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THE CHALLENGE OF EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTING CHANGE

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Executive leadership in almost every organization traditionally expects fully functional deployment of change initiatives on-time and on-budget. They also expect those impacted by the change—the “targets”—will jump on the bandwagon, accepting and embracing the change in the name of the overall good. More often than not executive leadership is disappointed. Successful change in infrastructure and business operations requires employees, suppliers, and sometimes even customers, to overcome significant issues of resistance to be in a position to accept and, better yet, embrace the change. Successfully moving the organization to acceptance of this “Desired State” is defined by many as “getting results.”

Gaining and optimizing these “Results” has been defined by the following equation:

$$R = Qs \times A$$

where R = Results; Qs = Quality of the Solution; and A = Acceptance of the Solution.

Too often organizations invest all of their resources, energy and budget in creating and

implementing elegant solutions (the “Qs”) designed to maximize benefits (cost savings, productivity improvements, functional additions, etc.) of the investment. In their zeal to deliver the “perfect solution,” they often short-change or overlook the importance of gaining acceptance of the change by the targets of the change (the “A” factor). Their acceptance is too often taken for granted. Their logic is that the benefits of the solution to the company will be so self-evident that after one communication meeting, individuals in the organization will automatically accept and embrace the change.

By ignoring this component of the equation, this “Qs-focused” approach will naturally spawn organizational and personal resistance to the change. Over time, this resistance will fester and grow within the organization. Silent and/or overt resistance to the change during the transition/implementation (the “Delta State”) can ultimately cause the project to extend beyond the original timeframe, run over budget, underperform in terms of improved functionality and, ultimately, prevent the sustainability of a well-reasoned change.

In reality, even the most elegant solution can be undermined because there was no investment made in identifying and mitigating this organizational resistance. In the end, senior management will look at the change as a major irritation, an underperformance or an abject failure on the part of the project team. Once that happens, moving the project or process forward toward its original “Desired State” will be difficult at best.

To help ensure the success and sustainability of a change initiative, companies must take a proactive approach to managing the change. That is, they must identify sources of potential resistance and then develop action plans designed to mitigate or eliminate this resistance. By taking these steps, the organization can help to minimize the risk that is associated with this resistance and to facilitate acceptance of the change at a more rapid pace. ■

This article is based on a presentation given at the Professional Insurance Marketing Association’s (PIMA) summer conference. For more information about PIMA, visit www.pima-assn.org.



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