

## ***The 8-Step Change Model - John Kotter***

To better understand what constitutes effective change management – the act of moving from steady state to a new vision – John Kotter in his book *‘Leading Change’* defines a process comprising 8 stages, *The 8-Step Change Model*. To successfully implement change, managers must:

- 1. Establish a sense of urgency.** If a change is to be effected, it should be carried through as quickly as possible to avoid a loss of impetus. A lack of urgency can lead to a scenario in which the change is perceived by those affected as ‘death by a thousand cuts’.
- 2. Create a guiding coalition.** Change cannot be successfully implemented by one person, irrespective of their position in the organisation. Even a chief executive on their own cannot make a change happen: a change initiative needs to be driven from the top of the organisation but it must take the people with it. This can only happen where key stakeholders – people of influence, often referred to as Change Champions – are fully committed to the change and are in a position to promote and support implementation of the change.
- 3. Developing a vision and strategy.** Every change project, by definition, involves delivering a vision. Clearly, however, some projects will be more complex than others. On complex change projects (step and major change initiatives), it will be necessary to develop a strategy to explain how the vision will be delivered. The responsibility for developing the strategy and ensuring that the vision is properly stated rests with the Project Lead/Change Manager. Effective change managers seek to involve key stakeholders in the development of the vision and strategy.
- 4. Communicating the change vision.** Change Champions will typically support the Change Manager in communicating the change vision. In successful change initiatives, the initial communication of the change vision is likely to have come from the Head of the Organisation personally. This approach has a number of advantages, most significantly the personal endorsement of a change from the chief executive/managing director adds significantly to the perceived importance of the change.
- 5. Empowering employees for broad based action.** Similar in some respects to the creation of a guiding coalition, this stage is about engagement with the people who are affected by the proposed change. It is true in most change initiatives that the people who are closest to the problem are best placed to find solutions to that problem. Regular and effective consultation with subject matter experts is likely to be productive in terms of gathering ideas. Moreover, enabling staff to come up with the best solution is a very powerful way of overcoming potential resistance to the proposed change.

- 6. Generating short-term wins.** One of the single most characteristics of organisations that are successful in implementing change is their ability to maintain momentum. In most cases, this is achieved by a well-considered strategy which seeks to deliver early success – short-term wins. Once again, the concept of Kaizen resonates here: organisations that seek incremental improvement (also called continuous improvement) are particularly adept at generating short-term wins.
- 7. Consolidating gains and producing more change.** This has a link to the importance of generating short-term wins. Early and frequent success will encourage and enable more innovation and change; indeed, staff will be significantly more positive about change where they see how the change has delivered a benefit and feel that they have and can influence future change.
- 8. Anchoring new approaches in the culture.** This is critical to organisations that want to be creative and innovative. While there is no guarantee that a particular methodology or approach to change that has worked well in the past will be effective in the future, it makes sense to try to do more of what has worked previously. When the approach ceases to be effective – be innovative, take a new approach!

The first 4 steps in Kotter's 8-Step Change Model focus on a 'de-freezing' process, whereby individuals who will be affected by the change must be led to recognise why the change is necessary. The next 3 stages make the change happen and the last stage 're-freezes' the organisation with the new change.

Kotter emphasised that all of these stages must be worked through in order and to completion. Skipping even a single step or getting too far ahead without a solid base would almost always create problems and lead to failure.