



Dear ODyssey,

My OD team is working on a change initiative to develop a more open organisational culture. We have started an [awareness campaign](#) encouraging work team conversations and have also [fostered the desire for the change](#) by using motivation factors.

I know the next step is to equip staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to exhibit and reinforce the new behaviour. How can I do this?

Yours Sincerely,
Practitioner

Forging a change that lasts

by Karin Soh and Geraldine Ling

Dear Practitioner,

For change to stick, we must make sure that the emotional state of each employee supports the change's implementation and follow-through. And we must also provide the necessary knowledge and reinforcement to ensure that the desired changes take hold without backsliding.¹

But how should we equip employees for the change and provide the necessary reinforcement for the change to be sustained?

¹ David A. Garvin and Michael A. Roberto, "Change through Persuasion", Harvard Business Review. <http://hbr.org/2005/02/change-through-persuasion/ar/1>.

² Jeffrey Hiatt, ADKAR: A model for change in business, government and our community (Colorado: Prosci Learning Center Publications, 2006), 2.

THE ADKAR MODEL²

A – Awareness of the need for change
D – Desire to support and participate in the change

K – Knowledge of how to change

A – Ability to implement required skills and behaviours

R – Reinforcement to sustain the change

Note: The 5 blocks are sequential in nature. For instance, before looking into 'K'nowledge the issue of 'D'esire should first be addressed.

PROVIDE KNOWLEDGE TO HELP MAKE SENSE OF THE CHANGE

Change requires conscious effort. When you encounter something new, your mind's working memory is engaged – it absorbs the new information and matches it against the old.

For example, when you see a new product on the supermarket shelf and compare its benefits to a product you already have, you are matching current and past information.³ The brain requires more energy to do that type of matching than when it is seamlessly linking day-to-day familiar activities, like brushing teeth.

A lot of mental effort is required when it comes to processing new information. That is why we, as practitioners, need to provide change recipients with adequate knowledge on how they can change to alleviate these new cognitive dynamics.

To start, clarify the roles and responsibilities for each employee affected by the change. This allows them to assess their own capacity and knowledge gaps, and identify the relevant knowledge and training courses they need to help close the gap.

For example, someone who lacks good conversational skills might find it tough to have more open dialogues. This person might benefit from a communications course.

You should also be providing information on how to use the new processes, systems and tools that accompany the change. For example, job aids and guides on how information can be better shared will help to encourage more open sharing.

Author of neuroscience book, 'Your Brain at Work', David Rock says, focus people on solutions instead of problems. That will help in change because that's what the brain wants.⁴



ESTABLISH STRUCTURES TO MAKE THE CHANGE ACTION EASY

However, knowledge does not equate to possessing the ability to take those actions. For example, a person may know that swimming requires certain arm and leg movements, but that does not mean that he or she knows how to swim. For change to occur, knowledge, while necessary, is insufficient by itself.

Change is, very much, a process. Developing the ability to change means adopting new habits and learning new skills – and these take time. Beyond sending employees to attend training courses, we need to ensure there are structures in place to help employees make the change.⁵

For example, provide platforms so that employees from different departments can interact and share information. You can also consider designing a facilitated session that makes it easy for staff to engage with one another in meaningful conversations.

³ David Rock and Jeffrey Schwartz, "The Neuroscience of Leadership", http://www.davidrock.net/files/Rock_&_Schwartz_s&b_43_06207.pdf.

⁴ *ibid*, 2.

⁵ Jeffrey Hiatt, ADKAR: A model for change in business, government and our community (Colorado: Prosci Learning Center Publications, 2006), 105.

Another thing you can do is to eliminate the barriers to change.

A global medical diagnostics company, for example, wanted their sales reps to improve their cross-selling rates (i.e. suggesting related products to a customer). However, the sales reps, bogged down by administrative tasks, found it hard to do so.

The company eliminated this barrier by establishing a central department to take on these administrative tasks. This allowed their sales reps to gain an average of another hour in their selling days and hit cross-selling goals.⁶

REINFORCE THROUGH THE USE OF TIMELY TRIGGERS

For new behaviours to stand the test of time, we need to send people timely reminders.

These reminders can come in the form of triggers – and there are many types of triggers. Just think of how an external trigger, like a ringing alarm clock, can rouse us from our sleep. Or how a simple action from our daily lives, like walking through the kitchen, can trigger us to open the fridge.⁷



We can apply the concept of triggers to our change projects to achieve target behaviours. Let us consider how Facebook uses triggers to get people to behave the way the social networking site wants them to.⁸

Say you have not logged in to your Facebook account for a long time. Facebook will automatically send you an email, prompting you to sign in, providing at least three prominent links for you to do so. That is the first trigger.

Once you have signed in, the site takes you to a 'find more friends' page instead of the main page. This sets off the second trigger, where you would add more friends to your page. As a natural result, these new friends will respond to you. And you, the once inactive user, would respond to these friends and become more active on the social networking site.

Just one trigger for a small behaviour can lead people to perform more complicated behaviours.⁹

For your project, you can consider restructuring the office space to include lower cubicle partitions, more coffee tables, hot drink machines, and open spaces to encourage discussions. Seeing these would likely trigger employees to want to sit down and have open conversations.

⁶ Bain and Company, "How leaders get the most out of their sales-force", <http://www.bain.com/publications/articles/how-leaders-get-the-most-of-salesforce.aspx>

⁷ BJ Fogg's Behaviour Model, "Triggers", <http://www.behaviormodel.org/triggers.html>

⁸ ibid, 7.

⁹ ibid, 7.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

To facilitate the implementation and reinforcement of a change initiative,

Provide knowledge to help make sense of the change.

1

Establish structures to make the change action easy.

2

Reinforce through the use of timely triggers.

3

Dear Practitioner,

This article sums up the last three parts of the ADKAR model - which is to provide employees with the knowledge of how to change; the ability to implement the change; and the reinforcement to sustain the change.

Implementing change successfully is often seen as difficult and challenging. However if we, as practitioners, learn to be intentional in the way we manage change, and to be informed with sound practices, we can significantly improve our ability to manage change effectively. We wish you all the best in your change efforts.

Yours Sincerely,
ODyssey



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_COD@cscollege.gov.sg.

