

MANAGING AND LEADING CHANGE

The art of leading change

The old adage of the “the only constant is change” still has currency in today’s business environment – more so than ever! Being able to survive and thrive in a constantly evolving workplace requires energy, a positive approach and an attitude of success. When an agenda of change – such as the State Government’s reform strategy is imposed upon organisations and its employees, it is common place to feel intimidated or uneasy and unsure of where exactly to start.

As a result of the deluge of change management information, data and research available, organisations that are experiencing transformational change now have the opportunity to take control of the process and lead. Leading change isn’t a process or attitude that is reserved for the GM or executive team, but one that is shared both vertically and horizontally across the organisation – from front line staff, to support staff, to elected members.

The NSW local government sector has a strong, capable and competent workforce. Sound as that may be, do we understand the level of effective change leadership skill and experience that is required at this point in time and do we need to build upon the sectors leadership capability? These are questions each organisation will need to ask itself honestly and then put into place change leadership strategies that will develop and support the key people within the local governments who are leading and enabling the change.

Whether it’s charismatic or the strong silent type, effective leaders will encourage participation, build commitment, strengthen strategy and better enable the transformation that is desired. It’s a position of privilege to evoke action on behalf of a compelling future and the unwavering leadership required to establish a strong foundation, build momentum and implement powerfully will be the guiding force that brings it all together successfully.

Managing change

Structural reform in any context means the evolution or end of an entity, function, relationship or role and the emergence of a something new. Depending on the resilience of the workforce or individuals, it can be an exciting or extremely challenging time.

Managing your own response and that of those around you takes courage, time, planning and effective communication. Regardless of the intent, whatever employees perceive is happening around them quickly becomes their reality. Timely and accurate information along with trust, empathy and understanding are vital components of successful change management and ensuring that the strategic intent becomes their reality.

Organisational change management is a systematic and planned approach to managing the impact of change (structural, cultural, management or procedural) and supporting people through the process. Taking a structured approach to managing the process of merging business entities will reduce the chance of change fatigue and help sustain the energy levels and commitment required from the workforce.

The benefits of managing change successfully are:

- Achieving a deeper understanding of the drivers of change
- Establishing common goals and expectations
- Effectively communicating in a way that people can understand
- Increasing innovative solutions and positive change outcomes
- Increasing employee morale, engagement and active participation
- Designing practical workplace change and improvement strategies
- Reducing uncertainty and anxiety; creating a commitment to change; and
- Ownership and a desire to achieve