

## **Time to change how we create change**

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If, as is likely, you have been, or will be, involved in change management, you may well find it worth reading these thoughts.

I used to rather ridiculously believe in my ability to design and steer organisation wide change programmes - for instance using Investors in People, in units as large as a 10,000 people social services department of a big city. I am over this now, and confine myself to what really works, and can be managed without the unhelpful involvement of all manner of people requiring reports no one reads and meetings no one wants to attend. In essence, I have been delivering six month CMI accredited leadership programmes in private and public sectors that as a final element involves a presentation specifying in detail how well researched ideas will save or make the organisation at least £5000 - the sum varies from client to client, but is always exceeded, sometimes spectacularly.

I have learned a lot about how to make this work, and I can share with you some essentials:

Select who you work with very carefully as they need to be up for the challenge

Provide clarity and plenty of structure so people know what they are being asked to do

Develop a very positive relationship with a client-based person and keep them well informed

Show genuine and serious support, giving all the time people need to get this right

Do all you can to put these frontliners directly in front of the most senior management

Don't just send hard pressed people out there with the vague instruction of improving something sustainably and with a price tag. I have developed a one page project brief with advice and clarification of expectations so they know exactly what they are doing, and a seven page project planning template they modify to suit their specific needs. The latter document forms, with the presentation, the basis for the assessment at Award level five, maximising the value of effort. If anyone would like these documents just ask.

Projects are typically undertaken alone, although pairing up can help with maintaining momentum. Whichever, they need serious support, particularly near the dreaded presentation, especially, if, as happens, but less often than I would like, the chief executive and other 'heavies' will be there.

The key issue is that they chose and work on something well known to them, and that they believe can deliver the value sought as swiftly as possible. To quote the excellent Donald Kirkpatrick:

### **'People will support what they help to create'**

Where possible, presentations, for which I allow 45 minutes per slot (they never believe they will need this, but they often do, with setting up and question time), are attended by the chief executive and relevant directors. This is one test of the seriousness of the organisation to support and implement the projects. The absence of anyone in a position to run with a great idea from those that know best and cut through the middle managerial blockers can be crucial, especially for higher value, spend to save projects.

Here are just two very recent examples of changes to practice that have been implemented within two weeks of being presented. Firstly, a change of high volume postal procedures using Royal Mail licencing in lieu of stamping all return envelopes that will bring in more than £9,000 annualised in just one part of a very complex organisation. Secondly, a payment has been negotiated for recycled items that were previously given away - annualised value already £15,000, this will rise as a higher value is agreed.

These two of seventeen change projects from two recent programmes provide a credible return on investment on their own. Often these lower value changes with minimum need to spend, or to go through cumbersome administrative and managerial processes are much more likely to be applied than for instance the almost 3 million pound project from the same group that stands alas, very little chance of success, as it becomes lost in the long grass of organisational pontification and delay.

So for me, this is the way I want to create change - not for me the fantasy world of whole organisation programmes, I much prefer the guerilla warfare of doing important things better as instantly and uncomplicatedly as possible.

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