

"...often the best ideas come from cutting across disciplinary boundaries and looking into other fields for new ideas. And...nothing will make a field stagnate more quickly than keeping out foreign ideas." Roger von Oech

Linkages

by Sager Educational Enterprises

CRITICAL II

Change Leadership Thought Topics

Initiating & Implementing Change from the Middle of the Organization: Part I

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Change can be initiated and implemented from the middle of the organization - even in the most difficult of situations. The following information is based on our experiences in helping clients- across all sectors - reduce the cycle time for adopting change and involving key players in change, even when the key player is one's boss. Regardless of one's position inside or outside of an organization, the tasks of Change Agents (CAs) are to:

- *Develop a need for change.* This must be done from the perspective of the person or persons needing to change (PNCs). Developing a need to change will depend largely on (1) how well CAs are able to see issues from the PNC's point of view; and (2) CAs empathy for the needs and feelings of PNCs.
- *Develop intent to change.* Accreditation and other mandates can provide incentives for change among stakeholders. In most organizations, leaders, managers, members of different departments (locally and globally), no matter how independent they see themselves, feel connected to the robustness of their organizations. However, the fact that things aren't working well or there's a better way to do things does not always provide intent to change. PNCs must see new programs as *significantly* more beneficial to even consider them. PNCs evaluate all new programs in light of their previous experiences. For example, in a recent situation, a quality program, which depended on physician involvement, was having difficulty getting off the ground. A large part of the problem was that even though hospital-based quality management programs have shifted from quality control to quality improvement for better than a decade, many physicians were still frozen in old paradigms and had no interest in becoming involved in what they saw as *more of the same*.
- *Analyze problem accurately.* CAs anticipate resistance to change. When confronted with opposition, CAs must be able to diagnose the causes of problems accurately. CAs also a need to know when to backtrack; when to concentrate on quieting opposition and allaying fears; and when opposition has relented enough for them to proceed.
- *Influence PNCs to take action.* Since peers usually listen to peers, it is important to develop CAs from within the ranks of the different groups involved in change. The degree to which the CAs can work through opinion leaders is an important success factor in influencing PNCs to take action. Effective CAs take the times to learn about opinion molders are. Who listens to whom? Specifically, to whom do the PNCs listen? A skillful CA focuses on creating the intent to change among the opinion leaders and letting the opinion leaders work with the PNCs.
- *Establish effective two-way communication.* As successful change depends on the degree to which PNCs see the innovation as meeting their needs, CAs must clearly show what's in it for PNCs to change. Change agent success is also linked to how well PNCs see the CA as knowledgeable and trustworthy. Effective CAs study the strategic plan and link proposed changes to achieving the organization's basic business drivers – faster, cheaper, and better. CAs

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do their homework and develop a well-documented action plan, including a Barriers and Aids analysis. Additionally, CAs need to establish feedback mechanisms and show how they are incorporating suggestions made into their plans.

The amount of time spent connecting with PNCs and building rapport with opinion leaders is directly related to the success of proposed change. Ideally, building rapport, gaining respect and trust should begin well before there is a change initiative.

The following checklists are suggested as guides for initiating change from the middle of the organization.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN, A PREASSESSMENT

QUESTIONS	EVIDENCE
Is there a need to change?	
Are there outside mandates (e.g. JHACO, ISO, and state assessment tests?), incentives or other factors that intensify the need?	
Who sees the need (e.g. quality professionals, administrators, etc.)?	
Are the opinion leaders identified?	
Does top leadership see & identify with the need?	
Do opinion leaders see & identify with the need?	
Is the need to change a top priority with TL & the opinion leaders?	

- ☺ If you have supporting evidence for most of the above, put a plan together and get started.
- ☹ If not, reassess the need. If there is a real need, develop an awareness and education program.

KEY FACTORS IN GETTING STARTED TO ENSURE THE SUCCESS OF YOUR PLAN

QUESTIONS TO ASK	EVIDENCE
Do you have the people that you need to get started?	
What are the necessary skills?	
What are the necessary training needs?	
What are the key metrics to measure and monitor success?	
Do you have facilitators who: are seen as leaders, trusted throughout the organization; skilled in problem solving, teaching/training; adapt easily to change; & are skilled in communicating/ presenting ideas?	

- ☹ If you don't have evidence of all of the above, put them in place before you get started.

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In every organization, there is a continuing need to streamline processes to provide more efficient, effective products and services. A fundamental factor in process improvement, in any field, is collaboration among all sectors of the organization. Given their skills sets, who better than quality professionals to champion system wide change efforts?

Part II will focus on implementing change from the middle of the organization.

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