

Changing focus

Forces should focus on improving people and existing procedures rather than projects, writes Martin Taylor, Managing Director of changethreesixty...

With many challenges requiring solutions to be identified and put into practice, it is essential that organisational leaders adopt a focus on how to implement the required change and not adopt a narrower programme or project approach.

There is an important difference: the project mindset deals with the specific requirement and need, while a change mindset focuses on the impacts of undertaking the change. This is not semantics but one of the main reasons why so many initiatives fail to provide the desired benefits.

For example, the Mobile Information Programme introduced by the Home Office and coordinated by the NPIA over the last two and a half years was intended to focus on the required business change, quite rightly. The programme's intentions were clear and attainable: increase officer visibility on the street by reducing bureaucracy, utilising handheld and in-car devices and software solutions. Many of the intended benefits have not yet been realised. One of the main reasons for this is the focus on the project aspects – the handheld or in-car device and software solution, the technology – and less so the processes and people aspects, ie. the impacts of undertaking the change. In this example the technology is the easiest component – it is the process and people aspects that are the most complex and difficult to change.

The change requirements have been highlighted repeatedly but not understood, and invariably the wrong type of resources have been deployed to deliver this critical role. What many may have thought at the time as a cost saving in terms of deploying available resource, has proved to be one of the reasons that the potential benefits have not been realised. It needs to be appreciated that managing change is a specific skill, and viewing this resource merely as additional cost is indeed a false economy.

Holistic approach

It is essential to adopt a holistic approach to organisational changes, mapping them to the overall strategy and objectives to ensure their achievement will move the institution in the desired direction. This can be easily undertaken using a simple scoring matrix to determine which changes really fit with the overall objectives. This approach must include process, people

and technology aspects and in particular the impacts on each of these elements.

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Successful change requires engagement with all stakeholders, detailed planning to define timescales, resources, impacts and expectations and successful delivery to ensure the benefits of the change are realised. To facilitate successful change requires:

Shared vision and strategy

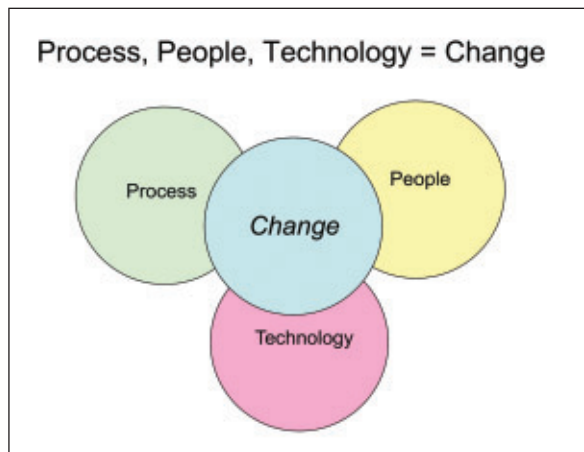
- Supported by all stakeholders, internal and external;
- Providing the direction and objectives for the organisation;
- Communicated throughout the organisation to ensure understanding and commitment.

Effective leadership and management

- There must be a clear decision-making process;
- Delegate real responsibility to people who then have the authority to deliver the change;
- Leaders must ‘walk the talk’ and set the example to their teams;
- Improve prioritisation, resource planning and time management;
- Improve real accountability.

A culture that supports and embraces change, with employee participation and involvement

- Greater involvement and empowerment of employees;
- Consistent messages from top down;
- Show benefits of change to employees;
- Recognise employee contribution;



- Proactively manage the culture.

Ongoing effective communication

- Match communication to the audience;
- Explain positively why the change is taking place and why it is important to employees;
- Communicate stages of success;
- Use different available media.

Focus on fewer, key, changes

- Compile initial list of business improvements;
- Score each change for fit with strategy and benefits;
- Appoint a passionate sponsor, change manager and business resource to own and deliver;
- Report and monitor progress regularly;
- Focus on fewer, finish and move on;
- Do not be too optimistic – do fewer, better.

Adopt a consistent approach for introducing and embedding change

- Implement a consistent approach for delivery;
- Have the people with the skills to deliver.

The above framework can identify current strengths and opportunities in different organisations, and provide a proven approach for introducing and embedding the change.

Project Management Office (PMO)

Many organisations have established PMOs – but what are these offices for? They are established to define and maintain the standards of process relating to programme and/or project management, but do they really add value to the organisation?

They exist because it is the textbook thing to do, but they simply add levels of unnecessary bureaucracy and therefore cost. The PMO perpetuates the focus on the project and invariably concentrates on the completion of forms and progress reports. It creates the ivory tower syndrome and can become all consuming so that the original intention is lost as the PMO team – invariably with

no programme or project experience or qualifications – grows in numbers and a sense of over-importance.

Surely it would be far better to introduce and embed processes focused around change that managers are responsible for, that provide real benefit and concentrate on the process, people and technology impacts.

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Quantity vs. quality

An old adage for sure but still organisations complete their strategy and identify hundreds of initiatives for the new financial year when there simply are not the available resources, while continuing with business as usual, to successfully complete and gain the intended benefits. So why does this continue to happen?

One reason is that the full impacts of the initiatives have not been considered or understood. Another reason, especially when there is a significant technology impact, is that there is still a lack of understanding at senior level in this area and sometimes ICT has not established effective relationships with other areas of the operation so the mystique still exists.

There must be an effective process for identifying key, strategic business changes and then mapping these to the required resources. This simple approach will ensure expectations are met. It is better to implement 10 changes 100% successfully than 20 changes 50% successfully.

Summary

Focusing on change and not projects opens up a more holistic view, and considering the impacts of what is trying to be achieved considerably increases the success rate. To achieve this requires specific skills and experience that will be needed to ensure the current challenges are addressed effectively.



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