



Dear ODyssey,

My organisation plans to form a change team to help facilitate its transformation journey. Who should be in the change team and what should we keep in mind as we help to change our organisation?

*Yours Sincerely,
Practitioner*

What every **change team** should know

by The Institute of Leadership and Organisation Development

Dear Practitioner,

Forming a change team is essential to the transformation journey because of the vastness of the project scope. If the right people are assembled, your change team will be able to propel the transformation forward, ensuring that all areas of the change, including processes and people, are well looked after.

WHO SHOULD BE IN THE CHANGE TEAM?

It should ideally comprise highly competent employees who have the trust of the management team.

They should be supported by OD practitioners (like you) who are able to provide more 'technical' expertise in designing the change process. It is also important that all members of the change team should already have the trust of their colleagues.

For your first step, your team should contract with the senior leadership sponsor of the transformation project. Find out his or her perspective of the situation and change objectives.

This may include personal visions for the project and if there are any factors preventing these from happening. How does he or she think the other stakeholders will perceive the change?

Once the project's direction is defined, your change team will have to conduct surveys and interviews with other senior team members and staff to broaden your perspectives and deepen your understanding of the ground. When all information is gathered, your team will then have to present its diagnosis of the situation to the sponsor and the senior team.

To increase the chances of your transformation efforts succeeding, your change team needs to be aware of the following principles:

THE SENIOR TEAM MUST BE AT THE CENTRE OF THE PROCESS

Often, because of their hectic schedules, senior leaders may distance themselves from the project after delegating the process of change to an assigned change team. If this is happening to your team, there is a need to convince your senior leaders of the need to increase their involvement. Delegating the change process distances senior teams from organisational issues and causes staff to doubt senior management's commitment.

More importantly, the senior team's involvement at every step of the change process connects them emotionally and intellectually to the change – helping them to develop a holistic and shared view of the organisation and allowing them to work together on how best to shift the whole system.¹

¹ Michael Beer. "Developing an effective organization: Intervention method, empirical evidence, and theory". Research in Organizational Change and Development 19(2011): 39.

² Ibid, pg 41.

³ Ibid, pg 42.



SYSTEMIC DIAGNOSIS SHOULD BE DATA-DRIVEN

To understand the complex and inter-related pieces of your organisational system, you need to gather and synthesise multiple perspectives. A thorough diagnosis assures senior leaders that what they are hearing is objective and not random opinions of a selected few.

One way to obtain objectivity in your surveys and interviews, recommends Harvard Business School's emeritus professor Michael Beer, is to adopt a "fire hose" method of interviewing.² First ask broad questions like "What are some of the strengths and barriers to our organisational changing?" and then continue with deeper probes if needed.

For change to be effective, you need to cover all corners. Gather information about organisational problems and suggested solutions from each and every department. This not only sheds light on problems of integration, but also provides insights into leadership, values and cultural issues in different parts of the organisation.

And because not everyone can be directly involved in these surveys (and conversations), making public these inquiry findings, diagnosis and action plans for the change builds trust and humanises your team and the senior team. This move helps to build purpose for your transformational journey, which is essential for commitment to change.³



HONEST REPORTING OF THE FULL SYSTEM

When the survey or interview results are in, honest reporting is key. The candor and directness of your team can help to put senior leaders in touch with the internal realities (including the emotional aspects) they may have distanced themselves from.⁴

As an OD practitioner, you are part of the change team, and the bridge between your colleagues and senior management. Your involvement puts senior leaders in touch with ground realities and with any pent-up frustration felt by front-line employees.

To play this role well, you need to balance the data presented. As Beer observed, there is a natural tendency for change teams to emphasise the negative.⁵ However, studies have shown that positive climates, in general, lead to more favourable outcomes. Your ability to speak the truth with hope gives senior management a clearer reflection of the change situation and inspiration for action, leading to more informed interventions and solutions.

⁴ Ibid, pg 21.

⁵ Ibid, pg 4.



Dear Practitioner,

The change team's role is to support the organisation in achieving alignment, commitment and effectiveness.

However, the right mix of people need to be assembled for the change team, namely those who are highly competent and trusted by both leaders and employees.

Once this team is assembled, they need to be mindful and intentional over the way information is collected and presented – it is only then that the transformation journey will be a well-informed and successful one.

*Yours Sincerely,
ODyssey*

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

To increase the chances of successful transformation efforts:

The senior team must be at the centre of the process.

1

Systemic diagnosis should be data-driven.

2

Honest reporting of the survey and interview results.

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.