



INSIGHTS NO 3 CHANGE MANAGEMENT

By Stephen Dantier

“Get your A-Team together.”

CHANGE MANAGEMENT MANIFESTO 6 KEY TIPS FOR SUCCESS

1. Newton’s Law of Motion

Every object in a state of uniform motion tends to remain in that state of motion unless an external force is applied to it.

2. The devil is in the detail

Gain a detailed understanding of the impacts to the organisational culture, technology, processes and structures.

3. Get your A-Team together

Put together a team of influential change agents who can spread the word amongst the people. They are your leadership team and will need to be trusted.

4. We don’t like change when done to us. We like it when done by us.

Involve people in the process as much as possible.

5. Build a path to follow and don’t forget to shut the gate behind

Determine what help people will need to transition from old to new and give it to them - properly. Then remove the old way.

6. Learning to walk

When people are transitioning from entrenched ways, understand it takes time to learn to walk again.

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OK, so what’s the **A-Team?**
Who should be on it?

Well let’s start with explaining why the A-Team is needed. As stated above, they are **Change Agents** who will spread the word. They become part of your leadership team. That’s because **you can’t do it all yourself**. Try being the lone person spruiking the change. Been there? That’s a road to frustration and failure and for any **decent** size change it is physically impossible.

So you need a group of people who will **represent the change** throughout the organisation. Getting to all parts with the message. Being able to **listen and learn from the reactions**. Able to **impart necessary information** and **take questions**. **Convey information** back to the change team. So let’s look at who you need as part of your A-Team.

The **first tier** is a hierarchically critical one. It’s your **senior leadership team**. Now depending on how strategic and widespread your change initiative is, will determine how senior you need to

get. For a **transformational change** it will require **your executive team**. People need to get confirmation that right from the top there is **commitment** to the change. This can only happen if the senior team is actually committed and **‘on the same page’**. They are two big assumptions that can’t be left to chance. That means a **change manager** has to start working on the commitment of the senior team **right from the start**.

Presumably there will be a **champion** for the initiative who is part of the leadership team (**Sponsor**) who will help get this happening.

Once the senior team is committed, their actions as the heads of the organisation and the A-Team will be under **constant scrutiny**. The term **“role model”** becomes a very important one and it’s key that they understand this. People will make their **judgement** as to whether **this change is important or not**, by watching whether the **actions** and **words** of their leaders support it.

How many times have you seen a change initiative **struggle** because the senior management **don’t walk the talk**. It’s a change management **killer**. Conversely, when they do **talk** about it, **action** it, **live** and **breathe** it, it **paves** the way.



Many years ago I worked on one of the most successful culture changes in Australian corporate history. One of the lessons learned from that success was the **CEO** (sponsor) **actively backing it** through word and action and making a statement of commitment to the cause by appointing a **Culture Director** to the executive team. Your **leaders** are the **drivers** of the change and **the most powerful** on your A-Team so **they must know that**.

So on to the group known as **change agents** throughout the organisation. These people will **represent the masses** for an organisational wide initiative. They become the **eyes, ears, arms and legs** of the change manager to get to all the crevices of the organisation and for the change initiative to have an **ongoing presence**, on a day to day basis. Typically, the change agent represents a **business unit**. For this reason, they have to be carefully selected. There are some key skills and traits they must possess: **communication, integrity, respected amongst peers**. Let's examine these.

Communication is a no-brainer really. Change agents will be the conduit for communication. They will bring key messages to their peers and receive information from them. They must have the **people and communication skills** to deal with people's different reactions to change.

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The IM School of Change Management provides education and advisory services to individuals and organisations.

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Integrity is a vital trait because they will be in a representative position. Their **peers must have trust in them** to allow them to function as a representative. This is the person people have to feel comfortable giving and receiving information from about the change. Any **perceived fault** in integrity will **render** their position as ineffective and **tarnish** the change effort. **Respected** goes closely with integrity. A person **could be trusted but not necessarily respected**, for instance due to **lack of expertise** or **understanding** of the work of their peers. So it is important that the change agent has the respect of their peers. A poor choice as change agent can have an adverse effect on the progress of the change initiative and a good choice can really help it.

One of the better ways I have seen change agents **selected** is **by asking the line manager to nominate** someone as a development opportunity. The person selected views this as the **recognition** it is and **takes a positive approach** to it.

The last key component to the A-Team is the line manager. In organisations this role title varies depending on the industry. It could be a **Supervisor**, a **Team Leader**, or any other form of **frontline manager**. Like the representative change agents group, line managers play the conduit role. The difference with the line managers is they are bestowed the responsibility of **conveying** all the **official information** regarding the change initiative due to their management responsibility. They convey the formal key messages.

How these messages get conveyed can **make** or **break** a change initiative. As they are also in a leadership position, their perceived support or negativity towards the initiative will be a powerful message to their people. For this reason it is important that a change manager **invest their time** into this specific group of stakeholders. Ensuring that the key messages are delivered as required. In the end, line managers are absolutely **key** to effecting the change.

So there they are. You're A-Team. You now have to **coach** and **mentor** them as part of the the change management team. These are typically the people you want to **train** in change management at the start so they have a full understanding of the change effort and **their part in it**.

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