



Why do we need effective Change Management?

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The need for change in the healthcare system is now widely recognized – by the public, professions and government. It requires a fundamental change in thinking, practice and delivery of healthcare over the next decade. We all know that the challenge of management in Healthcare is a daunting one. Add that to the management of information communications and technology solutions within Healthcare and you have one huge responsibility. How can we best ensure that our Healthcare clients get exactly what they need for solving their changing information communications and technology needs?

Answer = Implement a solid and progressive Change Management (CM) plan into your solution.

The lack of Change Management planning has been described as one of the biggest obstacles to success.

We all ideally want success for our clients.

We envision our clients to be the best that they possibly can be and, in turn to succeed in helping their patients – ultimately optimizing health for us all. Is it all really that easy? After all, change is a natural part of life isn't it? Or is it?

Research indicates that many CEOs (up to 75%) have said that their organizational change efforts have not yielded the promised results. In fact, these same executives end up managing the torrent of unintended outcomes and negative results. Why does this happen more often than not? Although change is considered a 'natural' part of life, we seem to develop organizational structures which are built on rigidity and structure and which do not easily lend themselves to any form of change. There is a large observable difference in how change occurs in nature compared to a machine. How is it then that we can successfully work within the inherent paradox which exists?

We begin by looking at what it is that we ultimately want to create. What are our outcomes? Do we know what the challenges and issues are which we feel we need to 'fix'? What roles do our people have to play in the process? How does any organization, especially one in Healthcare manage to prepare for future trends and innovations which arrive at lightening speed?

This means bringing together all the stages of a comprehensive CM process as all the information communications and technology needs are integrated. Good CM planning ultimately helps two groups: the Healthcare provider and the patient.

Change Management has been defined by Prosci (2006) as "a set of processes, tools and practices that are used to manage the people side of change. Change Management becomes a bridge between "implementing a solution" and an organization ultimately realizing the benefits associated with the change"

Let's talk about how to assess projects using the *Prosci Change Triangle*. The Prosci Change triangle defines three key elements in a framework based on client interactions. These elements are required for any project to be implemented and fully realized. Three key elements are identified:

- Leadership and Sponsorship
- Project Management
- Change Management

Leadership

When organizations like Motorola and GE implemented successful CM programs, they were clear to include comprehensive leadership training. The abilities and strengths of a leader in any organization preparing for a CM program are critical to its success. Leadership involves everything from making decisions, to the ability to clearly hold the vision of where the organization is moving to. A leader knows how to walk the talk and live with the 'commitment' involved in the process. They provide direction; many can inspire by action and they know how to build consensus and collaboration between teams. Finally, an effective leader in a CM process knows how to balance the alignment with overall strategic direction while keeping their commitment to the change inclusive. Leadership is depicted as one of the three main legs of the Change Triangle.

Project Management

Any change process within an organization needs must also be viewed from a project management vantage point. All CM needs to be defined with clear parameters and

goals, as well as looking at 'how' it fits into the overall strategic direction of the organization. Solutions need to be not only developed, they need to be implemented. What will the final deliverables look like when the project is complete? Can all the stages of the CM process be clearly identified? Are the timelines realistic? Is there allowance for a margin of error or difficulty? How do we get from Step one through to Step Twenty-two? These are just some of the things to consider as an integral part of the CM process. Project Management therefore becomes the second leg described in the triangle process.

Change Management

Finally, the triangle identifies the third leg as being "Change Management". This is defined as the aspect most relating to the 'people' side of the change management process. In order for effective CM to occur in any organization, employee buy-in and understanding is critical. By building support and helping an organization's staff understand why the change is occurring and what is to be gained from it, management can be ensured much greater success in the end. Wheatley states that the reason organizations fail at change is because they simply fail to understand who people inherently are and what goes on in organizations. She fundamentally believes that people will naturally take our work and try to make it their own. They want to be a part of the 'creative' process of what is happening. When this is allowed to occur, there becomes a natural sense of ownership and investment. Even if participation is not a choice in their view, if we invite them in to the process of re-thinking, redesigning and re-structuring then we know they will help create a future which includes them. Managing the people side of change is simply as essential as the other two legs of the triangle, leadership and project management.

The Prosci triangle describes all these elements as being essential in order to have a successful CM process within an organization. What also needs to be maintained is the creation of a level of balance between these factors. Organizations will differ in terms of where their prominent strengths lie initially. The ability to realistically define which attributes are strong and which need support will effectively support the entire process overall.

Scope of Change Management

What do we need to do as we integrate information communications and technology changes? What considerations are there for Healthcare providers and organizations? Let's go through some of the areas we, as Change Management professionals need to be aware of as the process moves forward.

Change Management Planning

Research in change management and business process design shows that successful change can be

modeled and repeated. As with any other project, all change management activities should be carefully planned. Research shows a direct positive correlation between the use of a structured methodology and change management effectiveness. Using a systematic approach for managing change with the integration of information communications and technology into healthcare projects ensures that the human factor (ease of use) is not overlooked in the midst of all the technical issues to be considered. This is especially important and relevant for the end-users of the new systems and applications – the non-technically trained healthcare providers.

Readiness Assessment

A comprehensive assessment of the existing situation, including both organizational and individual readiness, is crucial when introducing a new technology into any healthcare organization. The current state of any organization, including leadership responsibilities, established communication mechanisms and potential for the future developments can provide significant insights and may directly impact future actions. Individual readiness is important for assessing a level of computer literacy among the medical personnel and determines whether or not any additional actions may be required.

Sponsorship

Sponsorship refers to the understanding and execution of a change by an organization's leaders. Often, top leaders of the organization do not realize how to be the effective sponsors of change. This is a change management team task to involve leaders in active and visible participation with not only the project team, but also with employees and middle managers. Ideally, the sponsorship team learn to act as models for staff in showing how specific actions will lead to the overall vision of the change being implemented. The sponsorship team is also tasked with the responsibility of knowing how the CM process ties into the organization's strategic plan for the future. The impact of an organization's sponsorship participation is enormous as a component of successful implementation of any change management process.

Communication

Effective communication is critical for building awareness and fostering a willingness to embrace change. There is a need for the stakeholders at all levels of leadership of the organization to be actively involved in communicating main messages. Identifying the audience as well as the senders of the message and identifying the most effective tools of communication are some of the main factors to be considered. Healthcare providers are the most receptive to change

¹Bringing Life to Organizational Change, Journal for Strategic Performance Measurement, April/May 1998
Margaret J. Wheatley & Myron Kellner-Rogers

if the communication is coming from at least two sources: a leader of the organization or the information communications and technology department who can provide the employees with the vision and reason for the change; and their immediate supervisor who is more familiar with the business situation and can provide employees with immediate support and assistance. Creating the opportunity for feedback and establishing two-way communication mechanisms are also critical components to consider.

Coaching

In today's rapidly growing industry of information and communication technology, it can be challenging keeping up with the swift changes and innovations, especially within the healthcare industry. Establishing a proper coaching process is among the factors to consider when integrating a new information communications and technology product into any healthcare organization. Middle managers and supervisors as the main change transmitters need to be prepared to answer the question "What's in it for me?" from the employees. Training tools, materials and mechanisms involving current states of computer literacy should be developed and help support the transition from current to new processes. A carefully developed coaching process will address many issues of patient safety and potentially minimize any probability of medical error.

Resistance

Resistance is the first human reaction to any change. This should automatically be expected as a part of the process of bringing and implementing an information communications and technology solution into any healthcare organization. The typical employee of the organization might hesitate and doubt the need for any change, as well as their ability to perform well in the new environment. One of the tasks of the change management team is to try to identify what kind of resistance may be expected and where it is likely to come from. To be proactive is a key in addressing resistance. Based on the assessment of the current state and processes, a specialized approach should be developed in order to prevent or mitigate resistance before it happens. Any additional information communications and technology support and training for the medical personnel must be available and this availability needs to be clearly communicated to the staff to ensure smooth transition. Establishing open two-way communication and feedback needs to be ensured for a successful change integration process.

Reinforcement

Reinforcement is a significant part of a change management lifecycle. It keeps change in place and defines the future state of any implemented processes. CM professionals need to clarify what mechanisms for systematic and explicit reinforcement need to be considered from the start of any change integration. Sponsors of change, as well as middle managers and supervisors should be actively involved in supporting new processes and ensuring that all company personnel are using implemented innovations in their day-to-day practice.

Evaluation

Evaluation and analysis based on a feedback from employees and the other measurements of success is often one of the most forgotten parts of a change management process. Has the organization tested the change management which has occurred? One of the challenges that Motorola revealed in their learning's about CM is the level of 'testing' that did or did not happen once the change was implemented. Have the initial objectives of the organization been realized? Are there any indicators of improved efficiency, safety or service to the Healthcare clients? Is the final product a reflection of the original vision? Has the CM process supported the organizations strategic plan and vision? These are all questions to ask and things to consider as the CM process is evaluated.

Can effective Change Management happen?

We think so. Ideally, most of the modern information communications and technology solutions integrated into the healthcare setting are intended to simplify the existing processes and make the life of healthcare staff easier. Often it is hoped that these changes will also provide for better service and care for patients, perhaps even saving lives and increasing quality of care. If we dismiss the crucial change management components and steps, the leaders and project managers of healthcare organizations will put successful integration of information communications and technology solutions at risk. Change management uniquely addresses human aspects such as fear, hesitation, and resistance in the process of building and using technology. This alone can create a paradox in making the process both challenging yet fascinating in its orchestration. There are a great many things for us all to consider when it comes to implementing successful and lasting change. ●