



Dear ODyssey,

As my organisation transforms itself, I am concerned that my colleagues will be indifferent towards the change. How can I engage them such that they feel that they have ownership of the change?

*Yours Sincerely,
Practitioner*

Creating the ownership for change

by The Institute of Leadership and Organisation Development

Dear Practitioner,

ALWAYS INVOLVE MORE PEOPLE IN THE CHANGE PROCESS THAN LESS

It might appear to be more complicated if more people are asked to help manage change in the short term, but in the long term, it is not. Even if you are able to develop a brilliant transformation strategy, you will still have to develop organisational ownership and commitment, and the key to that is to widen the circle of involvement.¹

When people are excluded from the change process from the very beginning, they rarely exhibit the necessary levels of ownership and commitment to see the change process through to a successful conclusion.

Even if the change committee interviews employees to gather data for the change process, it doesn't create the same level of ownership as actual involvement does.

And predictably, the reverse side of ownership is resistance.

So how can you do so? Let us consider the case of how the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) succeeded in undergoing a series of culture changes. (See article: Reflections of an OD Practitioner: Lessons learnt from the BBC culture change)

¹ Axelrod, Richard H. Terms of Engagement: Changing the Way We Change Organizations. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2000), 51.

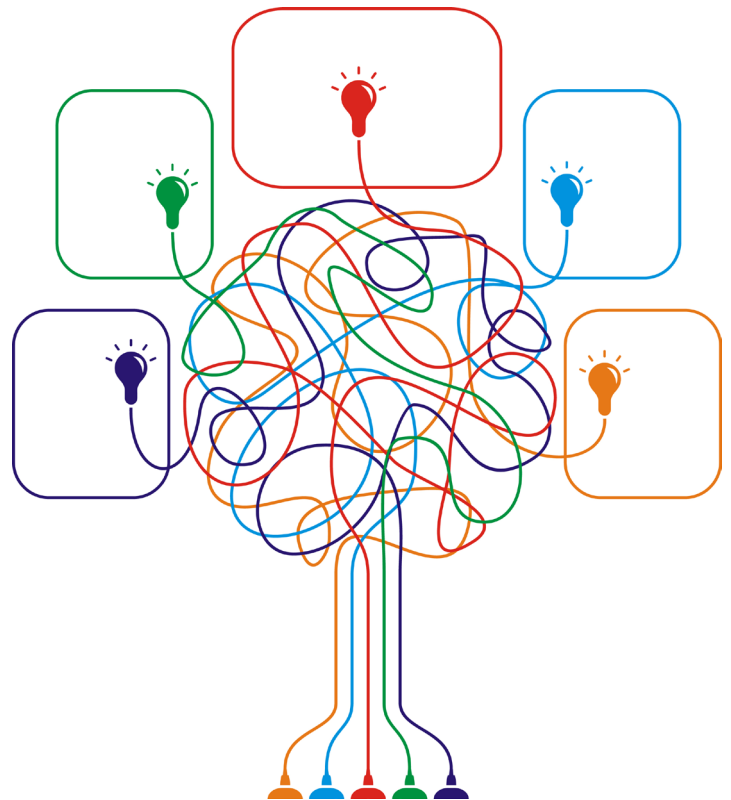
In 1999, the famed television company started cutting costs and streamlined its business, while improving teamwork. However, in doing so, staff felt that they were less valued and that this new structure stifled their creativity. Viewership ratings also suffered.²

As a result, the BBC engaged in a second systemwide culture-change programme in 2002, when it announced a five-year goal to become the most creative organisation in the world. This meant more than cosmetic changes to its programmes and policies, but an alignment of the BBC's strategic decisions to its organisational system.

One of the things that helped the BBC succeed in its culture change exercise was the consultative and inclusive approach it took to engage all 27,000 of its employees.

Through a design comprising a series of large group interventions at various stages of the project, greater buy-in and ownership was obtained from every level of the organisation. The ideas which employees came up with for the BBC's future were built into the company's planning cycle.

² Bunker, Barbara Benedict and Alban, Billie T. The Handbook of Large Group Methods: Creating Systemic Change in Organizations and Communities. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 45.



BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER FOR ACTION

To increase change ownership, individuals need to become a community of people who are willing to act on a common goal, that is, the transformation.

Some ways that you can help them to do so is to create a compelling purpose for the change or encourage dialogue among employees.

For example, to help your colleagues feel pride over their involvement in the change effort, you can consider creating opportunities for them to understand each other's jobs and how these roles contribute to the organisation as a whole. Create more joint projects or inter-divisional sharing that would allow employees to feel like they have worked together to transform the organisation.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Today's organisations are complex systems that require intricate coordination to be effective.³ And organisations are made of people, meaning that change cannot happen in isolation. Communities of committed people produce organisational change.

But for a collection of individuals to create the co-ordinated sets of actions necessary to produce change, they must feel connected to each other.⁴ Trust, connection, and knowledge of the personal resources available within the community can transform a collection of individuals into a community of people capable of producing exceptional results.

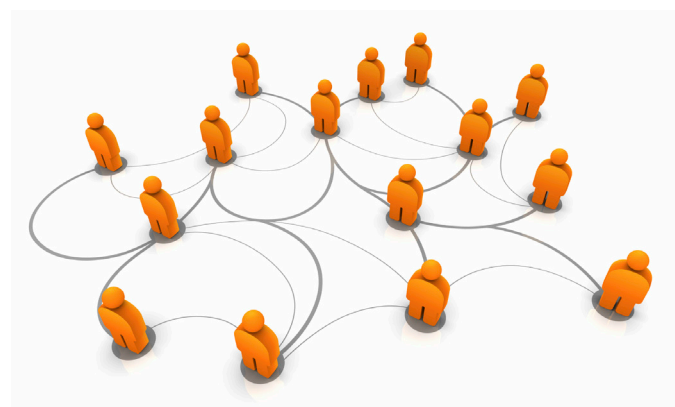
In addition to creating formal platforms that allow people to understand each other's roles, consider having informal ones as well. For example, celebrating successes together or ensuring that staff well-being is properly met. Informal celebrations, expressed through laughter and singing, helps to forge bonds and are symbolic of a strong community.⁵

If organisations spent more time on building relationships and connecting members with one another at work, people would build a solid foundation for working together, helping organisational transformation proceed more smoothly.

³ Ibid, 1, 90.

⁴ Ibid, 1, 87.

⁵ Ibid, 1, 113.



Dear Practitioner,

As you work towards helping your organisation transform itself, it is crucial to engage your colleagues such that they feel an ownership towards the change.

What you can do is to involve as many people in the discussion of the transformation and bring as many employees together as possible. Finally, build relationships to create a solid foundation for people to move towards the future together.

*Yours Sincerely,
ODyssey*

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

To create ownership for change:

Involve more people in the change process than less.

1

Bring people together for action.

2

Build relationships.

3

NOTES / THOUGHTS:



Contact us!

Have any burning questions or feedback about this article or any OD-related topics that you are interested in? Email us at cscollege_ILOD@cscollege.gov.sg.