



Degrees of Change

Steps for managing the workplace transition effectively

Doing more with less, adopting a next generation workplace, integrating new work practices -- almost everything we are doing requires a degree of change.

The following techniques for successful change have evolved through engagement with a range of clients, some moving from enclosed to open work areas, others adopting completely mobile lifestyles. In fact, many of these have been reinforced by user feedback following change engagements.

1

START NOW

Start practicing now. Do not put off any change for the time of move that you could start working on now. Understand the amount of change that will be required and work towards gradual but timely improvements.

2

COLLECT DATA

Have a detailed understanding of the current and future state. . . what will be different. . . the same, what can they expect - both in terms of challenges and long term benefits. . . collect actual data . . monitor progress towards change with metrics. . . customers have responded that the 'change' anticipated the ways that they were already working and thus made work easier rather than harder.

3

LISTEN

Listen early and often. Ask questions about apprehensions. . . need their concerns to be sincerely acknowledged and then they can be ready to proceed. Remain connected as groups begin to change and recognize successes. Provide public recognition for change agents and early adopters. Through recognition early adopters are enabled in coaching others and further reinforce change.

4

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Match your change strategy both to the overall culture of the organization and that of the particular group or individuals who are experiencing change. Work to discover what is valued in their culture and how people expect to be introduced to a new idea. For some organizations a ground up, for others a top down approach will work best.

5 KNOW YOUR GOAL

Like selling a product, you need to know who are you selling to and what you are selling; then it needs to be positioned relative to local value. Know what you have got, from a customer, audience, occupant and spatial perspective. Align messages between your overall business and how this change will support the bigger picture. Refer to these often.

6 COMMUNICATE

Use every available medium to communicate messages about the change. Use all of these smartly and appropriately. Consider new media and find individuals to operate if necessary. Traditional modes of communication are not necessarily the trusted channels for young employees. Discover where team members go for info; find out where the 'virtual water cooler' is and how to use it.

7 CREATE LEADERS

Find your advocates for change and those who hold influence in your audience. These are your critical resources and should be leveraged in addition to formal organizational leadership.

Word travels in unanticipated ways, have your elevator pitch ready and use it when asked 'how is it going?'

8 ENABLE OWNERSHIP

Autonomy is reinforced through individualization, so provide opportunities for self-assessment or individualized training. Panel discussions - with staff that have gone through similar change before - are repeatedly one of the highest rated change communication tools, highlighting the importance of hearing from a trusted colleague rather than an outsider.

9 PILOT RESPONSIBLY

Pilots can be used in many ways. . .they can also be used to train future users/occupants. However, it can be problematic to do all of this at the same time. Determine the intent of your pilot efforts and then conduct testing and communications appropriately. Consider a communication strategy based on who needs to participate given the intended purpose.

10 MAKE IT REAL

The highest rated activity is often the walk through of the office environment while under construction. This can be complicated - organizing hard hats, signing releases, transportation; and timing is key. But, this is well worth the effort. Provide further opportunities to leverage the effort by enabling video/ photo or other sharing after the event.

11 USE DESIGN

The power of a beautiful or attractive solution should not be underestimated. Whether it is the information used to present the change, or a future work environment, if people are attracted to and excited by the look of the environment - they will want to be part of it. If they like the look and feel of a new software implementation, they will be more inclined to adopt it.

12 ENJOY

Change can be a stressful time; however, we are all much more agile and resilient when we are having a good time. So wherever possible, make aspects of the change pleasurable, and socially engaging. Find ways to have fun.

At PLASTARC, we find ourselves at the intersection of people analytics and building design, supporting clients who are thinking differently about the future of work and place. With two architects, a sociologist, an anthropologist, an environmental psychologist and a data visualizer, we pretty much have the bases covered for innovative thinking.

