

# CHECKLIST FOR MANAGING CHANGES WITH PEOPLE, TEAMS, & ORGANIZATIONS

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This checklist is offered as an aid to leaders, managers, supervisors, negotiators, mediators and others who have responsibility for bringing about positive changes with people, teams, and organizations. Not all items in the list will necessarily be relevant to all change situations. Nonetheless, they are identified so that the leader can consider their relevance and apply the items that are helpful.

### **Preparation – Planning**

- ✓ Carefully assess the situation, problem, obstacle, or cause for considering making changes. *(What's wrong? What is it costing? Why is it necessary to make changes?)*
- ✓ Clarify possible change options that could result in improvements. *(What will make it right?)*
- ✓ Calculate the potential costs of possible changes in financial, human, and organizational terms. *(What can go wrong when making changes? What possible losses will accompany a change? What could happen during the change process if "Murphy's Law" operates?)*
- ✓ Specify the changes that are best suited to contribute positively to the situation. *(What are the things that need to be done to fix the situation?)*
- ✓ Identify the people and resources that will be necessary for the changes to be successful. *(What will it take to effectively make the changes?)*
- ✓ Anticipate other adjustments that could occur once the changes have been made. *(What unintended consequences could happen after the change is completed? How might people respond to the new situation?)*

### **Implementation – Execution**

- ✓ Communicate the goals and outcomes that are expected to be achieved by implementing the changes. *(What are the intended results of the changes? What is the "vision" of success?)*
- ✓ Explain the need for the changes to those who will be affected. Generate a sense of urgency for accomplishing the changes. *(Why are the changes required; why now? Why is the new vision urgently important?)*
- ✓ If appropriate, request input from people who are involved with the situation to be changed and those who are related to the situation that will be created by the change. *(What can make the change happen with the greatest ease? What suggestions do people have for how to implement the changes?)*
- ✓ Clarify the standards for outcomes that are related to the changes. *(How much? How far? What's enough? What deadlines apply? What measurements and reports are required?)*
- ✓ Establish a timeline of activities, events, and actions that will be used to achieve the changes. Specify who will be responsible for what and by when for the changes to be achieved. *(What will happen, who will cause it to occur, and when will it be done?)*

- ✓ Begin complex changes by dealing with small and/or simple increments to build up a momentum of success going into more complicated change actions. (*What can we start with that will be easy? What small successful changes will make it easier to change more complicated parts?*)
- ✓ Share information widely about progress of the changes toward the goals and outcomes. (*What do people need/want to know about how the changes are proceeding?*)
- ✓ Solicit continuous feedback from multiple sources that are impacted by the changes to assess progress and identify adjustments necessary for complete success. (*What's happening? Is it working? How's it going? What tweaks are needed?*)

### **Follow-through – Assessment**

- ✓ Provide ongoing support for assuring that the changes are implemented successfully. Support could consist of training for success in the new situation; new policies and procedures consistent with the new situation; new meeting schedules, deadlines, routines, etc., appropriate to the new situation; new people involved in new ways to support the new situation; new incentives and rewards for performing in ways consistent with the new situation; and so on. (*What do we need to do to help people want to make the new situation successful? What new ways-of-work will make it easy for the new situation to be successful?*)
- ✓ Compare the situation after the changes have been made with the situation that existed prior to the changes. Assess actual outcomes against desired outcomes. Make continuing adjustments. (*Did the outcome you want actually happen? What else now needs to be done?*)
- ✓ Stabilize the new situation by documentation, policies, procedures, guidelines, contracts, and other forms of institutionalization. Celebrate the change and the success of the new situation. (*What is the new way we do business around here? How can we thank those who helped?*)

### **Some Principles for Managing Changes That Involve People, Teams, and Organizations**

- ◆ Change produces resistance. It's not bad; it's normal. Take resistance into account in planning and implementing changes. Find ways to handle resistance effectively by listening actively and appealing to sound logical reasoning.
- ◆ People tend to resist less those changes that they perceive to be in their enlightened self-interest. Find ways of interpreting changes so that those impacted will see some benefits for themselves.
- ◆ Complacency, cynicism, laziness, pessimism, confusion, and fatigue can all contribute to failure of planned changes. Energy, enthusiasm, activity, optimism, clarity, and persistence all contribute to successful change.
- ◆ Leaders during change processes have a major responsibility to communicate clearly, reduce uncertainty, act confidently, listen carefully and non-defensively, provide reassurance, remain patient, and exude optimism. Leaders must avoid generalizing their experiences of changes to others. Leaders are in control of changes; others are not, and that makes a world of difference in how changes are experienced.
- ◆ Success in managing change can be increased by communicating both concrete-specific detailed outcomes AND abstract-general visionary goals. Different people connect in different ways to achieve an understanding of, and to cooperate with, the objectives and processes of making changes.