Article

Building Your Change Strategy: How to Ensure that Your Effort Is on the Right Track

(Task I.E.1)

Performance losses from finger-pointing and blame often permeate union-management relations. In this article, we will outline the keys to building successful union-management partnerships that will dramatically improve your organization's performance and simultaneously increase employee morale.

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Being FIRST
INC

Introduction

No executive in their right mind would compete in the marketplace without a clear business strategy, yet many undergo multi-million dollar change efforts without a clear change strategy. No wonder so many change efforts fail to produce their expected ROI.

While your business strategy determines what in your organization needs to change, your change strategy clarifies how you will make those changes happen.

Building an effective change strategy will accelerate your change and reduce its cost. It will increase your effort's efficiency, remove unnecessary or redundant activities, and engage your people optimally.

In this article, we will identify the three key aspects of a comprehensive change strategy and the ten core elements you will need to consider in developing your own.

Overview of the Components

Change strategies address three general topics about your change: its content, people, and process. Content refers to what in your organization needs to change—strategy, structure, systems, technology, business processes, products, services, or culture. Content describes the "business solution" being designed and implemented, and typically gets the most leadership attention.

The people component of your change strategy includes people's emotional reactions to the change, how to address the changes in mindset, behavior, and culture that your future state requires, how to engage your people in design and implementation, and how to ensure commitment and capacity to change.

Your people strategies are as important as the content of your change. Without your people being ready, willing, and able to make the change, your business solutions will never get implemented successfully. Most change efforts fail because of lack of attention or skill applied to the people dynamics.

Often, leaders delegate these issues to the Human Resource Department, which deals with them separately from the content changes. This approach does not work! Attending to the people dynamics should be done as an integrated component of the design and implementation of your content.

The process component of your change strategy sketches out the roadmap to get you from where you are today to where you need to be to achieve results from your change. The process sets your change up for success; moves you through the design of sound solutions, testing, and planning of those solutions; implementation, all the way through to full realization…attending to all of the people and cultural issues along the way. The key to success is consciously designing your change process to handle all the content and people issues together as one effort.

The following graphic shows the three components of change strategy as a three-legged stool. All three components are necessary for your change strategy to stand on its own.

Elements of Change Strategy

There are ten core elements of change strategy. Not every change requires attention to all ten, so tailor them to the type and magnitude of your change effort. As you consider the list, notice that they address content, people, and process.

Content of Change
The organizational focus of the change (structure, strategy, business process, technology, culture, product or service)

People in Change
Handling the human dynamics of change: people's mindsets, commitment to change; emotional reactions, behavior, engagement, relationships, politics; cultural dynamics impacting the change

Process of Change
The way in which change is planned, designed, and implemented; adjusting to how it unfolds; its A-Z roadmap, governance, integration strategy, and course corrections

Values and Guiding Principles

Change is all about taking a good idea or new direction and making it real. All change proceeds from "concept to pragmatics" becoming more and more tangible along the way. Your values and guiding principles are the essence of your new direction that must form the foundation of the tangible future state you are trying to create.

This element makes values and guiding principles conscious and explicit in how you design and lead your change. Your change process must reflect and embody the values and principles of the future you are creating or people will not believe the change is real. In other words, you must model the future in the way in which you lead and carry out your change effort.

As you move through your change process, you must ensure that your values and principles have tangible influence on your design requirements, the way in which you engage people, how you communicate, how you design implementation, etc. Make them overt in your change strategy, and keep them "visible" throughout your change.

Change Governance

There are four actions to determine how you will govern your change:

• Identify clear change leadership roles

• Create a recognizable change governance structure to oversee the effort

• Clarify how change-related decisions will be made

• Clarify how the change structure will interface with your ongoing operations

These four actions form the basis of your overall change infrastructure. When communicated, they demonstrate to your organization the importance of the change and that you are leading it with clear roles and authority. As you proceed through your change, add to your change infrastructure as needed. Include any temporary teams, systems, course correction vehicles, or technology you will use to support your initiative.

Identification of Change Initiatives and How They Integrate into One Unified Change

This element translates the scope of your change into actual initiatives that address your organizational and technical changes as well as your required human and cultural changes. Integrate these into one unified "theme" for your overall effort, which will demonstrate to your organization how all initiatives are aligned to deliver the collective results of your change. This element will help simplify the apparent magnitude and complexity of your change, and clarify confusing, competing, or unrelated change work.

Fit and Priority of Your Initiative among All Other Changes Happening in the Organization

Even if your overall change is enterprise-wide, other large changes are likely also occurring in

the organization. This element clarifies where your effort fits among all of the other organizational priorities. Ideally, the level of priority given to your effort by your sponsors will match the degree of visibility and resources allocated to it. Your intent with this element is to clarify how your change effort fits within and supports your organization's business strategy requirements.

Multiple Project Integration Strategy

Where there is obvious interdependence or overlap among any of the sub-initiatives within your overall effort, or interdependence between your effort and others occurring in the organization, you need an integration strategy that can surface, address, and streamline the work across efforts or regions. This element creates a Multiple Project Integration strategy to overtly look for redundancy, competition, or gaps among changes and constructively align them to share resources, reduce costs, increase efficiencies, and accelerate the pace of your changes.

Bold Actions

If your changes are significant or require your currently "successful" organization to alter course, you may need to do something radical to wake people up to the seriousness or magnitude of the new direction. Bold actions are highly visible, "outside the norm" moves that dramatically demonstrate that "things are going to be very different around here." It is powerful for senior leaders to identify bold actions, and equally important for them to carry them out to have the intended impact. Examples include selling off a business line, removing a whole layer of the organization, or reallocating significant resources. Bold actions should be a calculated part of your change strategy.

Communications and Engagement

Transformational change cannot succeed without significant engagement of stakeholders and

frequent, multi-directional communications (up, down, and across the hierarchy).

Stakeholders must be engaged early in understanding the case for change, vision, and direction. They must be part of inputting to the design requirements and actual design of the change, not just brought in downstream during implementation.

Most normal, top-down corporate communication channels are inadequate for complex change. Change communications require interaction, exploration, and a high level of engagement to ensure that the changes and their implications are felt and understood. Your communication plan must take the human dynamics of change into account from the beginning, and at every step of the way.

Because engagement and communications are such central aspects of people dynamics, both must be included in your overall change strategy.

Acceleration Strategies

Everyone wants change to go faster, but change takes the time it takes. And, there are ways to accelerate it. Be cautious here, however; pushing change beyond its pace actually makes it go slower. This is a very common problem in most change efforts.

Examples of effective acceleration strategies include large group engagement meetings to handle visioning, design, or impact analysis; putting special teams together to tackle key issues full time; running key aspects of the change in "parallel;" integrating activities with other change efforts; or, setting up conditions for success at the beginning.

Available/Required Resources

Your change strategy should determine a high-level "guesstimate" of the types and magnitude of the resources you will need to carry it out. Resources may include capital assets, people, expertise, technology, support, and time. Recall that the allocation of major resources can be a bold action as well as a critical message about the importance of the change. Also, identify how you will renegotiate your resource needs when you recognize variations from your original estimates.

Change Process Roadmap with Milestones and General Timeline

Create a macro plan that outlines the phases and milestone events for carrying out your change effort. This is a high-level roadmap, not your detailed implementation plan. As part of your change strategy, it should communicate how you will roll out the change and at what pace. It should include your critical actions, events, announcements, decisions, and benchmarks.

Summary

Deciding each of these elements of your change strategy will inevitably cause critical discussions among your change leaders and executives. These conversations, well facilitated, can produce essential clarity, even if they surface confusions or differences along the way. Clarifying these elements—for your executives and stakeholders in the change—will greatly accelerate your effort and reduce its costs.

When completed, compile these elements into a summary document that can be communicated to your organization. Use it to demonstrate that the leaders of the change have thought through the effort, have a comprehensive strategy, and are committed to its success.

About the Authors

Dean Anderson and Linda Ackerman Anderson are the co-founders of Being First, Inc., a results-oriented change leadership development and transformational change consulting firm working with visionary leaders of the Fortune 1000, government, and large non-profit organizations. For twenty-five years, Being First has been assisting executives to maximize their ROI from change, transform their cultures to high performance, and build their organization's change capability. Being First provides a complete change solution, including change strategy development, change methodology and tools, training, coaching, consulting, and hands-on change project support. A Deloitte and Touche research study once named the Being First Change Methodology the most comprehensive in the world.

Mr. Anderson and Ms. Ackerman Anderson are co-authors of two cutting-edge books on change, Beyond Change Management: Advanced Strategies for Today's Transformational Leaders and The Change Leader's Roadmap: How to Navigate Your Organization's Transformation. They co-author *The Change Management* column for Workforce Performance Solutions magazine, as well as the e-newsletter, *Results from Change*, which is distributed to change leaders and consultants worldwide.

Mr. Anderson and Ms. Ackerman Anderson speak internationally about the people and process dynamics that are key to succeeding at transformational change. They can be reached at info@beingfirst.com or **970-385-5100**.

About Being First, Inc.

BEING FIRST, INC. is a highly specialized change leadership development and transformational change consulting firm, serving Fortune 1000 companies, government agencies, non-profit organizations, and change consultants worldwide.

We partner with our clients to achieve breakthrough results. We provide a fully integrated solution of consulting, training, coaching, change methodology, and tools; everything our clients need to radically improve outcomes. We are experts in unleashing extraordinary human performance, transforming culture to enable that performance, and developing leaders to lead those transformations.

Outcomes

- **Maximize ROI** by achieving the tangible business results you are after from change; faster and with less cost to your business and people

- Build your organization's **change capability and skill** so you can consistently reap the benefits of successful change, now and in the future

- **Transform your people and culture** to truly unleash breakthrough performance

- Develop your managers and leaders into **competent change leaders** who know how to lead all aspects of change, including the people and cultural dynamics

- Develop your internal consultants into **expert change consultants**

Services and Products

- **Web-based Change Methodology, Products, and Tools** for every task in your change effort. Test drive **The Change Leader's Roadmap™** at www.changeleadersroadmap.com

- **Change Strategy Development and Process Planning** for complex transformation

- **Change Leadership Development and Coaching** for senior executives, change sponsors, change process leaders, change project teams, change consultants, mid-managers, and frontline targets of change

- **Change Consulting** that ensures you get the best change solution implemented by an engaged group of stakeholders

- Change Consultant Development to build your in-house skills

- Executive Team Development that builds cohesion, alignment, and commitment

- **Assessments:** Change Project Audit, Change History Audit, Change Readiness and Capacity, Change Sponsorship, Change Leadership, and Change Team Performance

- Results from Change e-Newsletter at www.resultsfromchange.com