

## **Ch-ch-ch-ch- changes.....**

If you're a David Bowie fan, you will recognise the song; but why do some organisations struggle with the concept of change, now that it seems to have become a regular feature of organisational life?

CIPD research suggests two critical steps to successful organisational change: securing the involvement of employees and other stakeholders and adopting an effective communications strategy. People start to engage with organisational change when they start thinking what it means for them and they become more engaged when they are asked questions from their Managers and Directors.

For a change management programme to succeed, several factors need to be taken into account: company vision, strategy and planning; communication, accountabilities, skills assessments, product reviews and a focus on teamwork, management and leadership capabilities.

The first stage is the creation and development of the Company vision to help direct the change process. Company strategy feeds into the vision, but however excellent it may be, it is only as good as its implementation!

Some employees may have to be encouraged to embrace organisational change so helping them to redefine their value in terms of the skills and experience they bring to the organisation is important. By listening to their concerns and thinking creatively about how to act on them, employees and Managers need to be involved at the early stages of the decision-making process. By engaging employees and allowing them to feed their views upwards, they will feel well-informed about what is likely to happen to their roles and the organisation as a whole.

Building employee confidence is essential so that any resistance is minimised; this often occurs because employees have a lack of faith; either in the organisation to follow through with its goals or in themselves (in their ability to adapt to the proposed changes). Employees may resist the *content* of change or the *process* of change (or both). By removing potential or current obstacles such as attitudinal or cultural beliefs, or out-of-date systems or processes, such resistance can be minimised.

HR is usually a key component to a successful change management programme and contributes to its effectiveness in several ways, for example:

- Advising at senior level in the planning phase to ensure a smooth transition
- Negotiating and engaging with employees by talking and listening to their views
- Acting as a sounding board for employees' concerns in order to anticipate problems and provide guidance and reassurance
- Identifying the skills available within the organisation as well as any skills gaps, training needs or new posts, systems, processes, policies or procedures required
- Ensuring the right employees are in the right roles, doing the right jobs with the right skill sets at the right time
- Recommending appropriate styles of communication to be used to convey the objectives, phases and outcomes of organisational change
- Assessing the impact of change in one area of the organisation and the effect it may have on other areas
- Ensuring teams are confident and well-managed and able to take the decisions required to respond to unexpected change and to come up with ideas to help carry the business through

HR has a key role to play in contributing to top-level decisions about the pace and direction of organisational change and in supporting managers in implementing the change process so that organisations can fully embrace sustainable change and grow and develop successfully.



“Putting the Human into Human Resources”

This article was written by Grania Sweeting, Managing Director of Grapevine HR Ltd. Grania is an experienced, independent HR Consultant providing outsourced HR support to organisations on a retained, project or ad hoc basis.

To obtain further information about this article or if you wish to contact Grania please visit her website or contact her via:

**Email:** [grania@grapevinehr.com](mailto:grania@grapevinehr.com)    **Phone:** 020 8892 9891    **Twitter:** [Follow](#)  
**Website:** [www.grapevinehr.com](http://www.grapevinehr.com)    **Skype:** grantiasweeting    **LinkedIn:** [Public profile](#)

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