

Talent Development 27 Change Management

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Section 3.6 in the CPTD Certification program for ATD is Change Management. Section A reads, “A knowledge of change management theories and models, for example Lewin, Kotter, Bridges’ transition model, Kubler-Ross change curve, and appreciative inquiry.”

In this brief article, I will share three change models that I have found to be particularly useful in helping people accept and implement change at work.

Adaptation of Kotter’s Model

I found Dr. John Kotter’s theories of change to be most helpful. His eight-step change process was first described in his 1996 book, “Leading Change,” and he followed it up with a neat fable in 2006 entitled’ “Our Iceberg is Melting.” He also described change in his 2014 book “Accelerate.”

The eight steps proposed by Kotter were as follows:

1. Create a sense of urgency
2. Build a guiding coalition
3. Form strategic vision and initiatives
4. Enlist a volunteer army
5. Enable action by removing barriers
6. Generate short term wins
7. Sustain Acceleration
8. Institute change

In my own work in a manufacturing unit of a large company, I ended up adapting and adding to his steps so people would understand the concepts easier and adopt them in our specific environment.

I used the following nine-point list of steps to change:

1. Create the right environment
2. Demonstrate an urgent need
3. Carve out sufficient time
4. Create a compelling vision
5. Reinforce the small wins
6. Integrate the new methods in the culture
7. Develop a tolerance for risk
8. Demonstrate constancy of purpose
9. Understand the psychology of change

I found the final item to be particularly helpful for guiding groups through the change cycles much faster by using the grief-counseling model of change.

Grief Counseling Change Model

In 1969 Elisabeth Kubler-Ross proposed the five stages of grief. These were as follows:

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

Her observation is that human beings go through the five stages whenever faced with extreme grief. Using the model as a pathway to a better future is one method of coping with loss and shortening the time to a return to a normal life.

Transition Model

William and Susan Bridges suggested a four-stage model for dealing with transitions at work. They included:

1. Anticipation
2. Ending
3. Transition
4. Beginning

I found this model to be particularly helpful at accelerating the time from an impending disruption to full acceptance of a change.

For example, I once was involved in shutting down an operation of nearly 300 people and moving it to a new location with much improved processes. The move had been anticipated by the production workers for a few months.

When the decision was announced, it represented the “Ending” stage, and the workers were dead set against the change, even though it meant a better existence on the other end. They described it as a “death.”

We used the transition model to help workers through the various transition stages of anger and bargaining and included them in visualizing the physical set up in the new plant. Their energy shifted from trying to preserve the old way to helping invent the new way.

We had expected the entire process to take over a year to accomplish, but by involving the employees in this way, we were able to accomplish the change in less than two months. The result was a huge cash savings, and people were happier all the way through the process.

Conclusion

Using a formal change model, like the ones mentioned in this article, to help people cope with difficult changes in life is an excellent way to mitigate the pain and return life to a good quality once again.

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of: The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals, Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online, Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind, and Trust in Transition: Navigating Organizational Change. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations.

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