

The Change Management Journey

John W. Moran, Ph.D.¹

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“Change doesn’t just happen. It takes planning and participation – and sometimes a little push.” - Katie Taylor²

Making an organizational change, such as implementing a Performance Management System or an organization-wide Quality Improvement program, is a process that takes careful planning and execution. Unfortunately, many times we try to do it too fast and skip key implementation steps, start off on the wrong foot, communicate mixed messages on what it is, get derailed when we meet unplanned opposition, a key supporter leaves, or we just abandon the idea since it falls out of favor. When any of these things happens, the change gets derailed and the people in the organization view it as a failure or another unsuccessful attempt at change. Every time a change failure happens, the trust the organization has built up with its employees deteriorates and, then, finally any change announced is viewed skeptically or is ignored. It has been shown that approximately 50 percent of all organizational change initiatives are unsuccessful, highlighting why knowing how to plan for, coordinate, and carry out change is a valuable skill for managers³.

Before starting any organizational change initiative, the leadership should understand where they are currently and determine whether they want to improve the current state or move to a different *Stage of the Change Management Journey* as shown in Figure 1. Knowing where you are starting from will help in developing the reasoning for changing, the strategy to be deployed, and the messaging to the employees.

¹ John W. Moran, Ph.D. is a Senior Quality Advisor to the Public Health Foundation and a Senior Fellow at the University of Minnesota, School of Public Health in the Division of Health Policy and Management. A member of PHAB’s Evaluation and Quality Improvement Committee 2013 – 2015, Adjunct Professor Arizona State University College of Health Solutions’ School for the Science of Health 2013 – 2016.

² <https://www.atlassian.com/blog/strategy/change-management-steps>

³ <https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/change-management-process>

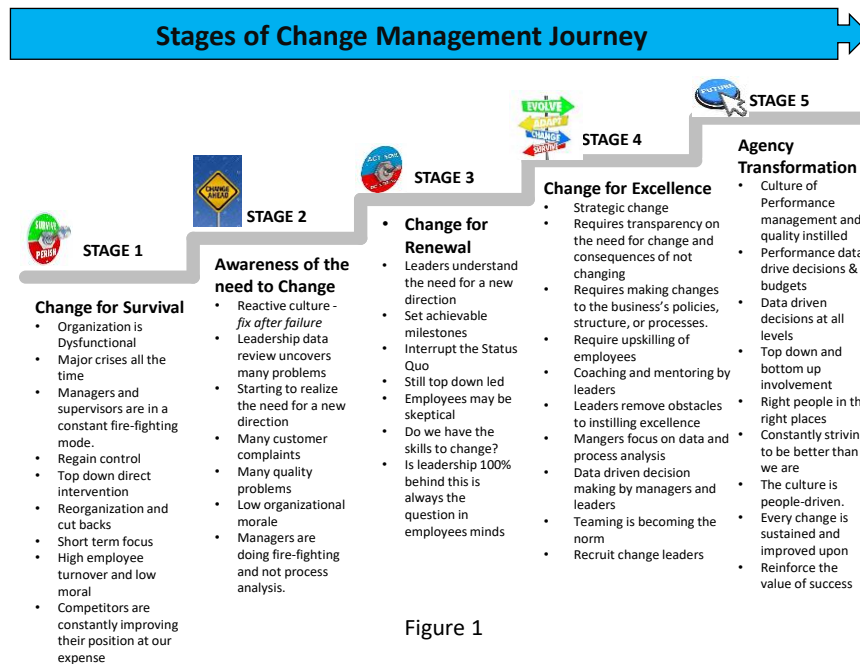


Figure 1

Characteristics of each of the Stages of the *Change Management Journey*:

Stage 1 Change for Survival:

- Organization is dysfunctional
- Major crises all the time
- Processes are undefined and do not operate correctly
- Processes that are defined are not followed consistently and they are not measured or monitored
- Workers receive little training and learn on-the-job by those doing it wrong
- High employee turnover and low morale
- Managers and supervisors are in a constant fire-fighting mode
- Customers regularly complain about poor product quality or bad service
- Costs are constantly increasing and resources are wasted
- Competitors are constantly improving their position at our expense

Potential Change Approach:

- Tell the organization the truth – where we are and why
- Communicate how we will regain control
- Start a top-down direct intervention
- Develop a short-term change focus
- Set up short-term measurable bite size changes
- Quickly reorganize and eliminate or restructure problem areas
- Get the right people in the right places

- Once the organization has stabilized develop a focused long term change strategy

Stage 2: Awareness of the need to Change:

- Leadership review of performance data uncovers many problems
- Starting to realize the need for a new direction before it is too late
- Living in a reactive culture where problems are fixed after the event has happened - *fix after failure*
- Many quality problems in all areas
- Many customer complaints
- Low organizational morale
- Managers are doing fire-fighting and not process analysis

Potential Change Approach:

- Prioritize the data and problem areas
- Determine if any organizational structural changes are required
- Do a root cause analysis of the highest priority problem areas – any common causes among the various areas? If so, focus on those
- Focus on the common causes across the organization and determine some short-term solution to implement quickly
- Develop Standard Operating Procedures for areas having short-term fixes
- Inform the employees and train them to implement and sustain the solutions
- Monitor the solutions to determine if they are making improvements
- Make any adjustments needed quickly to get back on track

Stage 3: Change for Renewal

- Once Stage 2 is stabilized, leadership should understand the need for a new organizational direction
- Determine what is the strategic change the organization needs to make
- Create and communicate a road map of the renewal change approach
- Develop real and relevant short and long-term change objectives
- Develop measures to track the progress of the change objectives
- Managers are starting to do less fire-fighting and more process documentation and root cause analysis of mistakes
- Quality problems are starting to get under control and getting permanent fixes that are sustained
- The organization begins to realize the benefits of having standardized processes since they are producing consistent outputs in a timely fashion with improving customer satisfaction.
- Major processes have been fully defined with linked boundaries that include defined process ownership and specific process metrics with benchmarks

Potential Change Approach:

- Develop a clear message on the what, how, and when of the change renewal process
- Ensure employees know and understand their roles and support the change approach – develop a roadmap
- **Train employees in data, quality improvement, and process analysis**
- **Ensure all major processes are standardized which makes it easier to monitor and train new and existing workers**
- **Develop dashboards for all major organizational areas and have monthly review meetings to understand what progress has been made**

Stage 4: Change for Excellence

Once the organization has achieved and stabilized Stage 3, they can make the Strategic Change to Excellence.

- Strategic change to Excellence positions the organization for the future
- Requires making changes to many business policies, organizational structure, or processes
- Data driven decision making is the norm
- Teaming is starting to become the norm across the organization
- Employees receive regular job and quality related training
- Customer focus and satisfaction are key metrics that are monitored

Potential Change Approach:

- **Develop baseline data for each process to help start and monitor a continuous quality improvement program**
- **Recruit and train change leaders to help coach the organization through the change**
- Develop dashboards to track organizational, process, and customer measures and use this information as a basis for process improvement decisions
- Apply statistical methods to the data and display it graphically
- Develop Key Process Indicators (KPI) on most processes

Stage 5: Agency Transformation

When an agency does a total transformation, they have inspired leadership to employ a Performance Management and Quality Improvement System that seamlessly weaves and integrates quality into its culture, people, processes, technology, and resources to deliver to its customers the best quality public health services they need and desire.

- Constantly focused on improving the way it conducts its business and delivers its products or services by incorporating both breakthrough and incremental performance and quality improvement at all organizational levels.
- Developed a culture in which continuous performance and quality improvement are common place and result in better service to the customer
- A quality improvement approach (such as PDCA⁴) has been instituted throughout the organization and is utilized in making process improvements identified by the process data
- Process owners are identified for all processes and monitor performance data and document changes made based on the data
- For every process the following questions can be answered by the process owner:
 - What is the measure measuring?
 - What is the baseline for this measure?
 - If no baseline exists, can one be obtained or developed?
 - Will this measure be used to understand how the process is functioning?
 - Is the measure directly linked to the current strategy?
 - Will this measure positively impact the process under study?
 - Will the measure positively impact the customers if there is improvement in what is being measured?
 - Will employees have personal incentives to improve what is being measured?
 - Are improvements in what is being measured likely to result in better service?
 - Are the resources available for improving what is being measured?
- All processes are now documented using a standard procedure
- All processes demonstrate increased efficiency and effectiveness in meeting customer needs since they have been documented and measured.
- New employees are trained on how to do the process and quality improvement methodology, and effectively use data generated by the measurement system.

Potential Change Approach:

- Train everyone in the organization so that they understand how to measure and monitor a process and can use data and information to prioritize where improvements need to be made
- Consistently develop new change leaders
- Use a combination of Quality Improvement Tools, Modular kaizen⁴, Kaizen, and Lean on all processes for continuous improvement, improved customer value, and the elimination of waste on a regular basis.

⁴ http://www.phf.org/resourcestools/Pages/Modular_kaizen_Dealing_with_Disruptions.aspx (accessed 6/18/24).

- A Tri-Metric Matrix⁵ has been developed for all processes. The Tri-Metric Matrix helps to guide the decision maker to measure the important aspects of a process's capacity, performance, and outcomes.
- Technology and automation are being used on processes to improve efficiency, where applicable

Agency Transformation is difficult to attain and sustain since leadership, management, and employee turnover can cause a void in the support for this approach and the organization can slip back to a previous stage.

Whatever Stage Your Organization is at there is always *The Fear of Change*:

No matter what change stage your organization is at or moving towards, when any organizational change is announced the employees immediately fear the worst, and feel insecure.

Leadership of any organizational change needs to have a clear and concise communication plan in place before making any change. Consistent communication keeps employees informed and reduce the fear of the change initiative.

⁵ http://www.phf.org/resourcestools/Pages/Modular_kaizen_Dealing_with_Disruptions.aspx, PP. 69-76 (accessed 1/20/2020).