



Dear ODyssey,

My senior leaders want to see a change in the current culture. They would like a more open culture within the organisation – one that is more collaborative, where conversations among the different work teams are common occurrences.

They have asked the OD team to support this change effort. Where should we begin in introducing this change in culture?

Yours Sincerely,
Practitioner

Igniting the awareness for change

by Karin Soh and Geraldine Ling

Dear Practitioner,

Change affects each person differently and we, as OD practitioners, need to address those individual dynamics if we are to succeed in implementing an organisational change effort. After all, managing an organisational change is the sum of handling each individual officer's response to the change.

Understanding change at the individual level consists of five building blocks – awareness, desire, knowledge, ability and reinforcement. Put together, they form the ADKAR model, a recognised approach developed by change management research leader Prosci. All five building blocks must be in place before successful change can occur.

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

THE ADKAR MODEL

- 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.

Taking reference from the ADKAR model, your change effort should begin with creating 'A'wareness for the change. This step is important because people are almost always curious about the change's necessity. Employees often resist change because they lack an awareness of why the change is being made.¹

Let us see how we can develop an effective awareness campaign for the change.

CRAFT MESSAGES THAT TOUCH HEARTS

Remember Mrs Chong? The teacher in the heart-warming television ad who wouldn't give up on her wayward student no matter what?²

Well, that commercial went on to win the 2011 Television Campaign of the Year, the 2011 Viewer's Choice Best Local TV Commercial - and the hearts of many Singaporeans.

What made the Ministry of Education commercial 'stick' in so many minds – it received some 4,600 likes on Facebook – was its appeal to viewers' emotions with its feel-good factor.

The commercial, a recruitment drive for MOE, also brought home the very heart of the teaching profession - to lead, care and inspire. It would be safe to say that the MOE probably saw a healthy spike in recruitment that year.

Feelings inspire. Feelings motivate people to act, say accomplished educators Chip and Dan Heath. For people to take action, you need to make them care.

This means that in addition to clearly explaining the rationale for change, your message needs to touch the hearts of the people you are reaching out to.



THE ROKIA EXPERIMENT

Consider this behavioural science experiment that examined how people responded to making donations, when the request was framed differently.

The first plainly featured statistics of the problems that African children faced. The other showed how a donation would make a difference in the life of a seven-year-old African girl called Rokia.

What the experiment's researchers found, was that Rokia received twice the donations. They concluded that when people think analytically, they are less motivated to take action.³

So to help your colleagues embrace the change, you need to make them 'feel' the need for the change. They need to 'care' about having an open culture.

Instead of focusing on how open cultures boost productivity rates, why not tell the story of how such a culture made a positive difference to a colleague who was facing a frustrating and challenging work situation? And don't forget to include the emotive details when you tell the story.

¹ Prosci Inc. Best Practices in Change Management, 2012 edition, 91.

² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GETzOHRPqus>

³ Chip & Dan Heath, Made to Stick (London: Random House Books, 2007), 166.

PAINT A PICTURE THAT CATCHES THE EYE

In creating awareness for the change, it is important to paint a picture of the change's desired outcome. Share with your colleagues the desired future state of the organisation in a clear way that is easy to understand. Ideally, the change should be something your colleagues would be able to see with their mind's eye.

This strategy helped the World Bank to embrace change in the mid-90s. Then, there was a knowledge management issue as information about the Bank's projects was scattered all over the world. People were resistant to using knowledge management to pool together their resources into one common portal.⁴

However, they changed their minds after hearing a story of how a health worker in a remote, tiny Zambian town was able – against overwhelming odds - to save the lives of many people. This was only possible because the worker was able to access information shared on a Center for Disease Control website on how to treat malaria.

Hearing the story helped the World Bank's employees envision the change – one that caught their 'mind's eye' as they were able to envision the story play out in their own contexts.

⁴ Steve Denning, "The Four Stories You Need To Lead Deep Organizational Change, Forbes, July 7, 2011, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/stevedenning/2011/07/25/the-four-stories-you-need-to-lead-deep-organizational-change>

⁵ Prosci Inc. Best Practices in Change Management, 2012 edition, 78.



COMMUNICATE WITH CREDIBILITY

Change can be unnerving. To allay any fears your colleagues may have, enlisting the help of an authority figure will aid in giving your message the credibility it needs to calm nerves and provide assurances.

Recall the food scare last year involving radiation-contaminated Japanese beef after the country's tsunami-related nuclear crisis.

What reassured Singapore was the announcement from the Agri-food & Veterinary Authority (AVA) stating that beef imported from Japan were not from any of the areas near the faulty nuclear reactors. People listened and believed the AVA – an authority with long-standing credibility in food health policing.

To apply this to your situation, the spokesperson of your open culture initiative should ideally be someone with influence and is well-respected in the organisation, like the Permanent Secretary or the CEO. This leader can talk about the change in, say, a Townhall session.

Worth noting is the need to pay attention on who the messenger is, and not just the message. In some cases, the messenger is part of the message. And the two most effective messengers of change are the most senior leader and employees' immediate supervisor, revealed a Prosci change benchmarking study.⁵

SAY IT EARLY, SAY IT FREQUENTLY

Organisations often fail to create awareness about change early enough.

People don't take well to surprising news of change. In order for people to respond well to the change, they typically need to go through a psychological period of transition before coming to terms with it.⁶ This requires time, and therefore the need to communicate the change early.

A good practice would be to communicate the change to the most affected stakeholders first before the rest. This will allow them that extra time to react to and process the news.

The news of the change should then be communicated to the rest of the employees as early as feasibly possible.

Your change message should be communicated regularly and repeatedly. You can never over-communicate to your colleagues. Change that is communicated frequently and consistently, especially by the leader, also sends a strong signal of the leadership team's commitment to the change.

⁶ William Bridges, *Managing transitions : making the most of change*, (Cambridge: Perseus Books Group, 2003), 3.



Dear Practitioner,

Raising awareness of the change is the crucial first step in introducing the change.

The five building blocks of the ADKAR model mirror the natural order of how an individual experiences change.

Awareness needs to be present before any desire for change can take effect. So you need to first let your colleagues know, in a clear but impactful way, how the change can affect or benefit them. Remember to give them plenty of time to absorb and accept the news.

To see what comes next after awareness, look out for the next issue of ODyssey, where we explore how practitioners can build the desire for change in their colleagues.

*Yours Sincerely,
ODyssey*

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

To build awareness for a change initiative,

- Engage people's emotions. 1
- Provide clarity about the change. 2
- Give the message credibility. 3
- Communicate early and frequently. 4

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.