



## **Leading Change** By John P. Kotter

### **Leading change requires 8 key steps:**

#### **1- Establish a sense of urgency**

People need to see and feel why change is necessary. A sense of urgency is established when people see the cold hard facts and emotionally internalize the need to change. They need to feel “we *must* change” not “we *should* probably change”. To establish this urgency big issues need to be talked about, comfort needs to be removed, top leaders need to embody the need for change, and employees need to see themselves as change agents. Some ways to increase the level of urgency are 1. using a crisis and highlighting it so that people feel the heat from it, 2. setting objectives (BHAGS) that are impossible to achieve by current activities/strategies, 3. measure everyone by the big goals, not the smaller department goals 4. quit ‘happy talk’ and start ‘real truth’ talk and 5. increase honest discussions 6. “bombard people with information on future opportunities, on the wonderful rewards for capitalizing on those opportunities, and on the organization’s current inability to pursue those opportunities”.

#### **2- Create a guiding coalition**

There is no one individual can do it all alone, no matter how talented or charismatic they are, a team is needed who are committed to the vision. This team helps formulate and spread the vision, while motivating change among others in the organization. This guiding coalition should be comprised of those with credibility, expertise for leading change and positions of influence. They need to be willing to influence by engaging others, not just making demands and policy.

#### **3- Develop a vision & strategy**

“Vision refers to a picture of the future with some implicit or explicit commentary on why people should strive to create that future.” Clear vision helps to direct employees and inspire them to do hard things. It simplifies thousands of detailed decisions by giving clarity. “One simple question—is this in line with the vision?—can help eliminate hours, days, or even months of torturous discussion.” It also removes projects that do not help reach the vision and helps to align the entire

organization in the same direction. The 'Vision story' must be constantly communicated over and over. The 6 characteristics of a great vision statement: Imaginable, Desirable, Feasible, Focused, Flexible & Communicable.

#### **4- Communicate the change vision**

Visions are only as powerful as their ability to be effectively communicated. Keep visions simple and free of all jargon. When possible use a metaphor or analogy. Share the vision in multiple forums, in big meetings and small, in multiple forms of media, keeping it simple but repeated, and making sure that the leaders are leading by example. Always try to get two-way communication as it is more powerful.

#### **5- Empower employees for broad-based action**

Often, formal or informal organizational structural barriers prevent employees from making necessary changes. Some past values may get in the way of progress and will need to be addressed. Some new skills will be necessary, so ways must be found to train employees with these skills. Systems also need changed that reward the wrong behavior or measure the wrong output. Sometimes, there are people in leadership that are highly influential but are resistant to change. These people should be worked with to try to help them understand the need for change or should be removed.

#### **6- Generate short-term wins**

Short term wins help sustain belief and support for the change effort. Without them, enthusiasm wains and change critics gain support. Short term wins also energize people by showing that change is possible and that they are gaining ground. "A good short-term win has at least these three characteristics: 1. It's visible; large numbers of people can see for themselves whether the result is real or just hype. 2. It's unambiguous; there can be little argument over the call. 3. It's clearly related to the change."

#### **7- Consolidate gains and produce more change**

You must maintain the urgency level, as soon as it drops the resistance is always waiting to stop the change. In highly interdependent organizations change difficult because to change one thing you must change many. When possible, try to reduce interdependence to facilitate change. Change can breed more change, after gaining ground on small projects you can now begin to tackle some of the larger projects. It is very helpful let many of the change projects to be led by lower level management and to a create an 'open system' so anyone can share ideas/raise issues/identify new areas in need of change.

#### **8- Anchor new approaches in the culture**

Culture is the common ways that a group acts. It is usually not written, but it is the way things are done and it reflects the shared values. To get change to stick, new behaviors and values must be firmly rooted. One of the best ways to do this is to fit new practices into the existing culture. By doing this it feels the same and is not an entirely new habit. Change never ends, so instilling a culture of lifelong learning and constant change can enable future changes to go smoothly. Other ways to instill changes into the culture are: showing evidence that changes are causing improvements, removing the old culture by showing how it was helpful in the past but no longer helpful, promote leaders not committed to the old culture. Anchoring changes in culture comes last, not first.