How to Handle the Transition of a Major Change with Your Employees

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Although change is part of the world of healthcare industry, employees are, more often than not, afraid of how a major change will affect them. In fact, this is more of a reality these days as evidenced by economic uncertainties, layoffs, and company rightsizing initiatives.

If you are experiencing a major change in your organization or contemplating one, here are 10 ways to help you and your employees deal with the transition:

Try to over communicate. The truth is, it is a normal tendency for employees to view change as a loss for them, unless proven otherwise. To offset their anxiety and to get buy-in, increase your communications prior, during, and after the implementation of the change. Many teams I have worked with have implemented a communication strategy that includes blogs, intra-net sites that contains all of the change intuitive minutes and work products for team members feedback, newsletters and visuals to demonstrate the change process.

Share your enthusiasm. During your formal and informal conversations with everyone in the organization, make it a point to tell them how excited you are about the change and the benefit to them and the company. When we remain positive about the change and how it will better serve our communities and add value to the care we provide, team members will follow.

 Involve your employees. Whenever appropriate, involve the people in the decision making, especially if it affects them and their work. Not only will this reduce their uneasiness, it will also develop more ownership in the change. Add team members from every level of the organization from the call center, front desk, administrative support, IT, clinical and supervisor into the work teams. By involving team members from every department, we are able to see around the corners and gain buy-in at all levels.

Change only what needs to be changed. Although it may be tempting to do so, don’t make wholesale changes beyond what needs to be changed. So often, overloading employees with too many changes at once can de-rail the process causing confusion and needless costs. We need to keep our goals straight. Calling something change and
not following through or adding too many non-related initiatives confuses team members and creates process fatigue.

**Be clear about your expectations.** Without question, make sure that there is clarity and consistency in your expectations. One of the surest ways to negatively impact the success of a change is to have employees unclear about what they are supposed to do. Set clear deadlines and interim milestones at the 15 and 45 day intervals. Keep the team focused on deliverables.

**Be honest and timely with news.** Whether it is good or bad news, employees need factual and timely information while a significant change is happening. Besides, they have a vested interest in the business and they are in a better position to positively influence the success of a change.

**Don’t Blink.** Once you have made a commitment to start the change process, even though it may become difficult, keep following through with it. By being indecisive, or regressing due to staff resistance could result in a missed opportunity and, equally important, negatively affect necessary changes in the future.

**Adopt a positive attitude.** Now, more than ever, you need to ensure that you display a positive attitude as the change takes root. Essentially, this will help to convince your team members that all is well and it’s business as usual.

**Don’t blindside your employees.** Since a major change can cause enough apprehension even when things go right, any surprises can add a degree of difficulty to the process and reduce some momentum.

**Dispel any myths and rumors.** Unfortunately, the nature of change can generate constant rumors and myths throughout the organization. In that regard, the best remedy for erroneous information is a steady diet of truthful information.

All in all, change is necessary and inevitable in the world of business in order to ensure that a company continues to grow and stay competitive. To this end, how an organization handles a major change will determine how successful it will be.

**About the Author:** Michael Flora, MBA, M.A.Ed, LCPC is the Senior Operation and Management Consultant for MTM Services and a National Council Senior Consultant. Mr. Flora is the CEO of a multimillion dollar behavioral health care organization and its four subsidiaries, and a renowned consultant, speaker, and author. He has extensive experience in strategic planning, marketing, performance improvement, workforce development, leadership coaching and training, board governance, and healthcare mergers and acquisitions. He has been recognized as Behavioral Health Champion and his organization is a recipient of the SAMHSA Science and Service Award for prevention programs. He has over 25 years of clinical and administrative experience. Consult engagement scheduling and copies of his current featured
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