

Leading Transformational Change: Winning the Hearts and Minds ^{1, 2}

James Fette

Abstract

We are in a period of rapid change. To remain competitive, companies need to move fast and adapt to changes quickly. Some of these changes require significant transformation of a company's culture, process and operating model. While the change may be important and unstoppable to the company, many individuals will always be hesitant to take on something new and leave behind what they have been familiar with for a long time. Change can create fear, uncertainty and loss of confidence and job security among employees, supervisors and the managers. Project managers need to be able to manage transformational change efforts and drive business benefits. Managing change efforts requires a different approach than traditional project management. The Learning Objectives of this article include the following:

1. Define change management and transformational change
2. Understand why transformational change efforts fail
3. The key to leading successful change- winning the hearts and minds
4. Three "batteries" you can use to energize and win the hearts and minds
 - Purpose – improvement vs. change
 - Human Needs – Esteem and Self-Actualization
 - Engagement through experiences, connections and community
5. Traditional project management vs. change management - communication

I. Introduction: Change Management and the Era of Rapid Change

Define change management and transformational change

Project managers lead many different types of projects. One of the most complex projects to manage is a transformational change project. Change Management goes beyond project management and refers to any approach to transitioning individuals, teams, and organizations using methods intended to re-direct the use of resources, business process, budget allocations, or other modes of operation that significantly reshape a company or organization. This

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transformation, reshaping the business or operation, requires different approaches and techniques because the project goes beyond just delivery of a tangible output i.e., product, service, technology, infrastructure, it requires changing the behaviors and at times, the mindset of the individuals performing the work. Many times, it requires a shift in the business culture of an organization resulting from a change in the underlying strategy and processes that the organization has used in the past. The management team may have been the people that built and enjoyed the fruits of the very culture that is needed to change.

For decades in business, change came at a relatively slow pace, technological advances were slow to roll out and be adopted. In the last 30 years, this has changed drastically. The pace of change is faster than any time in our history due to technological advances. Barriers to entry for many business' have disappeared and the power of innovation and a laptop have the ability to shift business away from some of the largest corporations. With the rapid pace of change companies need to be able to rapidly adapt to new competitors and new opportunities. This may require drastic changes to operating models, development approaches and decisions making processes. Successful change management is key to business success in era of rapid change.

Despite mature, robust project management tools and techniques, a McKinsey study on change efforts has found that 70% of all change programs fail to achieve their goals. This is a very alarming number given the need to quickly and successfully change the business' and operations function. Let's look at why these efforts fail.

II. Understanding Why Transformational Change Efforts Fail

John Kotter in his book *Leading Change* noted 8 main reasons why change efforts fail.

1. Allowing too much complacency – there is no sense of urgency to change
2. Failing to create a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition – leaders and change agents who model the future behaviors and drive the change through example and action
3. Underestimating the power of vision – clearly identifying the why and the what of the change
4. Under communicating the vision – relying on outdated and non-inspiring ways to deliver the message
5. Permitting obstacles to block the new vision
6. Failing to create short term wins and communicate them
7. Declaring victory too soon
8. Neglecting to anchor changes firmly in the corporate culture and the tools and processes that support the culture

There is no mention of poor project plans, scope creep, lack of funding, weak change control procedures or dysfunctional project teams. If you look at each of these 8 reasons, there is one common denominator. People. Project management and project management tools and

techniques tend to focus on process, org changes and task management and fail on the people side. *Successful change management requires winning the hearts and minds of the people.*

III. **Winning the Hearts and Minds, 3 “Batteries” You Can Use to Power Your Change Efforts**

"The Revolution was effected before the War commenced. The Revolution was in ***the minds and hearts of the people***; a change in their religious sentiments of their duties and obligations.... This radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people, was the real American Revolution" – John Adams

The most complex part of a change management project is winning the hearts and minds of the people impacted. Turning people from passive or detractors to promoters and possibly even champions of the change is critical to delivering lasting change. To successfully do this we need to look past traditional project management tools and techniques and focus on behavioral and motivational practices. Efforts that focus on individuals and answer the question “What’s in it for me and why should I care?” Three concepts or “batteries” we will explore to power your change efforts are:

1. Establish a sense of Purpose
2. Leverage Human Needs – Esteem and Self-actualization
3. Drive engagement through *Connections, Community and Experiences*

Battery 1: Establish a Sense of Purpose

“A man came across three masons who were working at chipping chunks of granite from large blocks. The first seemed unhappy at his job, chipping away and frequently looking at his watch. When the man asked what it was that he was doing, the first mason responded, rather curtly, “I’m hammering this stupid rock, and I can’t wait ‘til 5 when I can go home.”

“A second mason, seemingly more interested in his work, was hammering diligently and when asked what it was that he was doing, answered, “Well, I’m molding this block of rock so that it can be used with others to construct a wall. It’s not bad work, but I’ll sure be glad when it’s done.”

“A third mason was hammering at his block fervently, taking time to stand back and admire his work. He chipped off small pieces until he was satisfied that it was the best he could do. When he was questioned about his work he stopped, gazed skyward and proudly proclaimed, “I...am building a cathedral!”

This story exemplifies the power of “purpose”. All three of the masons are correct, but which one is the most motivated and inspired? As humans, we will rally behind a purpose that is

important to us and when we know our work is part of the greater good. Successful change management needs to identify the purpose of the change and tie the benefits and outcomes of that change to all impacted parties. One way to do this is to develop a vision for the change effort, clear concise and actionable. The vision must be aspirational and inspire people to take action. It should also be clear and actionable and outlines what this means for the customers, the stakeholders and the employees. It should outline and define the greater good the change management effort is striving for. No one but shareholders are inspired by profits, think of the human impact and the desire for purpose. This vision needs to outline a brighter future and clearly outline the benefits.

To make the leap from vision to purpose, a value proposition has to be developed for each segment of the population impacted by the change. Answer the question why is this **improvement vs. change?** Clearly articulate the purpose and how each segment contributes to a successful outcome. Set clear and actionable goals to align with the vision. Continue to ask this question, how does the change effort impact people and tie this back to winning the hearts and minds

Battery 2: Leverage Human Needs – Esteem and Self-actualization

Figure 1 – Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs



Another way to power your change effort and win the hearts and minds of the people is to leverage human needs, specifically the need for esteem and self-actualization. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a motivational theory in psychology comprising a five-tier model of human needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid. The five tiers are:

1. Biological and Physiological needs - air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sleep, etc.
2. Safety needs - protection from elements, security, order, law, limits, stability, etc.
3. Belongingness and Love needs - work group, family, affection, relationships, etc.
4. **Esteem needs - self-esteem, achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, managerial responsibility, etc.**
5. **Self-Actualization needs - realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences.**

Similar to the approach in establishing a sense of purpose, by aligning the vision and benefits of your change efforts with the human needs of esteem and self-actualization you can win over the hearts and minds of the people impacted by change.

Leverage the need of Esteem, by empowering people and including them in the transformation effort. Allow them to help define the project approach and be key members of the team. Use unique titles like change champions to recognize people who are on-board and reward those who drive the change. All too often, organizations bring in consultants to drive the project and this alienates the people impacted. By bringing people onto the team, recognizing the desired change behaviors and awarding those who are driving the change, the human needs of self-esteem will be met and you will power your transformation efforts.

For Self-Actualization, challenge your top performers and provide them with unique experiences that allow them to contribute to the change effort. Provide them with leadership roles on the project and provide them with opportunities for stretch assignments. You should use your change management project as an opportunity to grow and challenge the team. Make this a prestigious role and align their success with the change project's success.

Battery 3: Drive engagement through *Connections, Community and Experiences*

Continuous communication is critical to leading transformational change. In our age of information overload, we need to think of different ways to communicate the change effort, its benefits and progress. We need to engage the people impacted by the change, not just communicate to them. The goal of engaging people is to have them fully absorbed by and enthusiastic about the change effort and take positive action to further the organization's transformation efforts. The following are three ways to engage people and drive the change.

Connections

Connections are made up of connections to the organization, its values and vision. Connections to the leadership, their values and visions. Connections to the change effort and its benefits. Humans, because of necessity, evolved into social beings. Dependence on and cooperation with each other enhanced our ability to survive under harsh environmental circumstances. Although the survival threats of these circumstances have lessened in today's world, people continue to have a need to affiliate with others. In-person meetings, roundtables, townhalls, trade-shows are all ways to connect people with the change effort and those leading it. Interactive forums which allow people to raise questions and concerns. The goal in all these interactions is to be authentic and approachable.

The change effort can also be used to provide networking opportunities, allow people to connect with senior leaders. Provide forums where leaders and employees can interact in a casual, informal environment. The focus should be on personal interactions. Allow people to

“engage”. Leaders should model the desired change behaviors and make the change real for the employees. Resistance to change is often fueled by leaders who say one thing and do another. Leaders should be held accountable to the same set of expectations as employees.

Community

Driving transformational change, it takes a village. No one person ever has all of the answers, and regardless of the amount planning, consulting with the broader organization is always going to give you better information. Establishing a sense of community contributes to camaraderie and a feeling that “we are all in this together”. People will push their limits when they are not going alone and have the support of their peers. When you are working within a community of like-minded people, the wisdom of crowds is considerably greater than any one person working alone. You want to gather divergent views and unique perspectives. Establish these working and listening posts and specifically name them communities or tribes. They should not be hierarchical organizations, all participants should be equal. The goal should be to bring people together and work through the transformation effort. Make it about “us” not “them”

Experiences

“When I hear, I forget. When I see, I remember. When I do, I understand.”
- Confucius

Engage your employees and drive your change effort by providing unique experiences. Allow people to “feel” the change and its impacts. Develop and deliver events that are different, outside of our ordinary routine, and that will attract attention. They stand out because of their difference and their engaging format. Our brains are hardwired to remember new experiences because they stand out from our day to day routine. A few examples are as follows. Deliver a Change Fair, have tables highlighting the short-term wins and project progress. Run change focused competitions or contests, rewarding individuals or teams that demonstrate the behaviors you are targeted. If there are companies that model the behaviors you are looking to change, do a site visit. Take your change champions to visit the company and talk to the people who are living the future vision. Movie nights, team lunch and learns, photo contests are ways to provide experiences, outside of the normal day to day work activities.

IV. Continuous Communication and Short-term wins

Leading transformation change requires all the tools and techniques of project management along with a significant focus on changing people’s behaviors and winning their hearts and minds. With any project, there should be a communication plan developed. With change management, the communication plan should include highlighting short-term wins. Short-term wins are especially effective during a long and involved change initiative. When a team focuses

on tasks that enable quick, visual, and meaningful achievements during the change process, it shows employees that progress is being made and builds momentum to continue the change effort. In addition, short-term wins reward employees for their hard work, build confidence in the change effort, validate the vision and strategies of the change leaders, and demonstrate to change resisters the positive effects of the change

V. Conclusion

With the rapid pace of change companies need to be able to quickly adapt to new competitors and new opportunities. This may require drastic changes to operating models, development approaches and decision making processes. Culture, the heart, soul, and beliefs of a company may need to significantly change. Successful change management is key to business success in era of rapid change and project managers will need to focus on changing people's behaviors though winning the hearts and minds of the people impacted.

Significant effort should be focused on the vision and benefits of the change. Leverage people's need for purpose in their work, provide opportunities to build self-esteem and self-actualization, engage people though connections, community and experiences. Make the change real and its benefits known and understood. This focus, in addition to standard project management tools and techniques, will enable change leaders to win the hearts and minds of the people impacted by the change and enable successful, transformational change.

About the Author



Jim Fette

Texas, USA



Jim Fette, PMP is a Financial Services and Experience Management executive, with over 25 years of experience leading global teams. Jim has developed a robust portfolio of skills and experience and gets his energy by helping projects, organizations and people achieve their potential. Passions include driving innovation, leading change, developing talent, career coaching and defining corporate strategy. Jim is a Program Success Principal with Qualtrics where his focus is to partner with Qualtrics' largest and most strategic customers to close experience gaps and deliver breakthrough results. He consults on Experience Management (XM) program design, adoption and maturity and unlocks the most value from Qualtrics' products and services. Incorporating Project Management tools and techniques, Jim has developed approaches to leadership, strategic planning and change management which can be applied to your career, your project or in developing the strategy for your organization. Jim shares insights at events, conferences and workshops as a speaker and coaches on career and leadership development.

You can learn more about Jim and view his blog at jimfette.com