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Change Management – A path to success
by Barry Tuckwood

In this and the article entitled "From Resistance to Adoption" we will look at the approach to change management and the reactions that are built into it.

It is relatively easy for people inside an organisation to recognise the need for a change because they can see what is not working as effectively as it might be. It is similarly easy for any of us to see the same things from the outside. Indeed, we would be hard-pressed to find a person who does not have views on the efficiency or otherwise of a hundred services that they use, or wish they could use, during their normal day. Banks, the post office, mobile phones, we all fall victim to their inadequacies. We all think we know what we would do about them.

How will the manager responsible for their unit approach the problem? In the diagram you should start by recognising the need, which must first be confirmed. It is no good tackling a problem which simply isn't there, or is merely a symptom. Get to the root of it, identify and cure the illness.

Now you need to find the motivation for change. The people doing the job have always done it that way, and it always worked well enough before. What is in it for the person who needs to change? Why would they bother?

There is no simple answer to this. You have to know the person or ask them directly. What is it that provides the obstacle that the customer faces? What is it that would make it

worth changing? Does it affect them as individuals? Wouldn't it be better if their customer was happier? What would make them happier in their own jobs? What if…..

You need information, not only on the problem that you have seen, but on how to solve it and how to motivate staff – and perhaps customers and other stakeholders – to change their processes.
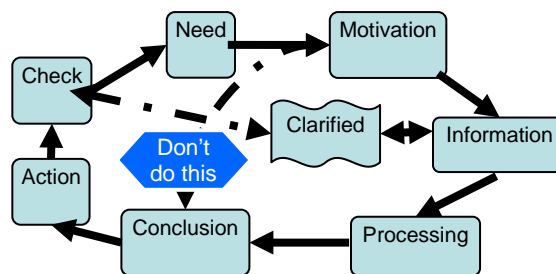
You obtain the information and can clarify it, checking back ideally using an independent observer, against the initial need. The independence which might easily come from uninvolved people within the organisation can clarify the problem, the solution and the benefits. You can now move on to change the process. Take it carefully, feathers can still be ruffled. What you said was necessary and what everyone has agreed to might still be less than perfectly understood, as well as being less than perfect. Can you test it? Was this an aspect that you could run a trial on as part of the checking process against the perceived need?

You can, you have, you tweaked it a bit and you succeeded. You have a conclusion, can take real action, implement the whole change

in the processes across all of the individual groups that are affected and the job is finished. Nothing more to do than a final check that all is well, and move on to running the unit again, always keeping an eye out for the next need. The cycle of change is complete.

Where can this whole chain of events go wrong? It is easy to jump steps. Once you recognise a weakness you can see the conclusion and move straight from Need or Motivation to Conclusion, taking action without obtaining the buy-in that is essential to success. You would be lucky to get away with that with a small child, yet we all try to do it from time to time with mature adults. No wonder we fail. Remember the steps and take all of them.

Change is serious - it requires care, communication and consultation to get cooperation and commitment. Consider the vital steps and take them at a pace that suits the participants. And don't try taking short cuts

Diagram taken from material developed during the National Projects programme. Barry Tuckwood is the Programme Manager for Valuebill, one of the National Projects. www.newham.gov.uk/valuebill; barry@tuckwood.co.uk

Useful sources: www.ogc.gov.uk