

# The 8-Step Process for Leading Change

Adapted from <http://www.kotterinternational.com/our-principles/changesteps/changesteps>

## STEP 1: Establish a Sense of Urgency

Most companies ignore this step —close to 50% of the companies that fail to make change make mistakes at the very beginning. Leaders may underestimate how hard it is to drive people out of their comfort zones, or overestimate how successfully they have already done so, or simply lack the patience necessary to develop appropriate urgency. Leaders who know what they are doing will "aim for the heart." They connect to the deepest values of their people and make the business case come alive with human experience; engage the senses; and create simple, imaginative messages that inspire people to greatness.

## STEP 2: Create a Guiding Coalition

Putting together the right coalition to lead change is critical. That coalition must have the right composition, a significant level of trust, and a shared objective. In putting together the coalition, the team as a whole should reflect:

- Position Power: Enough key players should be on board so that those left out cannot block progress.
- Expertise: All relevant points of view should be represented so that informed, intelligent decisions can be made.
- Credibility: The group should be seen and respected so that the group's pronouncements will be taken seriously.
- Leadership: The group should have enough proven leaders to be able to drive the change process.

## STEP 3: Develop a Change Vision

The change vision clarifies how the future will be different from the past. It serves three important purposes:

- It simplifies hundreds or thousands of more detailed decisions.
- It motivates people to take action in the right direction even if the first steps are painful.
- It helps to coordinate the actions of different people in a remarkably fast and efficient way.

## STEP 4: Communicate the Vision for Buy-in

Gaining an understanding and commitment to a new direction is never an easy task, especially in complex organizations. Most companies under communicate their visions by at least a factor of 10. A single memo announcing the transformation or even a series of speeches are never enough. To be effective, the vision must be communicated in hour-by-hour activities. The vision will be referenced in emails, in meetings, in presentations – it will be communicated anywhere and everywhere.

## STEP 5: Empower Broad-Based Action

This step involves removing obstacles to change; changing systems or structures that seriously undermine the vision; and encouraging risk-taking and nontraditional ideas, activities, and actions. This may involve changing the organizational structure or management information systems to that reporting relationships and information support needed actions. Another barrier to effective change can be troublesome supervisors with management styles that inhibit change. Easy solutions to this problem don't exist. Typically, the best solution is honest dialogue.

## STEP 6: Generate Short-term Wins

This step involves creating visible, unambiguous success as soon as possible. The Guiding Coalition becomes a critical force in identifying significant improvements that can happen between six and 18 months. Getting these wins helps ensure the overall change initiative's success. Research shows companies that experience significant short-term wins by fourteen and twenty-six months after the change initiative begins are much more likely to complete the transformation. Wins provide evidence the sacrifices people are making are paying off. This increases the sense of urgency and the optimism of those making the change.

## STEP 7: Never Let Up!

Resistance is always waiting in the wings to re-assert itself. Even if you are successful in the early stages, you may just drive resistors underground where they wait for an opportunity to emerge when you least expect it. The consequences of letting up can be very dangerous. Whenever you let up before the job is done, critical momentum can be lost and regression may soon follow. Instead of declaring victory and moving on, these transformational leaders will launch more and more projects to drive the change deeper into the organization.

## STEP 8: Incorporate Changes into the Culture

New practices must grow deep roots in order to remain firmly planted in the culture. Culture is composed of norms of behavior and shared values. These social forces are incredibly strong. Every individual that joins an organization is indoctrinated into its culture, generally without even realizing it. We keep change in place by creating a new, supportive and sufficiently strong organizational culture. The Guiding Coalition alone cannot root change in place no matter how strong they are. It takes the majority of the organization truly embracing the new culture for there to be any chance of success in the long term.

# Leadership Roles for Making and Implementing Strategic Plans

Adapted from *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* by John Bryson

## Understand the Context

Leaders help others view the organization and organizational change in the context of relevant social, political, economic and technical systems and trends. They take a long view over the organization's history in order to help people think wisely about the future. An understanding of the external and internal content of the organization is important for recognizing the possibilities for change presented by the context.

## Understand the People Involved

Leaders seek to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the people involved in planning and implementing change. In strategic planning the personal qualities of integrity, self-efficacy and courage are especially important in helping participants develop the trust and determination to take risks, explore difficult issues and new strategies. The process of understanding oneself and others can be used to establish personal development plans, choose team members, and gear messages and processes to different styles of learning and interacting.

## Sponsor the Process

Leaders articulate the purpose and importance of the effort. They commit necessary resources – time, money, energy, legitimacy—to the effort. They emphasize at the beginning and at critical points that action and change will occur. Leaders encourage and reward creative thinking, constructive debate, and multiple sources of input and insight. They use outside consultants when needed and are willing to exercise power and authority when necessary to keep the process on track.

## Champion the Process

Champions keep planning and implementation high on people's agendas. They attend to the process without promoting specific solutions. They think about what has to come together (people, tasks, information, reports) and make sure the right people with the right information are on stage at the right time. Champions keep rallying participants and pushing the process along. They also develop other champions throughout the organization to keep momentum going.

## Facilitate the Process

Leaders use a deep knowledge of the organization, its politics, issues, culture, and secrets to build group trust, interpersonal skills and conflict management skills. Leaders convey a sense of humor and enthusiasm for the process and help the group get unstuck when necessary. Leaders also press the group toward action and the assignment of responsibility for specific actions. They congratulate people whenever possible and say good things about people in a genuine and natural way.

## Foster Collective Leadership

Success is a group achievement so leaders foster collective leadership by relying on teams. They support individual team member's needs while also consciously promoting group cohesion. They focus on network and coalition development and establish specific mechanisms for sharing power, responsibility and accountability.

## Use Dialogue and Discussion

Leaders help others answer these questions: What's going on here? Where are we heading? And how will things look when we get there? Leaders frame and shape perspectives, "manage" important stakeholders and foster dialogue and discussions that move the organization forward. They encourage people to see the real situation and compelling visions of the future. They champion new and improved ideas for dealing with strategic issues. Leaders also detail actions and expected consequences.

## Make and Implement Decisions

Leaders understand how intergroup power relationships shape decision-making and implementation outcomes. They understand when items should be moved forward and also how to affect outcomes by having some things never come up for a decision. They mediate and shape conflict. They understand the dynamics of political influence and how to target resources appropriately. They build winning, sustainable coalitions. They challenge rules or find ethical ways around rules to avoid bureaucratic imprisonment.

## Enforce Norms, Settle Disputes, and Manage Residual Conflicts

Leaders are called upon to enforce norms, settle disputes and manage conflicts in an ethical manner. They exercise ethical leadership by fostering organizational integrity and educating others about ethics. They follow laws and enforce norms. They settle disputes and manage any remaining conflicts. They recognize when changes in processes or norms are needed and then facilitate group understanding and development of revised norms or processes.