

4 STEPS for Successful Organizational Change

1 Assess Readiness

Assessing organizational and employee readiness for change requires a keen understanding of the workforce's knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviors. This will help inform strategic workforce planning decisions and enable HR leaders to anticipate potential obstacles to a successful implementation.

Questions to consider:

- How does our leadership model fit with the change?
- What aspects of our culture will help support the change or what will hinder it?
- What are the behavioral and skill fits/gaps in our current workforce?

2 Lay the Groundwork

At the core of any successful change initiative is a strong partnership between HR and senior leadership. Working together, this coalition can identify and prepare the change management resources to establish and communicate a clear vision, manage culture shift, conduct strategic workforce planning and reduce interpersonal conflict. When this stage of the change process is well executed, it yields a robust roadmap all stakeholders can understand and follow.

Questions to consider:

- Do our people understand how their roles will/will not change in the new environment?
- Is our communication strategy aligned with our employees' behavioral styles and needs?
- What will the new structure look like and who do we need in the new structure?
- How will success be measured and leveraged?

Supporting sources: Cornell HR Review, Changeboard.com, American Management Association

3 Implement and Adapt

HR must approach implementation with a structured and systematic method. This may mean rolling out aspects of a change initiative in stages and evaluating the process with each step. Correcting direction is an ongoing and important part of implementing change and HR must be willing to embrace this approach if adjustments are necessary.

Questions to consider:

- How will success at each stage be measured and leveraged?
- Do we have contingency plans for each stage in case adjustments need to be made?
- What else could compete with this change initiative that requires resources (time, \$\$, people, space, technology, etc.)?
- Is this program still offering us a competitive advantage?

4 Sustain Momentum

Many of the steps highlighted in the planning and implementation stages – understanding your workforce, reducing resistance and communicating effectively – should be mirrored in sustaining a change. HR professionals are tasked with helping the change initiative become a corporate norm, so it is seen as part of the culture and business model, rather than a fad. To achieve this, HR must keep other change agents invigorated (to avoid burnout) and continue to partner with leadership to reinforce the new agenda and prevent old habits from reemerging.

Questions to consider:

- What is the mechanism by which we can encourage and collect employee feedback and ideas?
- What programs/plans can we introduce to help institutionalize the change over time?
- Which additional employees can we leverage as change agents?