Leading Large Scale Change Initiatives

Change is a process that takes time and perseverance. Understanding the theoretical principles of making change, how different individuals respond to change, the predictable stages individuals go through in adopting a change, and how to successfully address the concerns people have as you implement a new initiative can make your experience more successful.

**Principles of Change**

Certain principles of change, derived from educational research, play out in a variety of situations, regardless of the venue.

**Change is an ongoing process, not a short-term event.** Change requires ongoing support and resources, and it takes time. Sometimes we get discouraged when we don't see immediate results. It is important to have realistic expectations about the time it will take to see significant progress and to make sure other stakeholders in the community understand that as well.

**Change occurs in individuals first, then in organizations.** The best program in the world won't succeed unless the people who are implementing it are ready and willing to make it a success. However, individual change is difficult if the organization is not supportive of the change. For example, if a school’s schedule doesn't have room for a program, it won't happen. Therefore, as a change agent, you need to pay attention to individual implementer's needs and concerns as well as to work with the organizational leaders to successfully integrate your initiative into the organization's environment.

**Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM)**

Individuals go through predictable stages of concerns as they implement a new initiative. These concerns are delineated in the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) (Hall & Hord, 1987⁴), as shown below.

Implementer’s concerns may range from early concerns that focus on "self" (Stages 1 and 2) to concerns about the "task" of implementing the new initiative (Stage 3) to concerns about the "impact" of the initiative they are implementing (Stages 4-6). Implementers may have concerns in more than one stage at a time. For example, they might have concerns about the "how-to's" of managing the implementation (Stage 3) as well as how it will affect their constituents (Stage 4). The CBAM Stages of Concern are described below.
The CBAM Stages of Concern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Expressions of Typical Concerns</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0: Awareness</td>
<td>I am not concerned about this innovation.&quot; “I don’t really know what this innovation involves.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1: Informational</td>
<td>I would like to know more about it.&quot; “There is a lot I don’t know about this, but I am reading and asking questions.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>2: Personal</td>
<td>How will using it affect me?” “I’m concerned whether I will be able to do this well.” “How much control will I have over the way I use this.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>3: Management</td>
<td>I seem to be spending all my time getting materials ready. I'm concerned we will need to spend more time in meetings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4: Consequence</td>
<td>How is this going to affect my constituents/students/clients? How can I change this to have more impact?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Collaboration</td>
<td>How can I relate what I am doing to what others are doing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: Refocusing</td>
<td>I have some ideas about something that would work even better than this.</td>
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Addressing Concerns in Different Stages of Change

Change agents need to adapt to different individuals’ changing concerns over time in order to make effective organizational change. You will need to notice when people’s concerns change. Below are some strategies for addressing stakeholders’ needs at different stages of concerns (CBAM).

Strategies for Addressing Different Stages of Concern

Stage 0—Awareness Concerns

- Involve stakeholders in discussions and decisions about new change initiatives.
- Provide current data on the need for the change initiative.
- Share enough information to engage interest, but not overwhelm.
- Acknowledge that a lack of awareness is expected and that no questions about the change initiative are foolish.
- Encourage unaware people to talk with colleagues who know more about the change initiative.

Stage 1—Informational Concerns
• Provide clear and accurate information about the research-based change initiatives.
• Use a variety of ways to share information—verbally, in writing, and through any available media. Communicate with individuals and with small and large groups.
• Have people who have used the change initiatives in other communities visit with your change team.
• Help the change team members see how the new change initiative would relate to their current practices, both in similarities and differences.

Stage 2—Personal Concerns
• Legitimize the existence and provide opportunities for the expression of personal concerns.
• Use personal notes and conversations to encourage individuals and reinforce people’s sense of adequacy.
• Connect change team members with others whose personal concerns have diminished and who can be supportive.
• Show how the change initiative can be implemented in small steps, perhaps as a pilot, rather than one big leap. Establish realistic, attainable expectations.

Stage 3—Management Concerns
• Clarify the steps and components of the change initiative and implementation.
• Provide training and answers that address the small specific "how to" issues that are often the cause of management concerns.
• Demonstrate exact and practical solutions to the logistical problems that contribute to these concerns.
• Help implementers sequence specific activities and set timelines for their accomplishment.

Stage 4—Consequence Concerns
• Provide implementers with opportunities to visit other communities/organizations where the change initiative is being effectively used and to attend conferences or workshops on the initiative.
• Give individuals positive feedback and needed support.
• Share information about and include these individuals in any evaluations of process or outcome.

Stage 5—Collaboration Concerns
• Provide opportunities for these individuals to develop skills for working collaboratively.
• Bring together people, both within and outside the organization, who are interested in collaboration.
• Help the collaborators establish reasonable expectations and guidelines for the collaborative effort.
• Use these people to provide technical assistance to others who need assistance.
• Encourage the collaborators, but don't force collaboration on those who are not interested.
Stage 6—Refocusing Concerns

- Respect and encourage the interest these people have for finding a better way.
- Provide these individuals with information about the core aspects of the research-based program that need to be retained in order to assure effective outcomes.
- Help these individuals channel their ideas and energies in ways that will be productive and constructive rather than counterproductive.
- Encourage these individuals to act on their concerns for improving the initiative.
- Help these people access needed resources to accomplish the improvements and put them into practice.
- Be aware of and willing to accept the fact that these people may replace or significantly modify the existing initiative.