

# TACKLING CHANGE MANAGEMENT

*Setting yourself up for success when driving new operational changes.*

Change Management is the difference between a beautifully adopted new process and a wasted work effort. Regardless of the quality of the work deliverables, careful operational planning and execution is essential if your deliverables are to become a seamless part of your stakeholders' daily workflow. Even though many appreciate the importance of change management, few do it well. In this article, you'll learn fundamental steps to hook your stakeholders into embracing the change.

## VISUALIZE THE END-TO-END CHANGE

To completely plan for a large change, perform a mental walkthrough of all the events sequentially. Along the way, document each step, the questions you have, and areas that have a potential for high risk. Visualizing the end-to-end sequence of events will help you catch small but important items that need to be prepared for. For example, have you ever shown up to an event and suddenly found you have no idea where to park your car? Completing a mental walkthrough would have flagged this step so you could have more proactively planned for it.

Always challenge yourself to think from the perspective of the people who will be impacted by this change. This will help you anticipate questions and concerns from all stakeholders, an essential part of earning their buy-in. As you start to roll out the change, you will instill that trust, especially if your stakeholders feel you are truly taking their needs into account and thoughtfully answering the question, "What's in it for me?"

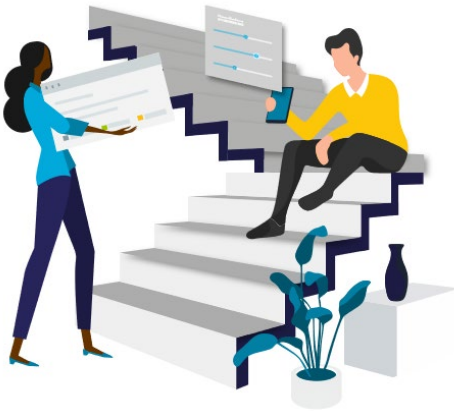
Once you have a list of all the steps, questions, and risks, convert them into a checklist/work plan for yourself. Even if you do not use the list to actually execute the tasks, it will be helpful to use for confirmation that everything has been addressed. (For more about the significance, varying types, and cross-industry relevance of checklists, I highly recommend *The Checklist Manifesto* by Atul Gawande.)

## BE TRANSPARENT AND RESILIENT

It is frequently the case that stakeholders recognize the need for change, but do not anticipate the impact the change will have on their own operations. To help set expectations up front and gain buy-in across disparate groups, emphasize the shared goal of improving the greater good of the organization. Make it clear that in order for the mission to be successful, all parties will need to be flexible in adjusting their status quo.

As you continue planning and ultimately roll out your change, solicit feedback often throughout the process. Regardless of your confidence with your planning, feedback from other parties can only improve the final outcome. In addition to





improving the deliverables, you will be empowering your stakeholders to be decision-makers, rather than simply end users of a new process.

Also, be [honest](#) about challenges. You will only add to others' skepticism if you paint a falsely rosy picture of pieces of the process that are still under construction.

When you start to roll your new process out, you will undoubtedly run into roadblocks and detractors. If you are going to be successful, you need to fight the urge to give into frustration and settle on a less effective but easier outcome. By nature, humans are reluctant to change, so as a champion of this change management initiative, you must help your stakeholders understand and contribute to the initiative's value.

## DON'T LET UP AFTER GO-LIVE

Many change management initiatives fall short because they treat go-live as the conclusion of the process. Therefore, you must create operating mechanisms that reinforce and refresh the change over time.

The following strategies will also help ensure your change succeeds long into the future:

- *Publicly celebrate wins* – Celebrate good behaviors publicly to [positively reinforce](#) the action both with the performer and observers.
- *Address nay-sayers* – After an initial adjustment period, proactively and directly address individuals who still are reluctant to or explicitly criticize the change. These individuals are a major risk to the success of the initiative long-term.
- *Enforce the processes* – Ensure there are clear processes and expectations around the change that will be ongoing. If you will not be owning the change in the future, make sure a clear handoff of the maintenance processes occurs.



If you follow these steps – plan fully by mentally walking through all the details, really engage your stakeholders and make them a part of the process end-to-end, and create clear processes to maintain the change after go-live – you will be much better positioned to have a successfully adopted change.

Extra credit: If you find that you really love the change management process, you can even make a career out of it!

[https://www.acmpglobal.org/page/change\\_management](https://www.acmpglobal.org/page/change_management)



This TIP was written by Emily Ellison, a Principal in Trexin's healthcare practice. Emily welcomes comments and discussion on this topic and can be reached at [emily.ellison@trexin.com](mailto:emily.ellison@trexin.com).