MANAGEMENT INSIDER

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HOW LEADERS CAN MANAGE CHANGE SUCCESSFULLY

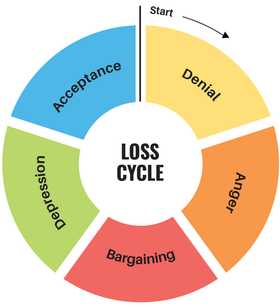
As the saying goes, "the only constant is change." That is a great truth in both life and work. But most of us still have a difficult time handling change. Leaders in an organization have to not only deal with their own reaction to change, they also have to steer their team's journey through the change process.

One major change coming up at Regal Medical Group and Lakeside Community Healthcare is our move from Northridge to West Hills. To prepare yourself and your team for this transition, and any other future changes, follow these steps: **Anticipate, Organize, Implement and Review.**

ANTICIPATE THE IMPACT

Understand the nature of change: The first step in preparing for change is to recognize that it is helpful to see change as the norm, rather than the exception. It is an opportunity for growth and improvement. This step **anticipates the level of stress and sense of loss as well as the excitement of the new.**

Deal with the change by identifying benefits and opportunities: As part of anticipating the impact of this move on the team, leaders must identify benefits and opportunities as well as acknowledging losses and concerns. The diagram below shows the stages of the loss cycle.



These five steps of the classical loss cycle go from denial to acceptance:

1. **Denial:** This is where a manager especially needs to be sensitive to each team member. Some may be perfectly at ease and excited about the move while others might stress about the change. You may want to meet one-on-one with each person to address any specific concerns.
2. **Anger:** Anger is a normal and natural reaction to change if any part of that change may impact a person adversely (e.g., the new office is a longer commute). The good news is that this phase forms a natural part of the cycle and will likely pass.
3. **Bargaining:** For those who feel the move will impact them negatively, bargaining helps the brain cope by searching for a way to negotiate some part of the change. One strategy is to emphasize the positive aspects of the change (e.g., a nicer campus with dining options and a workout area).
4. **Depression:** Before acceptance can occur, there may be a period of resignation, especially for someone who sees the upcoming change as even a little negative. You need to be prepared to navigate through this time, even though it leads to the final phase of the change cycle.
5. **Acceptance:** Acceptance occurs once the change has been fully implemented. You are now living in a new cycle with the change process completed.

ORGANIZE: ESTABLISH RESOURCES AND SYSTEMS

Establish resources and systems. Here, you need to lock in clear, strong and unequivocal leadership for the change before the journey begins. Select "champions" of change from your team who will help you lead the way to acceptance.

Work within the timetable: Plan ahead so no one gets stressed with last minute tasks. If the impending change involves a move, it makes sense to start discarding items and papers no longer needed and packing up the pieces that will go with you.

Create a sense of urgency: Whether the impending change is several months down the road or within a few weeks, it's important to broadcast the scope of the changes necessary and develop schedules and identify target dates and milestones.

IMPLEMENT: COMMUNICATE AND FOLLOW THROUGH

Communicate, listen and follow through: Use multiple ways of communicating the change to raise levels of awareness and understanding. Leaders need to communicate upcoming changes regularly and through various methods. Use email, verbal announcements during team huddles and meetings, and consider posting updates on white boards and bulletin boards.

Build enabling systems: Use feedback to build future processes that help employees and teams cope with and manage the change. This means listening actively to feedback in meetings and focus groups. Try to identify and respond to both emotional and non-emotional reactions.

REVIEW: MONITOR SUCCESS AND ADJUST

Separate from the past: As you roll out the new initiative, emphasize the positive and deal firmly, fairly and quickly with any continued negativity.

Implement change in value and culture: Help your team adjust to the change as it evolves. For example, with the upcoming move to West Hills, begin with small steps like starting to pack up before transitioning to more complex adjustments like exploring offerings of the new building and how each team member will benefit from them. You could emphasize the larger grounds at the new building as an incentive to walk during breaks and lunch and see this change as a bonus to improve health.

Evaluate success and adjust where necessary: Celebrate success at any available opportunity. This is especially important as the change date gets closer. Leaders should build excitement and celebrate.

Questions, comments or ideas? Please email **Henrietta Komras**, *M.Ed. (ES Training Manager)*, at hkomras@regalmed.com.

Recommended Reading

Resources for further study to enhance your knowledge and skills

Books on how to manage change

CHANGE MANAGEMENT THAT STICKS: A PRACTICAL, PEOPLE-CENTERED APPROACH, FOR HIGH BUY-IN AND MEANINGFUL RESULTS

by Barb Grant

This is a field-tested playbook for making change actually work. The book tackles the following:

- How to identify what people really want from change — and sell it to them
- The difference between how to motivate change leaders and change users
- How to gather the right information to develop great change management stakeholder assessments, change plans, and impact assessments and what to include in them
- What to do when the change effort gets into trouble and how to remain authentic when hard messages must be delivered

LEADING CHANGE

by John P. Kotter

John Kotter's eight-step process for managing change with positive results has become the foundation for leaders and organizations across the globe. By outlining the process every organization must go through to achieve its goals, and by identifying where and how even top performers derail during the change process, Kotter provides a practical resource for leaders and managers charged with making change initiatives work.