

Embedding change: give your staff a good change experience

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Organisations, and the people within them, make change for a host of very good reasons - a better customer experience, increased revenue, more rewarding roles or improved profitability. They often invest a lot of money and then focus solely on making it happen; leaving how to make the change stick until far too late.

In this latest Expert Series article, we look at best practices for embedding change, and how to avoid perpetuating multiple ways of working that create a poor customer experience.

Don't tell people at the end!

By the time you're coming out of the implementation phase, everyone should already be clear on what they should be doing, and how. Not just the project team members – who have a plan to deliver to – but the people who will actually be expected to embrace the change.

People want to be part of change; they don't want it done to them. Your credibility as a programme sponsor could be in jeopardy if you don't give people a positive experience of change. It should be hard work, it can be fun, but it should first and foremost make a change that others recognise as better or necessary.

Clear, unambiguous communication about why the change is necessary is vital from the outset, and you need to keep reminding people of the benefit and how you're tracking towards them, well after 'go-live'.

Create advocates who matter to people

Our approach always includes a joint team that includes people from the day-to-day business who will be impacted by the change. It's really important that the people you choose are credible advocates of their peers – so they can support and model the change in a way that others will follow.

These advocates must have the chance to input why and how their peers will be impacted, and you have to work with them to identify the support they will need and how they can get it. One of the things that's often overlooked is how to get 'top up' training after the initial training rollout. People rarely learn something new in one go, and practical application can throw up different issues.

We usually advise that you involve these advocates in user acceptance testing of any new systems and processes. This ensures that you identify the right operational scenarios to test, and again helps with the advocacy and credibility of the solution with their colleagues.

You're not done when the project is over

In my last Expert Series I talked in depth about having a Hypercare period. This ensures that business critical issues and functional niggles can be raised and dealt with quickly. Whilst you can plan and train for how you expect people to react, there will always be unexpected issues that could not be anticipated.

Set milestones that need to be met before you reduce this extra support – such as the percentage of orders processed without errors. Make sure you also offer extra support for the first time something seasonal happens – like a range change for a retailer, year end for a payroll. It's these points that will also throw up extra challenges that could easily unravel people's confidence in what you've recently changed.

A final check is to go back to your list of critical success factors and benefits. Are you achieving them at the rate you think you would? If something doesn't look right it's worth investigating root causes early so you can understand what needs to be revisited or simply retrained.

Implementing change in a holistic way

As part of the i-Realise methodology we use a tried and tested control framework (which provides a holistic view of any change) to design, implement and embed the behavioural and business performance changes that you are aiming for.

Our methodology uses proven tools that build collaboration from senior management through to the people on the front line who perform the impacted tasks or serve your customers. This allows us to avoid the pitfalls that could give your change programme a bad name, and make it hard to succeed.

We use tools to help us monitor the adoption of new behaviours, and nudge what will most impact success. My final tip would be to remember to reward and motivate in line with the changed behaviour that supports achievement of your objectives.

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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