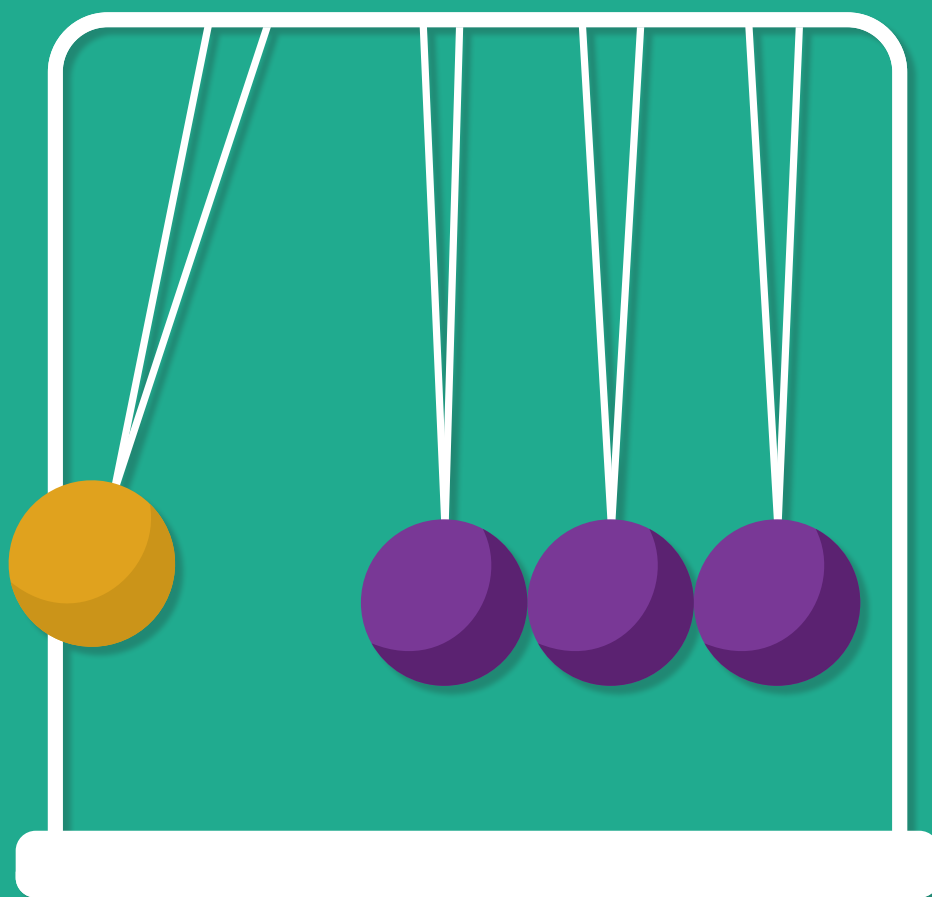


Create Successful Organizational Change

Scott Span



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Change happens regardless of whether anyone wants it. That is true in life and the workplace. A hybrid work environment, fewer engaged and committed employees and resources, and challenging new business priorities and processes are a few of the changes organizations have been experiencing. As a result, leaders and employees have been forced to rapidly adapt how they perform their work.

Take the current workplace environment: The pandemic challenged most everyone. And workplace challenges have been intensified with the Great Resignation and quiet quitting. To be successful, companies must place a renewed focus on improving the employee and customer experience. That is where people-focused change management is a priority for long-term business success now and for the future.

Most people don't like change. It brings uncertainty and ambiguity. It surfaces unpleasant feelings and triggers emotions. It means learning and implementing new behaviors and developing fresh ways of thinking. Change requires shifts in mindset and perspective and adapting to and adopting new ways of doing things. Companies often call on me, as a change and transformation specialist and leadership coach, to guide and coach those leading and affected by change to shift their mindsets and perspectives and strengthen, develop, and model behaviors necessary for successfully adopting change.

Change is also a choice. As management consultant W. Edwards Deming said, "It's not necessary to change. Survival is not mandatory."

The change journey can be bumpy and messy. But the rewards of achieving individual and organizational goals are wonderful. To successfully meet the desired outcomes, individuals leading change initiatives must plan carefully and follow a process and structure to support those affected. And talent development and other change management professionals can provide support throughout the process and change journey.

In this issue of *TD at Work*, I will:

- Define change management, its benefits, and why it's critical today.
- Outline six parts of the change journey and how TD professionals can help.
- Convey the importance of addressing the transition and change.
- Offer guidance on communicating about change.
- Share how to measure whether the initiative is successful.

Understanding Change Management

People define the term *change management* in many ways—some simple, some complex. It is a structured approach to transitioning individuals, teams, and organizations from a current state to a desired state. Change management can apply to situations such as business impacts from external events, downsizing, growing an organization, or adding new people or technology. Companies can apply change management concepts to improve the employee and customer experience.

For the purposes of this issue, change management is an organizational process that aims to help employees understand, commit to, accept, and embrace changes—either planned or unplanned—in their current workplace environment.

Benefits of Change

When carried out well, change initiatives can satisfy stakeholders and positively influence the workplace. An organization can obtain benefits from change management by:

- Enhancing the employee experience
- Improving process efficiencies
- Providing a great customer experience
- Increasing employee engagement
- Minimizing resistance and increasing agility
- Driving innovation
- Reducing costs

Today's Change Management

According to the Association for Talent Development's report *Change Management: Talent Development's Critical Role*, a typical organization went through four to six change initiatives in 2021, and two-thirds expected that amount to increase in the next five years.

People are burned out, yet leaders need to keep their businesses going. That requires people-focused change management. Leaders need to use empathy, transparency, and communication to help their people and organizations move forward, especially during times of change.

While already a steep hill to climb, successful change management can be even more challenging in a hybrid or remote work environment. Employees may not have access to some of the usual routes for learning about why change is necessary, such as chatting face-to-face with colleagues or their managers. That can contribute to them feeling disconnected from the change. Change leaders also may feel at a disadvantage when they don't necessarily have a good read on the pulse of the organization: What are employees really feeling? Is the message getting through? Has a negative voice hijacked the change dialogue? Driving commitment and adoption of change in a hybrid or remote work environment requires creativity and a heightened focus from stakeholders.

Some organizations and change leaders turn to technology as the primary source to help solve their change conundrum. And while technology can help them understand where employees are in terms of their engagement, commitment, and adoption, technology alone does not guarantee successful change acceptance. It can support the communication tools a company is using most widely within a stakeholder population. However, what's most critical is the organization and those leading the change initiative understanding the human side of change—employee feelings, the pace at which they're accepting change, and their mental state—and then responding in a timely and supportive manner.

Elements of the Change Process

The change journey comprises six elements: governance, processes, skills, communication, engagement, and measures. When a company brings those together, it is more likely to achieve change and the positive results associated with it. As a TD professional, you may take the lead and facilitate the change journey. If not, there are ways you can support and assist the company, stakeholders, and workers throughout.

Governance

American social psychologist Kurt Lewin says, “If you want to truly understand something, try to change it.” Achieving successful change requires understanding and a process and approach to move people from awareness to adoption.

Creating a structure to govern and manage the change process is critical for success. However, governance and operations are not one and the same. It's imperative for an organization to establish a clearly defined governance structure and operating model to support execution.

Governance is the set of roles and responsibilities, processes, and policies that come together to ensure that the work associated with the change initiative is coordinated, effective, and aligned to the organization's mission and strategy. Good governance balances autonomy and accountability through clear ownership of roles. The goal with governance is to coordinate, not control.

Governance Team

A change management governance structure consists of affected stakeholders, from leaders to individual contributors, across various affected stakeholder groups. Often an executive or senior leader is at the helm of the governance structure and has final decision-making authority and overall responsibility and accountability for the change's success. They may be known as the executive sponsor. Next is the executive leadership team or steering committee, comprised of senior leaders. The executive sponsor may or may not be part of that group. The steering committee owns the change initiative and offers high-level strategic direction. On a frequent basis, it monitors, sanctions, and legitimizes the change across the organization and among stakeholders. The committee is often responsible for decisions regarding funding and costing, vendor selection, resource allocation, and approval of large-scale process or technical change requests.

The next layer of governance is the project team, those with day-to-day responsibilities for managing and executing the change initiative. This project team, which reports to the steering committee, often includes project or program management functions. It is responsible for overall oversight of the change initiative, including execution of the daily activities and deployment of any new policies, processes, or technology that support the change. This group also provides overall coordination and integration of changes across business departments and functions. The members collaborate with the steering committee to set the scope and schedule. They determine the processes and approach for executing the tasks associated with the change initiative; track and resolve issues, risks, and changes; and escalate as needed. The group serves as a central point of contact between the layers above them and other parts of the organization. The project team is also responsible for promoting visible support and leadership and communicating to stakeholders the importance of the change.

Next in the governance structure are the change agents—also known as change ambassadors or change champions. They are a representation of affected business stakeholder groups and functions. Change agents are influential and trusted people within the organization and their relevant stakeholder groups. They are experts in