

## **The #1 Reason 75% of Organizational Change Efforts Fail, and How YOU Can Be Part of the 25% that Succeed**

Have you ever tried to lead a major organizational change that failed? I did years ago, and it hurt! I still remember the sting and the embarrassment of having to retract all of my bold statements and retreat from my position.

That's why, ever since, I've been an avid student of how to make organizational changes successful. Today, after leading and consulting on dozens of big organizational changes, I advise clients on how to avoid all of the mistakes I made and ensure that their changes will be smoother and more successful.

O.k., it's time to spill the beans: The #1 reason changes fail is NOT that the change was driven by a bad business decision, although that sometimes happens. It's not IT's fault. People love to blame IT for failed change ("If only their technology had met our needs, we could implement a whole new way of doing business..."), but that's rarely the reason a change fails.

No, the #1 reason organizational changes tank is this: the failure to manage the subjective human side. This includes aspects such as:

- The uncomfortable individual process of experiencing change -- the loss, feelings of uncertainty, denial, and general discomfort that nearly everyone experiences to some degree, from your most seasoned director to your youngest individual contributor
- Inattention to organizational politics – the change initiative gets sabotaged, intentionally or not
- Inattention to developing the information, knowledge, skills, and capabilities needed to sustain the change
- The counteracting pressures on individuals, that you and the other leaders may not even realize you are putting on them

You CAN be successful, though, by using a structured process to manage the human aspects of implementing a complex change -- in much the same way that you use a structured process to manage any other project.

Here are the key steps to make sure YOUR change is one of the 25% that succeed:

1. Widen the circle of involvement to ensure that key stakeholders are *involved*, not just *informed*, every step of the way.
2. Assemble a change leadership team. Some members of this team may be needed for just the project start-up, but others will need to stick with it through the entire change. Keep the membership flexible enough to accommodate this.
3. Choose an appropriate organizational change methodology for the scale and depth of the change. If you need to incrementally improve processes, it will

require a different approach than if you want to radically alter the fundamental way you view and manage the business.

4. Regardless of the scale and depth of change, create and sustain:
  - highly visible *leadership*
  - a means to effectively develop any *skills and capabilities* the organization will need
  - a *two-way* process for communication throughout the change
5. Pay attention and adjust as you receive feedback throughout the change. You can't predict everything that will happen. There will be surprises.

Remember, failure to manage the subjective, human aspects of the change will slow your efforts and create a poor end result. Apply this process so your organization can not only survive through a big change, but thrive.