

Working collaboratively for inclusive change

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We've all experienced situations where an external consultant joins to help make improvements only to then work separately from the project team. It always feels like they're basing their decisions on data analysis or the top-down view, not as part of the team doing the work today and after the change has happened.

In this week's expert series, we look at why i-Realise work as part of their clients' change teams and share tips on how to build real trust between all parties involved in a change programme.

Learning is two-way: some consultants forget that

Too often consulting projects can feel like twenty-questions. Someone comes into the office, sits apart from the team, looks at some data, undertakes a few interviews, and in the worst-case scenario, never even learns your name! I've experienced that in organisations I've worked for in the past and frankly, it made it difficult for me to trust anything the consultants presented. I always thought it was a shame – they missed the real opportunity for change by involving the people it was supposed to benefit.

Working as part of your team – forming relationships with everyone, sitting with them and actually listening to concerns or ideas they have been trying to raise for years – is a big part of how we successfully land change.

If people are heard, have the chance to hear each other and suggest ideas for change together, they will accept and adopt the change that's needed.

One of the benefits of working within a clients' team is our ability to transfer knowledge and skills. And that cuts both ways – we can embed ongoing change management or process improvement skills within your team, and your team will teach us new practical solutions and functional skills that make us better change professionals.

Be honest - if there's an issue for you, then there's an issue for the project

There can be a real temptation for people to come to a conversation or meeting and minimise the issues they're facing. Sometimes that's because it's been raised and dismissed before; other times because they fear that the issue only impacts them or might reflect badly on their own abilities.

There is no point in a change programme that changes nothing. No process or organisation is ever perfect and we are here to help. We need to know what's not working to fix it.

We see this a lot, especially with system changes, where the same manual workarounds have to be applied, even with the new system, when people haven't flagged why that workaround happens in the first place. We trust that you're doing some things manually because the documented process doesn't allow you to do something critical or takes too long. Our job is to help you fix it.

Watching you work is not about judging your performance

As well as conversations, workshops and meetings, we always like to sit with people and observe them doing their job. Why? Because we can see for ourselves where the pain points are for you, and we can visualise what it really takes to do something.

Someone may have taken a decision in the past that now leads you to have to open five different spreadsheets to provide one thing for them. They solved an issue in their area and passed it to you. Equally, management may think something happens in a particular way; but the reality of what you do is very different.

We need to see all of that and actually feel your frustration. We need to see the time it wastes that you could spend on more valuable or rewarding tasks. We will always share with you what we're looking to capture before we start observing.

What we can also identify, by watching each role & task in turn, are the root causes that impact many people's roles. Fixing a root cause can improve things for many people & processes at once.

Bring examples to workshops

We don't need you to spend hours preparing for a workshop. It's our job to draw and map processes and get to the common issues and challenges that need to be addressed with any change we make.

What is helpful, is for you to bring visuals or examples of things you do, not just describe them. If part of the process involves you filling in one spreadsheet and two forms, bringing the examples with you – on your laptop or printed – is really helpful to us. How it really works, and any inherent challenges, will be in this detail.

Vent, then accept that no one has yet invented the time machine

For initial workshops or meetings, it's helpful to let everyone vent. If something is broken everyone is frustrated - and airing those frustrations is going to be important if we're going to get past them.

After that it's important to face reality. There is no time machine so we can't dwell on the past. We have to ask "what can we all do now, now we know that?" – and pool our resources to address the future not the past.

Diverse people for inclusive change

We're all different - that's what makes working together so much fun. If we're sitting in your team, we will get to understand each person's personality and passions. This will help us draw out what they have to contribute and we'll be better able to help them understand how the change can impact and help them.

People who are seen as 'difficult' are often very passionate about the company and want to make it better. We work with these people to understand why they are taking the time to challenge what's being proposed. Others who at first seem quiet or passive may be equally passionate but perhaps unsure of what they 'should' or 'should not' be saying to consultants. We work with these people to make sure important issues aren't overlooked.

Making change happen, together

Delivering change and transformation success through people, process and technology.

Call us now on **+44 (0)20 3008 6358** or email info@i-realise.co.uk to find out more about how we can support all elements of your transformation programme.

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