# HOW TO MANAGE CHANGE

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Charles Darwin said: "Its not the strongest species that survives nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change".
However, change is often feared and resistance within an organisation can jeopardise new initiatives. This article looks at ways to
help changes in the work place take place smoothly

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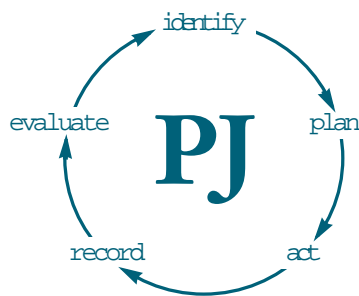
identify gaps in your knowledge

1. Name three barriers to change.
2. How can you help others adopt a positive attitude to change?
3. Are you confident in dealing with change?

This article relates to the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's core competencies of "management" and "interpersonal skills" (see "Medicines, ethics and practice — a guide for pharmacists", number 26, July 2002, pp105–6). You should consider how it will be of value to your practice.

The proposals to regulate pharmacy support staff and to initiate pharmacist prescribing demonstrate how pharmacy, like other professions affected by the modernisation agenda for the National Health Service, is subject to change. However, some managers find implementing change difficult. Two assumptions often made are that people will be carried along with change because it is a fact of life and that radical change is a productive process. Analysis of common responses to change suggests that the process is not so simple. According to Harvard education psychologists, most individuals and organisations are immune to change despite their best intentions to the contrary. But what exactly is change? The Chambers 21st Century Dictionary defines change as "to make or become different". The start of the process itself has been aptly described as follows:[1]

| Pressure to change | → | Vision of a new order | → | Explore capability to change | → | First actionable steps |

Successful implementation of change involves introducing and embedding new norms within an organisation. For example, pharmacist prescribing will undoubtedly affect the way in which pharmacists work and it could become the norm for pharmacists to have access to centralised patient records. And new norms are likely to lead to new codes of conduct for what may and may not be considered acceptable behaviour or practice.

DRIVING CHANGE

Pressure to change The workplace is subject to uncontrollable changes and changes which the organisation may choose to introduce. External factors such as new legislation, social opinion and new techologies are probably the most common impetuses for change. Computers, for example, have resulted in enormous changes to work procedures and communication.

Vision Good leaders do not only anticipate and prepare for change, they institute it. A leader has a vision, and change is needed for that vision to become reality. A pharmacist could, for example, have a vision of well-organised staffing, increased turnover or a new ser-

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vice. Self-induced change can be successfully managed by starting with thinking of the vision (where you want to be) and the reality (where you are now). The vision can be turned into something concrete if is expressed as an outcome. In other words, identify precisely what you want to achieve as a result of change, eg, the provision of a smoking cessation clinic every Wednesday evening.

Explore capabilities Before taking action, consider:

- What you already know that relates to your desired outcome
- What you need to know or have, eg, specific evidence
- Problems you envisage, eg, resistance from staff
- Tried and tested strategies for achieving the outcome you want
- Attitudes of key people (those who can influence the success of the change you want to bring about)

Action plan Use an action plan to turn vision into reality; to identify outcomes of change and establish deadlines. As with any action plan, identify key tasks that need to be completed and the resources needed to complete the tasks, such as people and equipment. The most important feature of an action plan designed to manage change is people. Identifying key people who can influence the outcome of the change you want to bring about, both positively and negatively, is essential. One resource guide,[2] based on a case of a headteacher who turned a failing school into a success, suggests asking the following questions about the people involved:

- Who is supporting your actions and who is not?
- Who understands what needs to be done, and who does not?
- Who can help you shake things up and actively lead the change?
- Who has influence over people that you do not?
- Who has the requisite skills for the necessary changes?
- Who has enjoyed career success under the values of the previous status quo and has a vested interest in keeping things as they are?
- Whom can you wholeheartedly trust and work with?
- In whom do you lack confidence?
- Who is supportive of change and well-intentioned, but holds views different from your own, that should be listened to?

Training Any change within the workplace will create some sort of training need. For example, if a new computer system is installed in a pharmacy, staff need to be trained to use the new system and might also need updating on health and safety issues regarding the use of computers. Changes to an existing job role might create the need

action : practice points

1. Critically assess your own attitude towards change. Do you see change as a threat, an opportunity or a stimulus for action?
2. Think about an impending change at work and draw up an action plan for successfully managing the change. List the opportunities the change will provide.
3. Reflect on a process of change that you have been involved in. What was your contribution? What could have been done differently and better?

evaluate

How could your learning have been more effective?
What will you do now and how will this be achieved?

for an organisation to support development of specific skills in an individual, such as team management or leadership. It is important that training needs are anticipated and that staff are given reassurances that they will be supported through the change.

FIGHTING FEAR AND RESISTANCE

Change often affects individuals personally. For example, as a result of change, an employee may be promoted or demoted, a new manager may be appointed or existing job descriptions amended. In some cases, change may be driven by a company take-over or merger, leading to restructuring of departments and completely new practices. Such changes will leave many staff feeling insecure about their future employment. They will be concerned about how their work might be viewed by new management and whether their conditions of service (eg, salary, benefits, working hours) will be subject to change to match the organisation's new mission. But it is not only upheavals that can cause problems. Small changes can cause anxiety too. Whatever the scenario, staff need to have their fears allayed and will benefit from opportunities to attend information sessions, counselling sessions and motivational workshops.

If you are aware of who is resistant to change and why, you are in a strong position to overcome their resistance. Resistance to change often stems from an "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" mentality. In other words, people tend to feel safe with what they know. One common reason for resistance to change is a lack of understanding as to why change happens. Therefore, a simple yet effective strategy for overcoming resistance is to communicate openly with staff, ie, provide comprehensive information and allow them to express their fears and ask questions.

If fundamental change is necessary and the outcome is threatened by staff who are not prepared to give any commitment, then it may be appropriate to have individual discussions with these people to identify reasons for their resistance and to talk about strategies for overcoming their objections. You might need to negotiate with those who believe that the planned changes will make a fundamental difference to the way in which they work. You might consider offering staff incentives, if possible. However, accept that some staff will be resistant no matter what incentives are offered.

Another cause of resistance is the feeling that the change is an imposition rather than a process that involves consultation. In particular, staff resent change if they believe it has been "manufactured" by managers in "secret" meetings. This type of resistance can be addressed by inviting and encouraging all staff to participate in discussing and implementing change. If staff can be convinced that the change is a good idea, they will communicate your vision to others and you will win the commitment of other "resistors".

Fighting resistance is about getting people to see change as an opportunity rather than a problem. Being confident about implementing change means that you should be ready not only to share the vision with staff and other stakeholders but to accept challenges to it. Research has found that sharing the bigger picture with staff works better than a closed, prescriptive approach. It allows for greater creative input from staff and helps to build their commitment.

As a successful manager of change you should invest time in communication and you must be prepared to explain why you feel a change is needed. If you are confident about your vision, you will feel able to invite other members of staff to assist you as appropriate.

BUILDING COMMITMENT TO CHANGE

Gaining commitment to change takes time and requires an understanding of what people think and how they feel about the change. John van Maurik[3] suggests the following eight steps to help people commit to change:

Mourn the past Allow people to mourn the past, to reflect on what was good about the past and even celebrate it. This will fulfil a basic human need to "let go" properly and with dignity.

Provide advanced notice Give staff as much time as possible to prepare for change. Give them time to make the necessary mental jumps from the shock of hearing about the change, through the denial stage, to acceptance and integration of the change into their own behaviour patterns.

Gradually integrate new with the old The process of change should be as seamless as possible and can be achieved by slow integration of old and new systems.

Involvement at planning and review meetings Allow people who will be directly affected by the change to be involved in its implementation, especially when it comes to the practicalities. Listen carefully to what they have to say.

Think about management style A patient but firm style works best. Balance the need to give direction with the need to provide support.

Use teams effectively Allowing teams to be involved in initiating and implementing change is usually more productive than an individual approach.

Keep abreast of progress A great deal of energy will be invested in kick starting change, but maintaining the energy for change is equally important. Once a change has been effected, managers need to keep abreast of developments, rather than rushing off to implement the next change. Change managers should also keep staff informed about achievements that have been made as a result of the change.

Keep leadership visible A change manager needs to be visible within the organisation as change is implemented. He or she needs to be seen to be interested in the changes that are being managed and how they impact on staff.

CONCLUSION

If change has been successfully managed, then there will be positive results and these should be celebrated. Ideally, organisations should aim to create a culture of continuous improvement and that means continuous change. So it is important for employees to understand the general process of change. One final point not to be overlooked is the need for critical review and reflection of the entire change process. Learn lessons from each change you manage and use that knowledge to improve the process the next time around.

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3. Williams M. The war for talent — getting the best from the best. London:CIPD; 2000.