focuses on people, processes, and organizational outcomes (Figure 1-1).

**Figure 1-1. The Three Themes of Change Management**

People	Processes	Organizational Outcomes
Understanding what happens to individuals as they encounter and deal with change at work	Using a systematic approach and set of tools, techniques, and processes to help people navigate that change	Embarking on change to achieve a desired end goal for the organization

Put simply: When we manage change in the workplace, we use a systematic approach to ensure we address both the soft, people side of change, and the hard, organizational-outcome side of change.

But addressing the soft side and the hard side, and integrating the two, present their own challenges. Let's look at each in turn.

## The Challenge of the Soft Side

I bet there are times when you and your co-workers have felt optimistic and enthusiastic about a change that was coming. Maybe your organization had been using outdated software that didn't have all the functionality employees needed to get their jobs done. Now new software was finally on its way. It's exciting, right? But as you and your co-workers got closer to actually using the new software, you might have noticed people feeling anxious and a bit unsettled. That's normal, too. After all, your co-workers might be thinking:

- “I really knew what I was doing using the old software. How long will it take me to get up to speed on the new? Will I be able to learn it?”
- “Is it going to take me longer to do my job while I am getting up to speed on the new software? Are things going to get harder here for some period of time while I figure this out?”
- “I know I didn't like the old software, but why did the company pick this new product to replace it? What other options were considered? Why didn't they ask for my opinion?”

I certainly have been in this spot before. I was working for an organization that was about to make a huge acquisition. We were going to purchase one of our major competitors, and as a result our company would double in size. I was excited for my company and thrilled that I had been asked to work on the acquisition integration team. This was the right move for our business and could mean big things for all of us. Maybe big things for me too. And yet I wondered, “When the merger is complete, will I still lead learning and organizational development for the company? Or will the head of L&OD at the company we're buying end up in the top spot?” I googled the other company and checked out the leadership development programs they described on their corporate website. They looked good—really good. Were they better than ours? Hmmmm. Forget heading up L&OD. Will I even have a job when all of this is over?

That's the challenge of the soft side of change. When things are changing at work, it's natural for people to feel apprehensive and unsettled. After all, despite all the positives that change can bring, there are risks too. When change is happening in the workplace, employees might feel anxious about:

- **Loss of competence:** Will I be able to learn how to do the work that's now required of me? Can I learn fast enough?

- **Loss of efficiency:** Will my work take more time now? Will I lose free time?
- **Job insecurity and instability:** Is my job at risk? Will I like my job after the changes go into effect? Will I still have a job?
- **Loss of feeling “in the know”:** Do I know what’s going on here at work?
- **Loss of feeling included:** Do my opinions matter? Is my expertise valued?
- **Loss of status:** Will the level of respect I receive at work diminish because of this change?
- **Loss of relationships:** Will I still have friends here and get to interact with them?
- **Loss of connection to the organization’s larger culture and mission:** Does this change really reflect the company I thought I worked for? Do I still fit in here?

That’s right. Change, even its most positive form, can also usher in a real sense of loss. And as a result, it’s not unusual for people to feel anxious and apprehensive. They may even question the value of the change and begin to actively resist it. Perhaps it’s not so much that people don’t like change. It’s that they don’t like loss.

The challenge for the soft side of change management is to be sensitive to that potential for loss—to understand that feelings of loss and threat are a natural, and possibly even appropriate, response to change. The challenge is to find ways to minimize the real or perceived sense of loss employees may experience, where that is possible. And the challenge is to acknowledge and help employees navigate through the unavoidable losses, whether they are temporary or permanent.

We do this by:

- Communicating honestly, openly, and frequently so employees understand what’s going on—so they feel like they can anticipate and predict what will happen day to day.
- Acknowledging that work might feel more challenging and less efficient while people are adjusting to the new way things are done. We look for ways to shorten that period of inefficiency as much as possible.
- Helping employees build the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to successfully perform their work as their jobs and work tasks are changing. We look for ways to shorten, as much as possible, the period of incompetence they may be feeling.
- Providing lots of opportunities for employees to contribute their ideas and their expertise, so they feel like they still matter at work.

In the chapters that follow, we'll look at tools and approaches that can help you address the challenges of the soft side of change. These tools include:

- The change management team (chapter 6)
- The transition monitoring team (chapter 7)
- Stakeholder analysis (chapter 9)
- The communications plan (chapter 12)
- The training plan (chapter 13)
- The resistance management plan (chapter 14)

That's the soft side. What challenges does the hard side present?

### **Your Organization and the Soft Side of Change**

What do you do in your organization to address the soft side of change?

- Do you have a culture of open communication? Do employees trust that leaders are being honest and transparent about changes that are planned? What do you do to nurture this kind of environment?
- When you're about to embark on a change initiative, do you consider the tangible and intangible sense of loss the changes may create for employees? What do you do to help employees navigate through that period of loss?
- Do you have a learning culture in which people embrace opportunities to change on the job? What does your organization do to help employees develop and refresh their knowledge and skill set?
- What mechanisms does your organization provide for employees to contribute their ideas and expertise during change initiatives? How does your organization help employees feel included and involved?
- Which tools for addressing the soft side of change do you use in your organization? Which ones might you consider implementing for your next change initiative?

## **The Challenge of the Hard Side**

As difficult as it might seem to address change from the soft side, it can be just as challenging to get the hard side right. I was working with an organization that restructured one of its business units. The directive from senior leadership was clear: Cut headcount. Streamline processes. So they brought in an external consultant—fortunately this person wasn't me—who created elegant organizational diagrams and provided compelling research about what other companies

had done. But the consultant, and the organization, never gathered input from anyone who actually worked in the unit targeted for restructuring. They failed to account for key tasks employees in the unit performed—work that didn't appear in the consultant's diagrams and research. They failed to comprehend the scope of the work the business unit actually performed and they underestimated what needed to happen to transform how that work got done. In the end, after the restructure was complete, the company discovered it needed to increase headcount, not decrease staffing. And for some time, while we untangled the mess that had been created, work in the unit proceeded at a much slower pace. Processes hadn't been streamlined at all.

Plenty of times, we seem to lose focus on why we're embarking on the change in the first place, what it is that we are trying to accomplish, the scope of what needs to change, and who has the expertise to help us get there. And when we lose that focus, we fail to achieve the organizational outcomes we were shooting for. Here are some of the missteps organizations make as they struggle with the hard side of change:

- **Failing to clearly articulate the end goal or provide a convincing rationale about why the goal is important for the organization.** I once worked with a company whose leaders said they were “going global” because real estate was so expensive in the northeastern United States. Employees dragged their feet and understandably questioned the stated rationale. After all, if land was too expensive in the Northeast, why couldn't they just open up operations in other parts of the country where real-estate prices were more moderate? That certainly seemed easier and less risky. It wasn't until the organization more clearly defined and communicated the market opportunities the company could tap into by “going global” that employees finally got on board and started moving the initiative forward.
- **Underestimating the scale and scope of the change.** I worked on a project for replacing outdated technology in an organization. The project team created a plan that clearly defined all the steps involved in swapping out the software. But they failed to consider the business processes that needed to change for the new software to work effectively. And once they realized the extent to which business processes had to change, it became clear that new jobs needed to be created and that some jobs should be eliminated, too. So the organization needed to be restructured. The project

was like an onion—as soon as one layer of issues was addressed, another was revealed.

- **Failing to include people with the right skills and experience on the project team.** Have you ever seen a project fail, where people said, “I knew this wasn’t going to work. All they had to do was ask me. But they didn’t.” Sometimes this happens when the organization fails to include on the project team people who have a deep understanding of the current state—people who know how things currently operate and why things are done the way they are. Or this sometimes happens when the organization fails to accurately define the scope of the project. People who have the skills needed to address the missing components are simply left out. It’s disappointing when a project fails even though people with the right knowledge and expertise are readily available to help set the project on a more successful course.
- **Failure to account for the amount of extra effort employees must exert to cope with the change.** Many times on a change initiative, things become a lot harder before they finally become easier. It just takes longer to get work done, because the new way of doing things is, well, new. Sometimes change initiatives fail when employees get frustrated by how inefficient they’ve suddenly become. So they drop the new procedures and develop workarounds, saying, “This change just isn’t working.” This happens most often when project leaders fail to honestly communicate to people that work will become harder for a while, that the difficulties are temporary, and that the end state will make the period of inefficiency worth muddling through. And this also happens when organizational leaders fail to plan for and make adjustments for the extra burden navigating through the change placed on employees.
- **Failure to monitor results and adjust as lessons are learned.** So often, especially when we face the crush of project deliverables and looming deadlines, we fail to take a step back to see what’s working, what isn’t working, and what we need to adjust so we can meet our goals. Instead, we keep working the plan, moving things forward, even if it’s clear that the plan ultimately won’t help us accomplish what we really need to achieve. Change initiatives fail when we don’t pause often enough to review the project and make needed adjustments.

You can think of change from a project management perspective. Like a project, change requires defined end goals, the right people, manageable

workloads, and pauses for reflection and adjustment. The challenge for the hard side of change is to focus, stay organized, secure the right resources and use them in the right way, and keep things moving forward, while at the same time remaining flexible and open to learning.

We do this by:

- **Clearly defining what needs to be accomplished:** What is the end state everyone should be working toward? We need to provide a convincing rationale for why that end state matters.
- **Accounting for the entire scope of the change as we map out the steps we'll take to reach the end goals:** For the organization to reach its desired outcome, we need to consider how a change in one part of the organizational system will affect other parts.
- **Including people with the right skills and experience on the project team:** We need to define the skills that are needed to work on each step of the initiative, and we need to enlist people with those skills to work on the project. And we need to make sure we clarify roles, responsibilities, and the authority of those working on the project.
- **Considering the extra effort employees need to exert to work in the changing environment, and adjusting what's expected to what can actually get done:** We need to make sure project schedules and expected deliverables are realistic. And we need to limit change fatigue by planning changes at a realistic pace and frequency.
- **Pausing periodically, considering what's working and what isn't, and adjusting our efforts so we keep on track:** We need to view our change initiative for what it is—an opportunity for the organization to learn. Our organizations will try some things that won't work. We need to stop, acknowledge that, and move on with something different. And our organizations will try some things that work spectacularly well. We need to recognize that too, and weave more of that throughout our change initiative.

In the chapters that follow, we'll look at tools and approaches that can help you address the challenges of the hard side of change. These tools include:

- Project charters (chapter 3)
- Project plans (chapter 4)
- The core project team (chapter 6)
- The red team (chapter 8)

- The RACI matrix (chapter 10)
- Action reviews (chapter 16)

That's the hard side. But the experiences at Bervin Cares and ProxyCo, the two organizations you read about at the beginning of this chapter, show that there's a third challenge we need to address as we try to help our organizations manage change.

### **Your Organization and the Hard Side of Change**

What do you do in your organization to address the hard side of change?

- When you begin work on a change initiative, do you have a clearly articulated goal you're shooting for? Do you understand the outcomes the change is expected to produce and why this is so important for your organization?
- What steps do you take to make sure you understand the scope of what's changing, and that you've considered how a change to one component in your organization might affect other components?
- How do you make sure you've enlisted the right people with the right skills to work on the change initiative?
- Are project schedules realistic? Is your organization experiencing change fatigue?
- What steps do you take in your organization to pause periodically, examine what's working and what isn't, and make needed adjustments to your project plans? How are you learning from your organization's successes and mistakes?
- Which tools for addressing the hard side of change do you use in your organization? Which ones might you consider implementing for your next change initiative?

## **The Challenge of Integrating the Hard and the Soft**

Here's something else I learned from leading successful change initiatives and from reflecting on those that were less successful. It's not enough to use soft-side practices to deal with people issues associated with change, and hard-side practices to focus on the project management component of change. Things turn out much better when we find a way to integrate the two. That is, people are much more likely to adopt and embrace a change when we focus on soft-side issues while we are using hard-side tools. And likewise, we're far more likely to make progress on the business outcomes we're striving for when we focus on hard-side issues while we are using soft-side tools.

Change management requires us to effectively integrate both the hard and the soft. Effective change management requires a dance of sorts—rigorous project management practices (hard-side tools) deployed in a soft way, and care and concern for people (soft-side practices) executed in a hard way.

## Competencies for Managing Change

As you learn more about managing the hard and soft side of change, you probably will discover that you already have lots of relevant knowledge and experience you can draw from.

- Have you ever worked on a project for which you needed to draft a clear statement about what you would deliver—the outcome you were shooting for?
- Did you create a detailed action plan that described the steps you would take along the way to help you get there?
- Have you ever taken the lead on a project and needed to figure out who else should be on your project team—who could you work with that could help you achieve the project goal?
- As you worked on your project, did you pause periodically to think about what was working and what wasn't—and did you make adjustments along the way to keep your initiative on track?
- Did you keep your manager and other leaders up-to-date on how the project was proceeding to make sure you had their support?

Congratulations. You already have demonstrated many of the skills needed to manage the hard side of change. In this book, we'll cover tools and processes you can use to apply these skills in a more structured way. You may find that using these tools and processes will help you achieve more consistently positive results as you work on change initiatives in your workplace.

And how about these skills and experiences?

- Are you empathetic and a good listener?
- Do you communicate clearly and transparently in a way that inspires others to get involved?
- Are you skilled at helping people voice their ideas and concerns—either one-on-one or in group settings?
- Have you helped negotiate and resolve conflict in your organization?
- Have you helped people build new skills and capabilities?

- Have you coached anyone to help them make a change in their personal life or at work?

Congratulations, again. You've already demonstrated many of the skills needed to manage the soft side of change. In this book, we'll cover tools and processes for applying these skills in a more systematic way as you work through your change projects. You'll find that using these tools and processes will help you create an environment in which your colleagues begin to feel more comfortable with, and supportive of, changes as they occur at work.

## About to Begin?

Are you about to begin working on a change initiative in your organization? Think about:

- What are some of the soft, people-side challenges you might encounter as you work on this project? Which approaches and tools can you use to help people understand what's changing, and why and how they're affected; develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to succeed in the changed environment; and feel like they were listened to and that their needs and concerns matter?
- What are some of the hard, project-management-related challenges you might encounter? What do you plan to do to ensure you clearly define the outcomes you're shooting for and the rationale for those outcomes; establish a comprehensive and realistic path for moving the project forward; clarify the roles, responsibilities, and authorities of those working on the project; and continuously adjust your plans based on lessons you learn along the way?
- How can you make sure you stay focused on the overall business goals you're shooting for as you address the soft, people-side of change? And how can you ensure you maintain an environment of inclusion, trust, and psychological safety as you address the hard, project management side of change?

Are you ready to get started? Let's begin by looking at the end. To manage change—actually, to manage just about anything—we need to clearly articulate the outcome, the business result, we're trying to accomplish. And we need to create a realistic plan for achieving that outcome. We need to clearly define the target we're shooting for and the path to get there.

That's what we'll look at in section 1. We're going to learn how to create a project charter that describes what's changing, what isn't changing, and

the rationale for embarking on our change initiative in the first place. And we'll see how we can create project plans that help us achieve that desired outcome. We'll learn how to use hard-side tools to launch our project and set it moving in the right direction. And we'll see how we can apply these tools in a soft way.

**Learn more. Check out:**

Sanchez, P. 2019. "The Secret to Leading Organizational Change is Empathy." *Harvard Business Review*, December 20. [hbr.org/2018/12/the-secret-to-leading-organizational-change-is-empathy](https://hbr.org/2018/12/the-secret-to-leading-organizational-change-is-empathy).

Sirkin, H.L., P. Keenan, and A. Jackson. 2005. "The Hard Side of Change Management." In *Harvard Business Review* 83:108–18.

# About Kathryn Zukof



Kathryn Zukof is a learning and organizational development practitioner and educator with more than 30 years of experience in industries ranging from manufacturing, to higher education, to technology services. Her work focuses on helping organizations create and implement innovative approaches to leadership development and succession management, foster an environment of continuous learning, and plan and navigate through transformational change. Before she transitioned to a career in L&OD, Kathryn held management roles in client relations, product development, and marketing in the technology services sector.

Kathryn has a PhD in social psychology and an MBA in marketing. She has taught graduate and undergraduate courses in industrial and organizational psychology, research methods, and marketing.

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# Change isn't going anywhere. Learn how to manage it.

Kathryn Zukof offers practices and approaches to help you and your organization roll out, receive, and manage change effectively. Namely, Zukof shows that you need to manage the process (or the “hard”) side and the people (or the “soft”) side of change and find the sweet spot between the two. When you integrate both, you and your organization can make change less of a hit or miss affair. Successful change management means deploying sound project management techniques that increase the odds of achieving the outcomes of your change initiative. It also means helping employees understand the need and vision for change so they feel less threatened by it and become excited and energized by what's ahead.

In this book, learn how to:

- Define the change and how to get there.
- Involve the right people in the right way.
- Build support, understanding, and awareness.
- Assess progress and adjust along the way.

Capturing the inherently messy nature of workplace change—from technology implementations, mergers and acquisitions, and business transformations to office relocations and more—this book provides tangible insights, tools, and practices to help you and your organization tackle change challenges.

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