

Driving Organisational Change

by Geoff Roberts MSc, FCIWEM, MCMI

“The one constant is change” – and perhaps especially so in these difficult times. These tips from Geoff Roberts, a change leadership consultant who also has extensive experience of working as a customer of and alongside other consultants, will help you make the most of your investment in consultancy.

7 Tips to help your change succeed

1. Lead as well as manage

Hundreds of books have been written about the need for change management and I am not going to disagree because any project needs appropriate management. Yet project management is not enough – it is about processes and the biggest challenge in change is that it affects people. This is where leadership comes in – be active in showing the future and the way to get there, support individuals and groups, listen as well as speak, be there when you are needed.

2. Value and use resistance

You will meet resisters – they have their own reasons for not wanting to change and those reasons make absolute sense to them (if not you!). Listen to them – have they perhaps spotted something that has been missed? Have they got personal challenges (lack of training, concerns about future security, etc) that you can help them with? Resisters can cause more damage than the supporters can help. Treat them carefully, respectfully and individually – a ‘convert’ will be worth their weight in gold.

3. Do what you can, where you can, when you can

I have yet to see the path of any change effort go smoothly; some things prove more difficult than expected and others simpler. For a big change you might think of it as lighting little fires all over the organisation – some will die out and you will need to come back to them but others will flare up and those you fan and help spread more widely.

4. Ignore losses, consolidate wins

If you focus on losses or failures, they get bigger and more overwhelming, you then pull in even more losses. So find ways to ignore these losses. Shift your attention to something positive, stop talking or thinking about them. What can you do to consolidate your successes? Write them down or put them on a wall. Keep a record of your wins. Talk about them to everyone you can. Celebrate them. Make a habit of finding and focusing on the wins of others. The more attention you put on success, the more success you get.

5. Communicate, communicate, communicate...

THE most important issue. Everyone involved in the change needs to know why it is happening, what the future is going to be like, how it will affect them and their colleagues (don't underestimate 'solidarity'). It's not just about newsletters, much more effective is routine face-to-face discussions in formal and informal (canteen, coffee machine...) settings – use your apostles (see Tip #6) to spread the word and explain what's happening. And remember that you have two ears but only one mouth – this is where you sense the resistance that is so useful for Tip #2.

6. Recruit sources of power

The power you can exercise is in direct proportion to your ability to meet the needs of your people. Power comes in many different flavours and they are all needed to create effective change as different individuals will respond to different power bases (the fact that you are the boss may matter more to you than them!). Your, and your apostles', Personal Power will be much more valuable than all the Formal Power you can muster – the latter might create compliance, the former commitment.

7. Find and nurture your apostles

You can't do it all yourself, you need a small and growing number of individuals who are totally with you and actively supporting you. These advocates need constant support – ‘feed and water’ them because your change really does depend on them. Keep them close to you, allow them time and actively encourage them to get out on the shop floor convincing others through the sheer commitment they show. Finally, reward them for their efforts.

Geoff Roberts runs Hidden Resources, a specialist personal team and organisational change consultancy based in Leeds. He describes himself as a Catalyst, helping others to identify and make the changes they need in their organisations. He has over 25 years' of experience working with individuals, public sector, private and public companies and the third sector.

Geoff would love to hear from you – get in touch at geoff.roberts@developingminds.co.uk or on 0845 1235890. Read more about Hidden Resources at www.hiddenresources.co.uk