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strong leadership skills come into their own when
an organisation faces major change. Sinead
Johnson (DBS 91, MBA 96) offers advice on bringing
-• your people along with you in the process

OR any company to grow and develop, there will be
stages of major transition. In order to effect this as
smoothly and as efficiently as possible, the management
team needs to make its vision clear to the people who
work within it, and manage the process of change care-
fully and intelligently.

Good change leaders are usually risk takers, willing to do what-
ever it takes to get the desired result. They are able to adjust their
management style depending on the situation — from coach to edu-
cator and from psychologist to taskmaster or mentor — and will
leave their own popularity aside to achieve the vision. •••

Opening the communication channels
Open and frequent communication is critical to the ongoing success
of organisational change. Management must be able to talk with,
and listen to the concerns and ideas of, its employees — rather than
simply delivering instructions. Good communication can often alle-
viate peoples fears, and the more detail given, the better. Employees
are more inclined to develop an allegiance to a goal or process into
which theyVe had input, so communication should be a two-way
street. And of course timing is critical. If employees consider the
process a fait accompli they are less likely to provide meaningful
input and more likely to provide critical feedback.
All messages from management should be clear and consistent,
pi'oviding comfort and a degree of certainty to employees where pos-
sible. If employees experience difficulties in changing their ways,
management and leaders may need to provide one-to-one commu-
nication or coaching sessions to understand the employees' concerns
and agree how best to deal with them. Different people will adjust at
different rates; always make allowances for this.
The power of communication can be strongly effected by the deliv-
ery chosen, so rather than making general announcements, it is often
better to personally communicate the information to specific
departments or groups of employees. Regular communications pro-
vide management with a great forum to celebrate successes as they
occur and to highlight lessons learned. '

Setting milestones ?• - ' • .
Allied to the requirement for clarity in communications is the
requirement to prepare a clear and comprehensive implementation

milestone plan. This should outline the tasks required to effect the
change, the employees responsible for delivery and the timeframe
wthin which the tasks should be completed.
Central to the effective management of the change programme is
the establishment of a project office, with appropriate available
resources to oversee and drive the change process. The project office
personnel will ensure interdependencies are identified and
addressed and that the overall progress of the transition is monitored
and reported on in a timely fashion.

Acknowledging and rewarding progress
It may seem obvious, but a performance measurement system should
always be used to measure the extent to which goals are being achieved.
Key performance indicators that reflect the company's goals should be
identified. If the company and its employees are assessed relative to
these indicators, they will drive the results and thus help measure how
well employees are adjusting to the change.
Companies that do not measure the extent of change will find it
difficult to demonstrate their achievements and thus to celebrate
success. This can lead to a lack of motivation and difficulties with
team morale.
Further motivation to achieve successful change management is
the extent to which individuals are rewarded or recognised for their
efforts. Incentives are powerful tools in facilitating change, lessening
the shock and increasing momentum. Existing reward schemes may
need to be modified to refiect new objectives. Make sure rewards are
tangible and timely if they are to incentivise. They need not always
be monetary and may take the form, for example, of additional skills
development or training, promotion opportunities and improved
working conditions. Strong people leadership will be key to your
successful transition.

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Conveying your vision
A company embarking on change must establish a vision that is log-
ical, realistic, honest and straightforward, and convey it effectively to
its employees. It must lay out a clear picture of the future that not
only benefits the company but also its employees. Buy-in is never
automatic, and no organisation can escape human nature — people
want to know what's in it for them. In this way, it is vital that employ-
ees feel they have joint ownership of the vision for the company.
Reluctance and fear must always be anticipated in any change
process. Smart managers will consider the change from the employ-
ees' perspective and seek to pre-empt their concerns and queries.
The vision should explain why the company needs the change
and how the improvements will be worth the effort. Directness
and honesty give management credibility and generate buy-in to
the whole process.

Providing support
In times of change, employees look to management and leaders to set
the direction. It's essential that management helps employees under-
stand the logic of the change, keeping goals relevant and meaning-
ful and building commitment and confidence. Effective leadership
may mean ignoring traditional hierarchical structures to involve all
levels of an organisation, working in collaboration to achieve a per-
ceived common goal. As management, be prepared also to divulge
more about the business than you normally would, such as in-depth
financial information and operating statistics. The latter maybe nec-
essary to justify reasons for change and to retain valuable buy-in.

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