

GUIDANCE NOTE

Leading successful workplace change

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1. Introduction

The first Guidance Note in this series, 'An introduction to workplace', explained what workplace is and what it means for facilities management (FM). You can download it, and the other guidance notes in this series, from www.iwfm.org.uk/better-workplaces.

This, the fifth guidance note in the series, focuses on workplace change. Change is a constant part of business and work life, but many organisations often find it difficult to implement workplace change successfully. Workplace change initiatives often do not achieve what they were designed to achieve, either partially or completely.

This guidance note explores what workplace change is, in practical terms, and discusses the human and organisational impacts of workplace change. It considers why many organisations find workplace change to be so challenging and the factors that can increase the likelihood of bringing about successful workplace change.

The overall aim of this guidance note is to help facilities managers and other workplace professionals to learn more about the processes of change and provide them with ideas and techniques for implementing workplace change more effectively.

WORKPLACE AND WORKSPACE – A QUICK REFRESH

This is how we use the terms 'workplace' and 'workspace' in this guidance note:

- workplaces are the social places where people use the tools available to them to get their work done - a workplace contains and involves people
- workplaces can be fixed (for example hospitals and offices) or flexible (for example a work van or a temporary place of work)
- workspaces are the physical spaces or environments available for people to work in - spaces are empty and they become places when they have people in them.

Remember that words can be defined in different ways. These aren't the only definitions of workplace and workspace, but they are the ones that we believe allow FM to make the best contribution to organisations.

HOW TO USE OUR WORKPLACE GUIDANCE NOTES

Our workplace guidance notes have been designed to be used as standalone resources or together as a series. Together, the guidance notes focus on the things that organisations should pay attention to when changing existing workplaces or developing new ones.

- 'An introduction to workplace' explains what workplace is and the importance of viewing workplace in a joined-up way.
- 'Making better workplace decisions using data' discusses the role that data can play in helping organisations to make more informed workplace decisions.
- 'Selling your workplace vision' explains how to communicate the value of workplace authoritatively and persuasively and create a convincing case for change.
- 'Creating better workspaces' is about helping non-designers to have a positive influence on the design of the workspaces they are involved with or responsible for.
- 'Leading successful workplace change' provides guidance on the processes of change and practical ideas for bringing about effective workplace change.

It can be helpful to think of these things in sequence, from discovery through to design and delivery of better workplaces.



If you would like to provide feedback on this guidance note or have ideas for other workplace information, guidance or research please email research@iwfm.org.uk

2. What is workplace change?

Change is something we talk about constantly in our everyday lives – often without realising it. For instance, we might be talking about the state of the economy, new technologies, fashion or how our sports teams are doing. But we rarely stop to consider what change means in practical terms; and why would we, because change is just one of those things that happens and that we take for granted – at least until it affects us.

We use the word 'change' as both a noun and also as a verb, and we tend to switch between the two usages without noticing.

- as a noun, change represents the thing that is different: the effect or outcome (for example, something that has improved).
- as a verb, change involves the actions and activities that lead to making the thing different: the process or the journey (for example, the activities we have done to bring about the improvement).

These two different uses are important because, as will become apparent, the process of change is often as, if not more, important than the outcome of change.

In some cases we, as an individual or organisation, are the source or instigator of the change – we decide that something needs to be different, for whatever reason. In other cases the change may be imposed on us and we have to react or adapt to it. Often these internal and external forces work in tandem.

For instance, you might decide to change your diesel car for an electric car because you feel that you should try to reduce your impact on the environment, in terms of pollution and carbon emissions. However, your decision to buy the electric car may also be influenced by external factors, such as media coverage about climate change, government subsidies, better vehicles coming on to the market and higher taxes on diesel cars.



ACTIVITY

Think about a recent workplace change that you were involved with – perhaps you were part of the team responsible for delivering it, or perhaps you were on the 'receiving end':

- what was the source of the change?
- was there just one source or multiple sources? If there were multiple sources, which one was most important?
- were the sources internal, external or a combination of the two?

A series of horizontal lines provided for writing the response to the activity.

In the context of workplace, change can take a number of different forms. It could be about changes to the way people work: the things people do; when, how and where they do them; and who they do them with. It could be about changes to the tools they use to do their jobs or the physical spaces where people work. Or it could involve changes to all of these things or some combination of them.

Workplace change often occurs incrementally, with small or isolated changes being implemented in a piecemeal way, as and when they are deemed necessary. For instance, an organisation may roll-out a new software application to enable their staff to work more collaboratively or they may make changes to their workspace to reflect an organisational rebrand. Often these types of changes are made independently of each other.

Other workplace changes may be more significant, involving a number of initiatives being undertaken at the same time (although not always in a joined-up way!). For instance, an organisation may move or refurbish its premises and use this as an opportunity to not only change its workspace but also upgrade the technology people use to do their work and/or encourage them to work differently.

To help bring these ideas to life let’s return to the ‘workplace equaliser’ thinking tool that was introduced in ‘An introduction to workplace’¹. The equaliser shows each component of a workplace (culture, technology and workspace) on a continuum between two different states. It can therefore be used as a tool for thinking about change.

Here’s a simple example. It’s fictional but based on real world examples, so don’t be surprised if parts of it resonate with you:

WizzFund is a financial technology company with its international headquarters in central Manchester. The company’s headcount has almost doubled since it was formed by a more traditional bank five years ago. WizzFund’s founders predicted this growth and leased a large, open-plan office space, but the office is now full.

The company’s employees are working in a very regimented, inflexible way – they commute into the office most days and tend to work nine to five, despite some of them having mobile computing technology (and jobs) that would allow them to work wherever, whenever. People sit at the same desk every day and there’s limited face-to-face interaction between people in different teams.

The inflexibility in working practices is, in part, because many of WizzFund’s senior leaders came across from the bank and structured WizzFund’s operations in ways they were used to. Many of WizzFund’s middle managers also worked for the bank and have brought across the same line-management practices that they used previously.

WizzFund’s Chief Executive Officer (CEO) would like to solve the company’s space capacity problem by implementing ‘flexible working’, meaning that it will be able to manage with the same amount of office space even as it continues to grow. This is because employees will be able to work elsewhere or flex their hours when they need to, in return for sharing their desks with colleagues.

The CEO also believes that this will lead to a more collaborative working culture, as people are forced to move around the office more and interact with each other. She’s read about other technology and financial services companies implementing similar ‘flexible working’ initiatives and the benefits that these have resulted in. She’s instructed WizzFund’s Workplace Director to implement the changes.



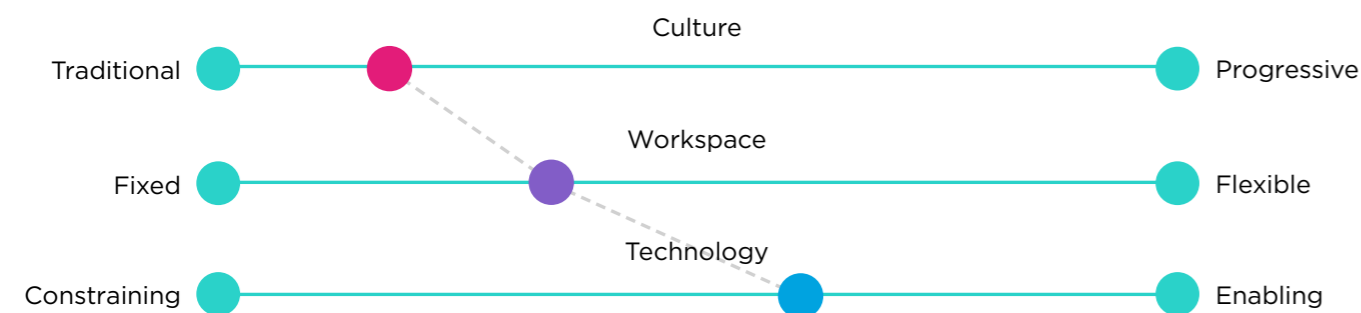
ACTIVITY

Knowing what you know about WizzFund and its CEO’s plan:

- what do you think will happen if the plan is implemented?
- what would need to happen for the plan to succeed?

Footnote:
¹Pinder, J. and Ellison, I. (2019) An introduction to workplace. IWFM guidance note available at: www.iwfm.org.uk/resource/an-introduction-to-workplace.html (accessed 8 April 2020)

Now, we've only got a few paragraphs' worth of information about WizzFund, but we can use the workplace equaliser to visualise the situation to get an idea of what's potentially going on.



We can immediately see that despite a seemingly modern brand identity, there are clues that WizzFund is quite a traditional business with a workplace to match. We also know from the equaliser that the three facets of WizzFund's workplace are interlinked, which means that trying to change one facet (its culture) alone will be tremendously difficult and risky and is therefore unlikely to succeed.

So, if we were WizzFund's Workplace Director we would advise the CEO that:

1. Workplace change at WizzFund needs to be approached in a joined-up way – people won't be able to work 'flexibly' without the technologies and workspaces to enable this

2. The reasons for introducing 'flexible working' need to be communicated clearly and honestly – otherwise employees may come up with their own reasons, which may lead them to reject or resist the change
3. Cultural change is never easy and won't happen overnight – time and effort will need to be invested in supporting employees during the change
4. Senior leaders and middle managers will play a key role in influencing whether the change is successful or not – employees will look to them to determine what behaviours are acceptable or not and leaders and managers may need to develop new ways of managing their team(s).

DIFFERENT WAYS OF THINKING AND TALKING ABOUT CHANGE

Change can take a number of different forms and this is reflected in how we think and talk about change. For instance, we often talk about the speed or pace of change:

- it may be 'slow', or 'evolutionary', taking place steadily over a longer period of time
- or it may be 'fast', or 'revolutionary', occurring suddenly or over a much shorter time frame.

Such descriptions are also clearly relative and based on perceptions, which may vary from person to person.

Culture is a good example of something that tends to change more slowly. Indeed, at a societal level, cultural change is often only really apparent when you look back over a longer period of time, perhaps many decades. In contrast we regularly talk about the fast pace of technological change, particularly when it comes to improvements in digital technologies, such as mobile phones.

As well as talking about the speed of change, we also talk about the magnitude or size of the change. Changes might be 'small' and therefore hardly noticeable. However, such small changes may occur incrementally over time, and their collective impact might actually be more significant and only really become evident years later.

Changes may be bigger in magnitude and create ripples far beyond the context where the change occurred. Such changes can act as historical markers between different 'eras'. To use a well-known technology example, think about how the introduction of the iPhone in 2007 transformed

not only the mobile phone industry, but also other sectors and society more generally.

Many organisations use the word 'transformational' to describe changes they are making to their business processes and their workplaces. However, 'transformational' (like disruption) has arguably become an over-used phrase in business, because it's often used to describe changes that aren't really that transformational.

A caterpillar undergoing metamorphosis into a butterfly is a transformational change! This example might seem irrelevant, but it shows how transformational change implies a shift from one state to another. If a change is badged as transformational when it isn't, this can lead to unrealistic expectations and disappointment when it turns out that things haven't changed very much.

Another way to think about change is to consider the metaphors we use when talking about change. For instance, we might talk about 'navigating' and 'engineering' change, 'watershed' moments, going on a 'journey', and even using 'burning platforms' to galvanise action. We use metaphors to help people understand what changes they face and why they need to happen.

However, such metaphors also need to be used carefully. For example, Daryl Connor, who coined the term 'burning platform', argues that this particular metaphor has become misunderstood and misappropriated over time. It's commonly used to manipulate employees into a place where they believe they have no choice but to jump, but that's not what the metaphor was originally about².

Footnote:

²Connor, D. (2012) The Real Story of the Burning Platform. Available at: www.connerpartners.com/frameworks-and-processes/the-real-story-of-the-burning-platform (accessed 8 April 2020)

3. Why can workplace change be so difficult?

There is a famous (and often quoted article in the Harvard Business Review that made the striking claim that ‘... about 70% of all change initiatives fail.’³ The basis for the 70% figure isn’t discussed in the article but the figure is nevertheless widely cited by other writers and in conference presentations.

The 70% figure was actually taken from an earlier book on organisational change, but subsequent research⁴ has shown that there is no empirical evidence to support it. However, just because the 70% has no empirical basis, that’s not to say that there isn’t a grain of truth in it. Organisational change is often difficult and many change initiatives do either fail or underperform, to varying degrees.

The challenges posed by organisational change are evident in the fact that an entire industry has grown up around helping organisations to implement change or become better at managing it, in the form of consultancy, training and education. Organisational change is one of the business and management issues most widely written about.

So why is organisational change often so difficult, despite the fact that people have spent years talking and writing about it? Well, to help understand why, we need to consider:

1. What change means at an individual level – how we view and respond to change in our everyday lives
2. What we know about organisational change, based on years of collective learning from organisations around the world.

Together these two perspectives provide insights into how we can more effectively approach workplace change.

Footnote:

³Nohria, N. & Beer, M. (2000) Cracking the Code of Change. Harvard Business Review. Available at: hbr.org/2000/05/cracking-the-code-of-change (accessed 8 April 2020)

⁴Hughes, M. (2011) Do 70 Per Cent of All Organizational Change Initiatives Really Fail? Journal of Change Management, 11(4). Available at: doi.org/10.1080/14697017.2011.630506 (accessed 8 April 2020)



ACTIVITY

Pause and think about an example of a change initiative that you’ve seen fail or under-perform:

- in what way did it fail or underperform?
- what do you think the reasons were for the failure or underperformance?
- how could the change initiative have been approached differently?

INDIVIDUAL CHANGE

Over the years much has been written about how people respond to change and the factors that influence their response. There isn't room to do a deep dive into the subject in this guidance note, but there is room to introduce you to some different ways of thinking about change at an individual level.



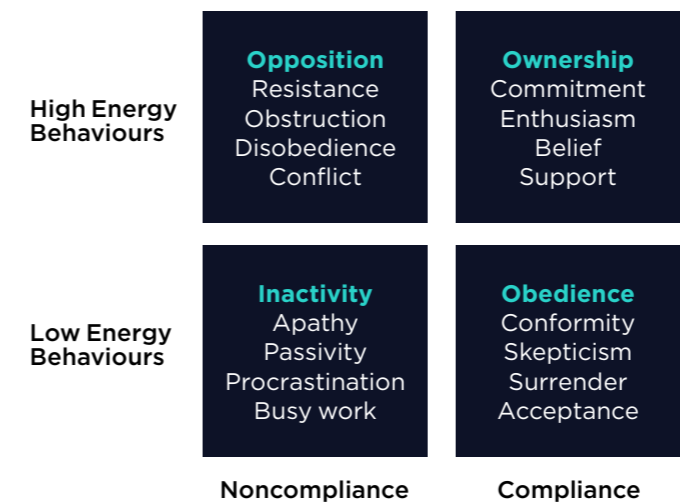
ACTIVITY

Pause and think about an example of where you have been affected by a change at work:

- how did it make you feel?
- how did you respond to the change?
- why did you respond that way?

One way to think about change is to categorise peoples' responses to it. For instance, the model below suggests that when faced with change, people either: oppose the change; actively support it; become apathetic about it; or simply comply with it. You can probably relate to these different responses, both in terms of your own reaction to changes and the responses of others.

AN EXAMPLE OF CATEGORISING PEOPLES' RESPONSES TO CHANGE⁵



Another way of thinking about peoples' responses to change is to consider how they vary over time. People often go through a sequence of emotions that, more or less, conform to a predictable pattern or 'change curve'.

Perhaps the most famous 'change curve' is the Kübler-Ross model, developed from studies several decades ago of people coming to terms with tragic events, like serious illness and dying. The model suggests that people move through the following five stages: denial; anger; bargaining; depression; and acceptance. These stages affect both morale and confidence as time passes.⁶

Models like these will never be perfect representations of the real world and they come in for criticism because of this. But if you view them as 'thinking tools',

you can use them to reflect on how you are responding to change or how others might respond to a change that you're involved in implementing. This, in turn, may lead you to think and act differently as a workplace practitioner.

The way a person responds to change will depend on a wide range of factors. Some of them will be 'internal', such as an individual's personality, past experiences, personal circumstances and values (what they deem to be important or not). Other factors will be 'external', such as the nature of the change, its real or perceived impact, how it is implemented, who is implementing it and the context or situation in which the change is occurring.

The complexity of these factors means that the same change may elicit very different reactions from different people. It also means that the way someone responds to the same type of change may differ at different points in time. However, whilst acknowledging this complexity, it's worth noting that people are likely to be more accepting of change when they:

1. Have a say or choice in the change. Generally speaking, people don't like having changes imposed on them, at least without good reason. When change is imposed on people it can leave them feeling resentful and done to, which in turn may lead to apathy or resistance
2. Know the real reasons for the change, even if they don't necessarily agree with them. If they don't know why the change is happening, then they are likely to come up with their own (possibly incorrect) reasons
3. Stand to benefit from the change personally ('what's in it for me?') and/or may see the broader benefits of the change (for example, for their team, organisation, society) Reactions to change are more often than not about perceived loss or gain.

These are useful things to consider if you are involved in implementing changes in your organisation or within a client's organisation.

Footnote:
⁵Adapted from Koller, R., Fenwick, R. & Fenwick Jr, R. (2013) Is obedience, not resistance, the real organizational change killer? Change Management: An International Journal, 13(1), 25-36.
⁶Elisabeth Kübler-Ross Foundation (2020) www.ekrfoundation.org/5-stages-of-grief/change-curve/ (accessed 8 April 2020)

ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

Any discussion of organisational change inevitably leads to a discussion of organisational culture. Culture is the 'glue' that binds organisations together – the shared values, beliefs and rules that govern 'the way we do things around here'⁷.

This cultural 'glue' typically acts as a brake on change, which is desirable a lot of the time, otherwise organisations would just be groups of people doing their own thing without any common purpose or consistent approach. But it can be challenging when organisations need to change.

Unsticking an organisation's cultural glue can be difficult because 'the way we do things around here' tends to be deeply ingrained, habitual and mutually-reinforcing. If I suddenly start doing something different to the accepted norm, it's likely that people will tell me about it and I'll feel pressured (or be required) to conform to the norm again.

For example, an organisation's culture might dictate that people should come into the office every day during 'core hours', even if they could work equally as effectively elsewhere, some of the time. The reason they've always done it this way is because – somewhere deep down – many managers and staff believe that if people aren't seen to be working, then they're probably not working. This is known as presenteeism.

So if, as an employee of that organisation, I think about working differently to the norm – for instance, by flexing my hours and/or working from home a few days a week – it's not difficult to anticipate what sort of reactions I'll receive from my manager(s) and colleagues. For instance, I might have comments such as 'shirking from home' aimed at me – allegedly in jest, but with the subtext that what I'm doing isn't acceptable. Alternatively, my manager might just demand that I get back to the office.

I might therefore try to work differently but stop doing so because pressure from peers and management might lead me to go back to the way I'd worked previously. Or I might not even bother trying, because I can anticipate the likely reaction I'll receive from my colleagues and management – and that's enough to put me off, because I don't want to feel like the odd one out.

When you look at it like this, it's easy to see why organisations struggle to implement things like 'flexible working' initiatives. An organisation might say it wants its people to work more flexibly and might invest in the workspace and technology to enable this. There may even be people in the organisation who want to work more flexibly, but as the above example shows, social pressures to conform to a norm ('the way we do things around here') can be very powerful and it takes a strong character to push back against them.

It's also easy to see why cultural glue can potentially put a brake on innovation and creativity in organisations. If doing things differently from the norm is frowned upon in an organisation, then people may not feel able to take risks or try new things – which are essentially what innovation and creativity are about – for fear of being judged.

By trying to do things differently, you are challenging peoples' assumptions and beliefs about how things should be done. In some cases these assumptions and beliefs may be deeply rooted, particularly if people have held them for many years. So perhaps it's not surprising that people will push back and try to make you conform to the way things have always been done, even if that's no longer the best way to do things.

Sometimes it takes an 'external' shock to break the cultural glue that inhibits change in organisations. Such shocks may mean that the normal rules no longer apply, because if they do the organisation will suffer or even cease to exist. In these situations people are forced to unlearn old ways of doing things and quickly learn new ones. They're an opportunity for people to see the art of the possible and the benefits of doing things differently. But often people may need help to do this.

An example of such a shock occurred during the writing of this guidance note, when the coronavirus pandemic led to a sudden increase in the number of people working from home. For some organisations, having their staff working from home will have represented a significant change from how they normally operate, and it will have pushed many people out of their 'comfort zone'. Only time will tell whether they will revert to how they worked previously.

UNDERSTANDING THE FORCES FOR AND AGAINST CHANGE

Over the years, various models have been developed that can help individuals and organisations to better understand the forces of change that are affecting them or may affect them in the future. Such models are useful because they encourage you to:

- stop and think about the things that are happening outside of your organisation or specific situation
- look ahead to consider what may occur in the future, which may allow you to pre-empt rather than react to external forces.

In business and management, being able to pre-empt and prepare for change is often seen as more desirable than reacting to change, because the latter may involve making rash or knee-jerk responses.

One model that you may be familiar with is PEST analysis: a simple framework for identifying the Political, Economic, Social and Technological forces influencing an organisation. PEST has been adapted many times over the years and there are numerous variations of the model, such as PESTLE – which includes legal and environmental forces.

Another useful model is the Five Forces analysis, which was published in 1979 by management academic Michael Porter⁸. Porter created the model to help businesses to analyse their competitive environment and understand how changes in the environment might impact on profitability and therefore business strategy.

A third model that can be used to understand the forces of change is the Force Field analysis, which was created by the psychologist Kurt Lewin in the 1940s. The model distinguishes between the forces that are driving or helping a change and those that are hindering or blocking it.

Although Lewin developed the model to analyse social situations, it has been widely used in business and management⁹. One of its enduring benefits is that it helps show how reducing resistive forces can be more effective than increasing driving ones. In the example below, Lewin's model has been applied to the WizzFund case study introduced earlier.

The Force Field analysis shows that there are both driving and resisting forces affecting WizzFund's workplace change initiatives. It also shows that many of the resisting forces are cultural. So, based on what we know about the importance of resisting forces, we can focus our attention on trying to reduce these forces through a series of targeted interventions or activities.

As with any model, the frameworks discussed above are best viewed (and used) as 'thinking tools': they provide a simple template with which to capture and organise your thoughts and ideas, guide your research and structure your conversations with others.

Driving forces

- Office is at capacity
- Mobile technology is available
- CEO wants to see 'flexible working' implemented
- New workspace as a catalyst for change

Resisting forces

- Inflexible working habits
- Traditionalist senior leaders
- Middle managers emulate senior leader behaviours
- Not everyone has mobile technology (or uses it properly)

Footnote:

⁷ Deal, T. E. & Kennedy, A. A. (1983) Corporate cultures: The rites and rituals of corporate life. Addison-Wesley.

Footnote:

⁸ Porter, M. (1979) How Competitive Forces Shape Strategy. Harvard Business Review. Available at: hbr.org/1979/03/how-competitive-forces-shape-strategy (accessed 8 April 2020)

⁹ There are a range of practical explanations and examples available – this one from MindTools has text and video resources: www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_06.htm

4. How to bring about successful workplace change

The internet is awash with ideas, suggestions and advice on how to implement organisational change more effectively. More often than not this advice takes the form of a number of things to do (or avoid doing) when managing change. These lists can be useful, but it's always important to adopt a critical mindset when reading such advice and consider whether it's sound and appropriate to your situation.

In 2017 the Association for Project Management (APM) published a list of what it found to be 'key factors' in successful change¹⁰, namely to:

1. Formulate a clear vision and strategy, supported by well-defined benefits
2. Ensure strong leadership and sponsorship
3. Define and follow a well-structured and integrated approach
4. Understand, engage with, build commitment from and support key stakeholders
5. Build a strong change team with the necessary capability for success
6. Measure the success of the change initiative.

The list was based on a review of previous studies of organisational change success factors and a survey of APM members. It's useful because it provides a simple framework against which to evaluate your own organisation's approach to workplace change. A more detailed self-assessment framework is provided in section 5 of this guidance note.

Now let's take a closer look at each of these factors and consider what they mean in terms of workplace change.

VISION, STRATEGY AND BENEFITS

The first factor is based on the fact that organisational change initiatives often lack clear objectives, which can be confusing for people involved in the change. When the purpose of change is unclear, people will inevitably come up with their own reasons for why the change is happening, based on their past experiences, beliefs and assumptions. Remember, gossip is an entirely normal human behaviour!

Footnote:

¹⁰ Beaumont, T. et al. (2017) Introduction to managing change. Association for Project Management, Buckinghamshire.

For example, senior leaders may view a change as being about improving something, but some employees might just see it as being about cutting costs, because that's what always seems to happen.

A lack of clear objectives can also lead to actions that undermine change initiatives because people may have different ideas of what the change is about and behave accordingly. For instance, employees may see senior leaders behaving in ways that run counter to what the change is supposedly about, which can undermine trust in leadership and lead to accusations of 'double standards'.

When it comes to workplace change, a lack of clarity over objectives is usually because organisations don't spend enough time and effort up front working out what the change is specifically about. This requires commitment from senior leaders and a willingness to openly discuss conflicting priorities and areas of disagreement. When conflicts are not discussed up front, they tend to bubble up to the surface later in the project and can derail the change.

This first factor is, however, more than just about coming up with an agreed list of objectives and reasons for change. It's also about wrapping these in a compelling vision and strategy that people can buy-into. The importance of creating a compelling vision and strategy for workplace projects is discussed in more detail in our third guidance note: 'Selling your workplace vision'.

LEADERSHIP AND SPONSORSHIP

The second factor on APM's list is about strong leadership and sponsorship. Workplace change initiatives will invariably fail or underperform if senior leaders don't support them, because in most organisations senior leaders are the people who sanction change and the financial investment required to bring about change.

Senior leaders can also play a key role in reinforcing and legitimising the behaviours and practices that a change is intended to bring about. Humans learn by watching the behaviour of others – it's how children learn what is or is not acceptable behaviour, and – consciously or otherwise – this carries on into adult life. We're social creatures and part of our cultural 'glue' involves learning how to fit in from those with higher status than us, perceived or otherwise. Modelling or exhibiting the behaviours that you want other people to adopt is a really powerful way for senior leaders to let employees know it's okay to behave a certain way.

However, it's not only senior leaders and managers who can lead during times of change. Change leadership can (and arguably should) happen at all levels of an organisation. In their book 'Living Leadership', George Binney, Colin Williams and Gerhard Wilke argue that 'Leaders are not at the top but in the middle of a complex network of relationships' – they are "ordinary heroes"¹¹.

Binney, Williams and Wilke use the term 'ordinary heroes' as a counterpoint to what they see as the dangerous and damaging myth of the high profile and 'transformational' business leader – people like Jack Welch and Steve Jobs. Such leaders are:

'... seen like rodeo riders seeking to impose their will on their organisations. The more resistance there is, the more leaders need to push back and bring them under control. They have to make their organisations understand where their true interests lie.'

It's easy to see why this model of leadership could be viewed as damaging, based on what we've already

Footnote:

¹¹ Binney, G., Williams, C. & Wilke, G. (2012) Living leadership: a practical guide for ordinary heroes. Pearson UK.

¹² Pinder, J. and Ellison, I. (2019) Making better workplace decisions using data. IWFM guidance note available at: www.iwfm.org.uk/resource/making-better-workplace-decisions-using-data.html (accessed 8 April 2020)

¹³ IAP2 (2018) Spectrum of Public Participation. The International Association for Public Participation https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/pillars/Spectrum_8.5x11_Print.pdf (accessed 6 April 2020)

learnt about individual and organisational responses to change. But for many people this remains their 'default' view of leadership.

ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS

The idea of the 'transformational hero' also implies a top-down approach to implementing organisational change. A top-down approach involves one individual (or a small group of powerful people) making decisions for the rest of the organisation, because they (think they) know best. This was described as the DAD (decide, announce, defend) approach in guidance note 2¹².

Top-down approaches to implementing change might be appropriate in some situations – for instance, during a crisis or when there's only one obvious course of action – however, in many cases it can leave people feeling alienated. It might also mean people become disempowered to such an extent that it erodes their ability to make decisions for themselves and act on their own initiative.

An alternative approach to implementing change is to engage people in the decisions affecting them. Engagement can take a number of different forms. In its 'Spectrum of Public Participation', The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) distinguishes between five levels of engagement: inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower¹³.

Applying this model to organisational and workplace change, moving through the five levels (from inform through to empower) would see employees (and other stakeholders) having an increasing influence on decision-making until you reach the level where the employees themselves make the decisions.

A key point about the IAP2 model is that different situations will require different approaches: sometimes informing people about what's happening might be appropriate; in other situations, involving people might be more effective. Different approaches might also be required at different points during a change process.

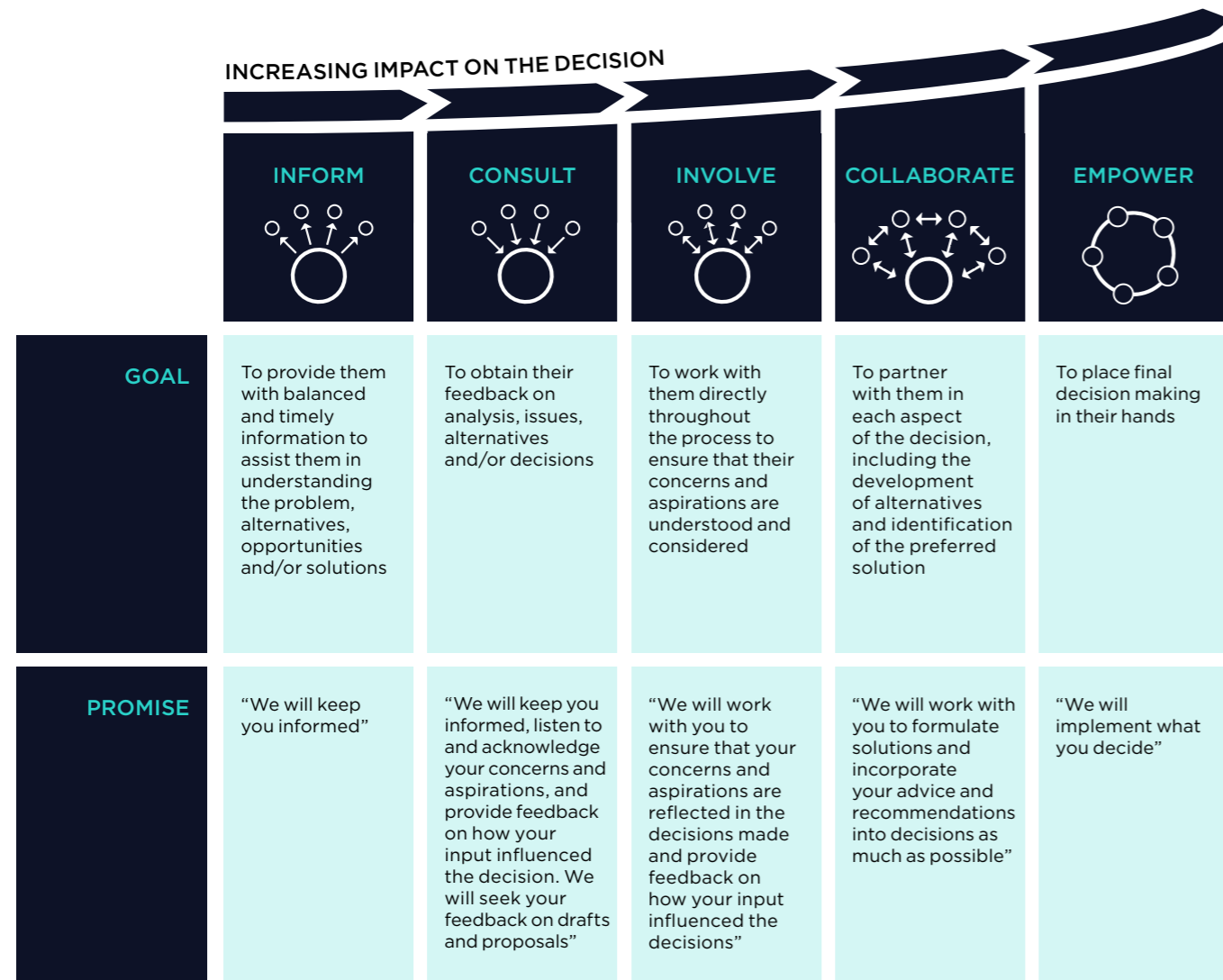
The appropriateness of each of these approaches will also depend on the organisation where the change is occurring. In some organisations it may be the norm for senior leaders and managers to consult with employees before making a decision, whereas in others the culture might simply be one of keeping employees informed about what's happening.

This means thought needs to be given to which approach is most appropriate to use in a given situation. If you're in an organisation that operates (and has always operated) by command and control then you might find it challenging to suddenly start

empowering people. This is because the employees themselves are not used to making decisions (some call this 'learned helplessness') and management are not accustomed to them making decisions either.

However, that's not say that you shouldn't try to push the boundaries in an organisation. In his bestselling book 'Turn the ship around!', the former US Navy captain David Marquet explained how he brought about a change of culture on his nuclear-powered submarine. The culture went from being one in which his crew simply followed orders to one in which they were empowered to make decisions and take responsibility for them¹⁴.

SPECTRUM OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION¹⁵



Footnote:

¹⁴Marquet, D. (2013) Turn the ship around!: A true story of turning followers into leaders. Penguin. Also see Inno-Versity animated presentation: "Greatness" by David Marquet, available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqmdLcyES_Q (accessed 8 April 2020)

¹⁵ Adapted from <https://blog.placespeak.com/top-5-public-participation-tips-from-iap2/>

ACTIVITY
 Pause and think about your own organisation or one of your clients:

- which of the five types of employee engagement are typically used during workplace (or organisational) change?
- do you think the engagement is appropriate and effective?
- how might it be improved?

There are also examples, outside of the workplace arena, of the benefits of involving people in decisions that affect them. In a recent episode of Outside magazine's podcast, the participants explained how involving people in their own rescue, for instance by giving them meaningful tasks to do, can aid their recovery and help to lessen post-traumatic stress after what can be a significant change event¹⁶.

This example may seem tangential, but one of the key messages in the episode was that, during significant change events, it's all too easy to forget the human side and become preoccupied with technical issues. This is often the case in workplace change initiatives, when organisations become preoccupied with the technical (workspace design, HR policies and technology solutions) and forget about the social (what people feel, think and do).

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH AND CHANGE TEAM

The third and fifth factors in APM's list are essentially about assembling the right team to help deliver change. An organisation may have the right processes and procedures in place for managing workplace change, but without the right people involved it's unlikely that the change will be implemented effectively.

By now it should be pretty evident that teams responsible for delivering workplace change should include representatives of each part of the workplace equaliser discussed earlier in this guidance note: culture (leadership and HR), technology (IT) and workspace (FM). However, it's also important that the people responsible for internal communications are represented on workplace change teams.

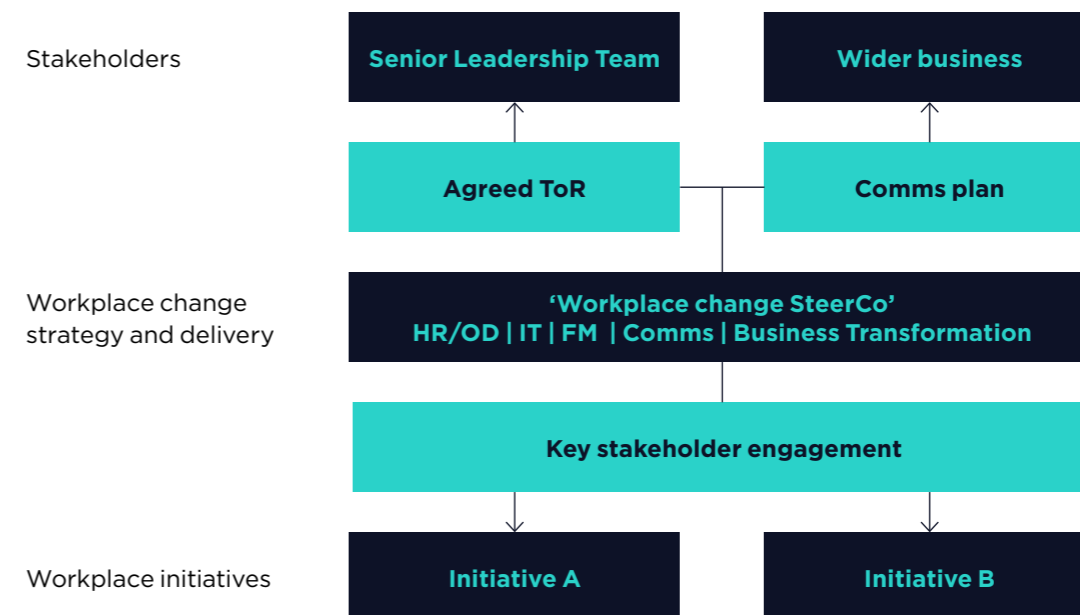
Communications can often be an 'Achilles heel' during workplace change initiatives. A failure to be proactive about communication means that organisations can find themselves playing catch-up and losing control of the message. Effective communications involve providing people with the right amount of information and ensuring that people have access to the right information at the right time.

In some organisations it's the norm for different corporate functions to work together on an ongoing basis. However, in others this may be unusual because of functional silos and turf wars, in which case assembling a workplace change team may involve committing time and effort to building relationships and mutual trust.

One way of strengthening relationships between different functions is to create a project (or programme) board (or 'SteerCo') with agreed 'terms of reference' (ToR). This group would meet on a regular basis and include representation from the business (for example, a sponsor from the leadership team). It may also include representatives of other business change or transformation initiatives that are occurring elsewhere in the organisation.

The diagram on page 21 shows how a SteerCo can work to co-ordinate multiple workplace change activities and communication responsibilities in a straightforward way.

USING A 'STEERCO' TO CO-ORDINATE WORKPLACE CHANGE



EVALUATING CHANGE

The final factor in APM's list is about measuring the success of the change initiative. This could be framed more broadly in terms of:

- evaluating the impact of the change
- identifying and sharing lessons from the change.

The table below expands these themes and provides examples of the sort of questions that an organisation might ask in relation to each one. It's important to remember that some of these questions can be considered soon after the change has taken place. Other outcomes, however, may unfold over time.

THEME	QUESTIONS
What lessons can we learn from the change process?	What went well in how we implemented the change?
	What did not go well and why?
	What could we have done differently?
	How should we apply these lessons in future change initiatives?
What impact has the change had?	Did the change achieve what it was designed to achieve? If not, why not?
	Did the change achieve some or all of its objectives?
	Has the change had a positive or negative impact?
	What are the short, medium and long-term impacts of the change?
	What evidence do we have to demonstrate the impact of the change?
	Have the benefits of the change outweighed the costs of the change?
	Who has benefitted from the change and who has lost out?
Has the change had any unintended consequences? If so, are those consequences positive or negative?	

Footnote:
¹⁶Outside Podcast (6 November 2019) The Hardest Part of a Rescue Comes Later. Available at: www.outsideonline.com/2404965/aftermath-wilderness-rescue-survival (Accessed 14 April 2020).

Organisations are often deficient when it comes to measuring the impact of change and learning lessons from it. Part of the challenge is that project teams disband and move on to new things. Sometimes there's also a lack of interest in evaluating changes once they've been implemented, perhaps out of fear that a post-project review will reveal 'bad news'.

Even when an organisation does evaluate their change, they might not necessarily share the findings in a way that allows others to benefit from it. They might just view it as a tick-box exercise or simply share the 'good news'. The result is that, when it comes to change, organisations repeat the same mistakes over and over again.

At an organisational level, evaluating change requires a commitment to learning and sharing, and the avoidance of blame. If people fear that they will be sanctioned or punished for something they've done, then they're unlikely to draw attention to it – or they may even actively conceal it. 'Psychological safety' is therefore an important part of evaluating change in organisations.

At an individual level, evaluating change is about being able to reflect on your own behaviours and actions, and how you might have done things differently in a given situation. It's also about being able to cope with feedback. For some people these things may come naturally, for others they can be more challenging. Nonetheless, they are a key part of being a workplace change practitioner.



CHANGE MANAGEMENT MODELS

If you've been tasked with managing change, perhaps for the first time, it can be reassuring to follow a standard change management framework. Such frameworks can help to demystify and provide structure to the change management process. They can also be used as communication tools, to structure conversations with stakeholders about intent and progress.

The eight steps are:

1. Create a sense of urgency
2. Build a guiding coalition
3. Form a strategic vision and initiatives
4. Enlist a volunteer army
5. Enable action by removing barriers
6. Generate short-term wins
7. Sustain acceleration
8. Institute change

Perhaps the most well-known change management framework is John Kotter's 8-Step Process, which was based on his research and observations in numerous organisations over many years¹⁷.

Kotter's model is useful because it highlights some of the things that are prudent to do if you're managing or leading workplace change. For instance, it's important to have a clear and compelling vision and work to get peoples' buy-in to that vision.

However, as with many mainstream change models, Kotter's is arguably over-simplified because it treats change as a linear or ordered process, as you move from one step to another. In reality, organisational change is often iterative and messy, because unexpected challenges or opportunities may arise as you go along. Kotter's model also implies a very top-down approach to change.

Other useful change management models include:

- Kurt Lewin's three-step model that involves unfreezing, changing and refreezing culture
- the ADKAR model, which involves the five elements of awareness, desire, knowledge, ability and reinforcement
- the EAST framework, which is based on 'nudge theory' and is about making behavioural change easy, attractive, social and timely.

You might find it helpful to explore these (and other) models further, particularly if you're involved in or are going to be involved in workplace change. Section 5 of this guidance note contains some suggestions for further reading.

Footnote:

¹⁷ Kotter, J. (1996) *Leading change*, Harvard Business School Press.

5. What should I do next?

We recommend that you:

- 1** Give this guidance note to colleagues (including clients and senior managers) who you think might be interested in it. Make sure to have a follow-up conversation about it and what it means for how your organisation or your client's organisation approaches workplace change
- 2** Find out more about how your organisation (or client's organisation) goes about implementing workplace change. What works well and what works less well? How might its approach be improved?
- 3** Complete the following workplace change self-assessment for your own organisation or your client's organisation. This will give you a high-level indication of how well your organisation/client approaches workplace change. Use this as a basis for a follow-up conversation with your colleagues and/or client.

You may also want to explore the following links to learn more about the change models mentioned in this guidance note:

- Kotter's 8-Step Change Model: a comprehensive but accessible discussion of Kotter's 8-Step mode can be found here: blogs.shu.ac.uk/hallamleaders/files/2017/11/john-kotter-on-transformational-change.pdf
- Lewin's three-step model: a practical explanation with both text and video from MindTools is available here: www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newPPM_94.htm
- ADKAR: a model developed and presented by long-standing change management specialists Prosci: www.prosci.com/adkar/adkar-model
- the EAST framework: involves four simple ways to apply behavioural insights to achieve cultural and behavioural change, discussed here: www.bi.team/publications/east-four-simple-ways-to-apply-behavioural-insights/

LEARNING MORE ABOUT LEADING SUCCESSFUL WORKPLACE CHANGE

There are a number of ways you can learn more about leading successful workplace change through IWFM.

We have a number of resources on the subject, including guidance notes and good practice guides:

- An introduction to workplace
- Making better workplace decisions using data
- Selling your workplace vision
- Creating better workspaces
- Internet of things
- Agile working change management
- Space planning and management

These are available to download from our website at: www.iwfm.org.uk/insight/

We have also partnered with workplace specialists 3edges to provide a one-day CPD course on 'Leading successful workplace change' as part of our 'Workplace Leadership Programme'. The course can be attended individually or delivered for groups 'in-company'.

Multi-course discounts are available. To find out more about our courses or to book a place, visit: www.iwfm.org.uk/professional-development/academy

The ideas and approaches in this guidance note also form part of our 'Level 6 Diploma in Workplace Leadership, Insight and Change'. This is the first workplace qualification of its kind. If you would like to learn more about the Diploma, please contact: qualifications@iwfm.org.uk

YOUR WORKPLACE CHANGE SELF-ASSESSMENT

This thinking tool has been designed to help you reflect on how your organisation, team or client approaches workplace change. It will help you to identify things that you do well or less well and identify areas for improvement.

As with any self-assessment, this tool requires you to reflect on your own situation critically and honestly. Remember, sometimes honest truths can be uncomfortable!

You might find it helpful to complete this self-assessment individually within your team and then come together to discuss your responses.

To complete the self-assessment, read each statement and pick a point on the corresponding scale that feels about right to you. Try not to overthink the statements!

Let's take statement 3 as an example. If you think you're not very good at clearly explaining the benefits of workplace change, you might pick a point somewhere to the left hand-side of the scale.



Once you've put a mark on each scale, draw a line down through the marks so that you can see the profile of your responses.

Then take stock of the overall picture and ask yourself:

- what are our strengths and weaknesses?
- are there any obvious areas for improvement?
- who do I need to talk to about implementing these improvements?

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