

# Change management..., your project may fail to deliver maximum value or worse without it

*Find out the essential questions to ask when you need to manage change, what to look for if you are considering hiring a consulting firm, and how effective change management can be*

**Workplace change can hit hard.** So hard, in fact, that employees often cycle through the Kubler-Ross stages of grief when it happens.

So if your company is implementing what seems like a straightforward change -- a new software system, for example -- you still need to be ready to face some measure of denial, anger, bargaining etc. before you can get employees to fully embrace the change.

While change management may seem fuzzy, studies from Gartner, Prosci, and others show that projects that incorporate change management have a much higher chance of success.

Change management is often overlooked or done inadequately because it can feel like coddling. It's not, though, and the trouble is that if you DON'T embrace change management -- or you don't embrace it early enough -- you can kill a project's chance of success.

## **Where do you start?**

Let's say you ARE ready to implement change management. How do you do it?

The field is relatively new, so it may feel like the playbook is still being written: Best practices are still evolving; change management often means different things to different people; it touches everything you do; it's hard to map to measurable outcomes; it's hard to define key performance indicators; and on and on.

Yet effective change management helps with employee engagement, satisfaction, retention and drives increased return on investment.

So consider change management not as an end unto itself, but as the way to implement a new project or process while building support of your employees. Change shouldn't happen TO people; change should happen WITH people.

As you guide a team or an organization through change, try to create an environment where:

- People understand *why* a change is happening (because their leader has talked with them).
- People *want* to change (because their leader has given them a safe place to ask questions).
- People know *how* to change (because they are trained appropriately).
- People are *able* to change (because they get time to practice it).
- People will *continue* to change (because the new normal is rewarded, valued and measured).

### *Making change succeed*

Here are some ideas that will help you make change stick.

*Slow down to speed up.* Change management takes time, planning, and thoughtfulness. As much as possible, you want to understand a project's impact before you do it.

*Expect resistance to the IDEA of change management.* Change management is a great thing but you'll likely have to stand up to internal pressure just to make it happen.

*Create a change plan.* To help people move effectively through the change, you'll need to solicit input, plan training sessions, provide help, and make them feel they're part of the process.

*Document.* You need documentation and a process for what the change will look like day-to-day and how it affects the entire organization.

If change management is new to you, or if you don't have the bandwidth to manage change on your own, you may want to look for a consulting firm to help.

### *Guidelines for hiring a consulting firm*

Look for someone who can paint a comprehensive picture of how change management will help your organization.

Here are some other things to consider.

*Background and experience:* The consulting firm should have comfort and experience with change management in multiple industries and areas of operations. This helps bring a broad range of solutions to bear. Make sure their certifications, experience, and areas of expertise align with the work you need done.

*Tactical skills:* Look for research and analytical skills, and the ability to gather, interpret, and present data in a format that's easy to consume.

*Methodology.* A consulting firm should be able to employ a wide range of tools and methodologies, such as Prosci's ADKAR model, Six Sigma, lean, and PMI's project management change principles (outlined in the Project Management Body of Knowledge).

*Approach and Adaptability.* The consulting firm should be able to tailor the approach to your needs and not be constrained by a single toolset. There is no one way.

*Leadership.* Change management leads need to be able to create collaborative project teams where every member is heard.

*Soft skills.* Since they act as leaders without authority, your consultants MUST connect with you and your team. It takes charisma and likeability to succeed -- just as much as having the chops.

*Curiosity.* Consultants should ask the "tough" questions and seek answers tenaciously.

*Cost.* Be sure to do the math around hiring a full-time employee vs. bringing in a change management consultant. It is usually a long-term commitment to hire an employee to manage change in your organization. If you expect to have a long series of changes this may make complete sense. However, it may make sense to hire a consulting firm if your needs are more finite in duration.

*Strategy session.* Since you want a company you can build a relationship with, the consulting firm should be willing to do an initial strategy session. From this initial engagement you will be able to assess their strengths and overall fit with your team.

*An understanding that one size DOESN'T fit all.* Look for a consulting firm who will LISTEN first, to find out what your problems are, before they begin suggesting solutions.

*Big-picture outlook.* The consulting firm should be able to tie the proposed work back to improved value or return on investment, such as a better experience for employees, a better client experience, fewer process steps, etc.

*What's the most surprising thing about change management?*

Prosci research shows that effective change management increases the chance of a project's success by a factor of 6.

Change is scary, and it usually affects more people than you think. But if you do it right, it will help make your people happy. And it will be great for business.

**Want to learn how Loft9 can help you manage change?**

Contact us to schedule your strategy consultation. In a brief working session, we will give you primer on change management and help you understand how it may help your organization.

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## About this whitepaper

This introductory paper is intended to provide a high-level overview of change management elements you may want to consider on projects. This is the first paper in a series that will provide in depth examples of projects we've delivered on for our clients. If you have an idea for a future paper or a topic you would like to learn more about, please reach out to us using the methods listed above.

## About Loft9

Loft9 Consulting is a management consulting firm that provides business analysis, project management, change management, and process improvement across the entire business lifecycle -- from envisioning to deploying and optimizing.

At Loft9, we're as focused on the expertise we deliver as on the experience we create. Our clients get fresh thinking, sincere partnerships, and elevated outcomes. Together, Loft9 is able to be there for our clients, at the right time, with the right resource, consistently producing great results. That's the Loft9 experience.

We actively collaborate with and leverage the knowledge of other Loft9 Associates for the benefit of clients. Co-Delivery™ is our "secret sauce." Co-Delivery™ helps provide a quicker ramp time and the highest quality in delivery. We pair every Associate on an engagement with someone else from within the firm who has relevant experience in the space. More than just a check-in, Co-Delivery™ leverages experience and knowledge to bring additional resources to bear each and every week for the benefits of our clients and our delivery.

Our clients keep coming back to us year after year. When we ask them why, they mention our expertise and the results we deliver, but it always comes back around to the quality of our people.

They say that when you're working with Loft9, it's the intangibles, it's the communication, it's the way we collaborate and deliver.

It's the experience.