



FAIRHEADS

Making Change Management Count

By Aldrin Links, Director: HR - Fairheads Benefit Services

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Change is certainly the one inevitable constant in the VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) world we live in. Effective Change Management therefore plays a crucial role in assisting organisations to navigate and make the most of the changes they are confronted with to ensure their sustainability. In recent times, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about many changes and forced or encouraged companies to re-examine their business models – with staff working remotely being an obvious example.

But organisations only exist through people who make up the organisation and so it is not only systems which are affected but largely individuals and even communities who are therefore impacted by change. As Change Management can be a delicate process it is absolutely vital to communicate, and keep communicating change plans to employees in order to reassure them and bring them on board.

Effective Change Management prepare people to be comfortable with the anticipated change and minimise potential disruptions in their lives. Employees will naturally ask “how will change affect me?” and any Change Manager must be ready and be able to answer each and every such question.

Best practice is also to choose a Change Management model of which there are many. This provides a framework within which to introduce and process change and, once chosen, it should be committed to. Let’s take one such model and use the simple face mask concept as an example of how change could work in practice.

The model example could be ADKAR, which focuses on the people side of change. **ADKAR** is an acronym that represents the five tangible and concrete outcomes that people need to achieve for lasting change:

- 'A' is to create Awareness of why the change is necessary. In the case of the face mask this means people know why a face mask is necessary to wear during COVID-19. Perceptions are all-important and the aim is to communicate in such a way that perceptions are altered in a positive manner.
- 'D' stands for Desire – how to create the wish in people to adopt the change. In the case of our face mask example, this might be to create the desire for people to protect their loved ones.
- 'K' stands for Knowledge – for example, why people need to know that it is important to cover both their nose and their mouth.
- The second 'A' represents Ability – the need to empower people to be able to adopt a new practice.
- And 'R' stands for Review – the imperative to return and examine the outcomes and success or otherwise of the change because this is the only way to learn and improve.

We find that ADKAR provides a very practical framework, one that can be used at a large organisational, systemic level or at a much smaller and personal level, for example as a framework and method to lose weight.

Narratives, images and change drivers

Finally, it is important not to make change too theoretical but rather introduce a tangible element. People respond well to narratives and images. In our face mask example, President Ramaphosa struggling to put on a face mask created a powerful and human image for people to relate to.

As another example, a change process could be represented by a bus journey, with milestones, humps in the road and stop signs all used to good effect. It is important to identify and appoint change “drivers” or champions to carry out the narrative and communicate throughout the entire process.

Change is never easy

In conclusion, we all know that change is never easy but it is part of organisational and personal life. Companies need to plan well ahead, adopt a suitable Change Management model and – above all – put people, their questions and their understanding first.

ENDS

