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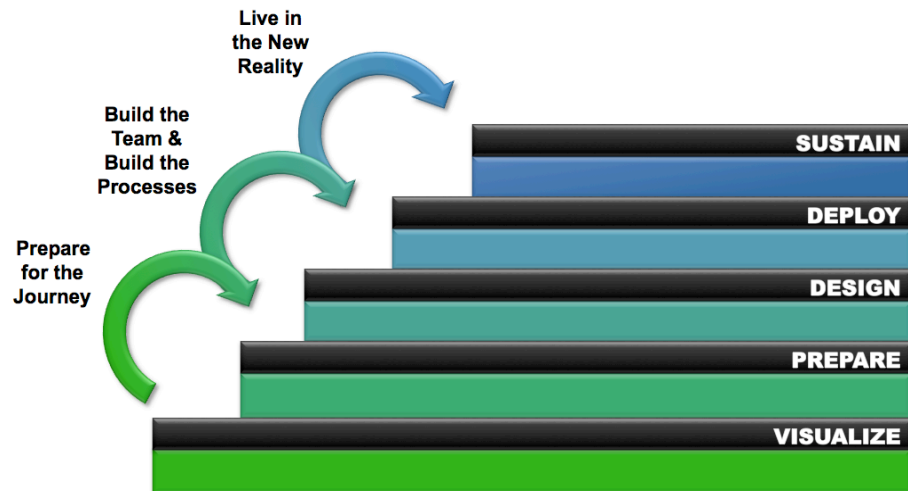
Life Cycle Engineering's Five Stage Model for Change

When managing change, one of the factors that work in our favor is that even though the changes we are facing may vary significantly, change itself occurs in definable stages. One of the major distractions, however, is that even the most well-managed and successful change contains its share of surprises, missteps and setbacks which tend to disguise the underlying structured process.

The fundamental reason that change occurs in stages is that change is inherently an emotional challenge, not a logical challenge – and emotional changes are fairly well understood. Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross developed a widely accepted model of an individual's journey towards coping with loss. Therapists, psychologists and counselors have found this model extremely useful in helping individuals work through their grief. Most importantly, they have learned that rushing through or skipping a step will only prolong the grief process or even prevent closure. In the field of Organizational Change, noted author William Bridges identified that the emotional stages of change closely mirror the stages of the grief cycle. Additionally, Harvard Business School professor and author of "Leading Change" John P. Kotter made an observation regarding change very similar to what grief counselors found regarding coping with loss:

"The most general lesson to be learned from the more successful cases is that the change process goes through a series of phases that, in total, usually require a considerable length of time. Skipping steps creates only the illusion of speed and never produces satisfactory results."

In leading organizational change, it is critical to know what the stages or phases are and what needs to be accomplished in each step before moving to the next step. Life Cycle Engineering has developed the five step change model below that provides a basic framework for managing the change stages.



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Stage 1 – Visualize

In the first step in the model – Visualize – the organization begins accepting that change is coming and creating a vision of the future. The core activities are:

- Communicate a compelling reason to change – It is easy to underestimate the level of complacency that is inherent in most organizations. Naturally occurring urgency generally occurs when the reason to change is self-evident – and usually too late to be of value. To leaders in the organization, this means that a sense of urgency must be created, before it is self-evident. This is accomplished by identifying the reason that change is critical now BEFORE it is too late, followed by urgency in action more than words.
- Create a shared vision of the future – It is important that the leader have a vision of the future and help refine and share that vision with others. The future is personal and each person has to be able to see where they fit in the new organization to ensure their efforts are aligned.
- Link behaviors to business goals – New results require new behaviors. The only way to get the business results is for people to consistently perform the activities that create the results. Early in the change it is important to create a clear line of sight between the business results and the critical behaviors and then manage the change to create the behaviors. Too often, failed changes are accompanied with the statement “We have new processes, we just don’t follow them...” In other words, desired behaviors are not required behaviors.
- Sizing the change – When visualizing the change, it is important to know how big the challenge is going to be. There are two dimensions to sizing the change. The first is determining the complexity of the change and the second is the organization’s readiness (or capacity) for change.

Stage 2 – Prepare

Once the change has been defined and visualized, it is time to begin preparing for the effort. One of the most critical activities in this stage is to create the right guiding coalition to lead the change and building a sense of urgency through action. Transformational change cuts across functional boundaries and getting support from key leaders throughout the organization is critical. These leaders should have a combination of both formal and informal power including title, respect, influence, expertise, etc. Other preparation activities include creating the change management team and structure, developing the change management strategy, and acquiring the resources necessary to undertake the change. The manner in which the leadership prepares is a primary indicator to the organization of the level of commitment and urgency.

Stage 3 – Design

The Design step has two critical aspects. The first (and most obvious) is developing new processes that will result in producing the desired business results. The second aspect is less obvious but equally critical – gaining organizational support and ownership of the new processes. Many organizations mistakenly believe that the right answer is sufficient to ensure success only to find out that the organization systemically

resists the change for purely non-technical reasons. Finding ways to maximize information, involvement and influence to as many people as possible in the organization is an investment that will pay tremendous dividends during the deployment stage.

Stage 4 – Deploy

This is the stage where the latent resistance will become visible. Noted psychologist Kurt Lewin once stated “If you want to understand how something works, try changing it.” This observation highlights the fact that no matter how much analysis, design and preparation is performed, issues previously unnoticed will surface. This is where earlier investments in communicating, involvement and influence will yield tremendous dividends. If a large segment of the organization feels informed and involved – creating a sense of ownership – they will be much more willing to invest efforts into fixing the issues that arise. Another investment that will pay dividends is preparing middle managers and supervisors to handle resistance (including their own). Organizations often forget that due to their direct links to the front line workers, these middle managers and supervisors will be their most influential change agents.

Critical activities during the deploy stage are:

- Watch managers and supervisors closely for resistant behavior
- Support managers’ and supervisors’ efforts to be change agents
- Monitor employee frustrations and respond quickly
- Reward imperfect efforts

Stage 5 – Sustain

As top athletes, musicians, and anyone who has ever successfully lost weight already know, getting there is only half the battle. Sustaining top performance has its own set of challenges. The inherent danger here is to declare victory too soon and not embed the new behaviors into the culture, making it easy (or at least easier) to drift backwards.

Critical activities include:

- Retain focus on leading indicators
- Publicize successes while burning bridges
- Prepare next generation leaders to sustain changes

Change is inherently an emotional challenge, not a logical challenge. Successful change is created through urgency, passion, engagement, and ownership – emotional commitments more than logic analysis. Anticipating and proactively leading people through these inevitable emotional stages – without skipping or rushing -- yields greater adoption and proficiency in the desired behavior.

About LCE

As a leading maintenance and reliability solution provider for over 30 years, Life Cycle Engineering (LCE) (www.LCE.com) helps public and private enterprise gain increased profitability through greater capacity, lower operational costs, and decreased downtime. By combining a range of industry experts, unique processes with proven success, and a comprehensive array of educational courses, LCE has gained reputable status as the premier provider of innovative and successfully executed reliability and maintenance solutions worldwide.

