



Quick CLIX for CHANGE ◀ No: 3

The 8 Errors of Change

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Useful Reading:

John P. Kotter 1996, *Leading Change*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, Mass

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John Kotter's book on Leading Change is structured around eight errors organisations make. These "errors" serve as a handy check-list for leaders who suspect their change initiative is turning disaster-like. They can also be translated into a model of 8 stages you need to cover in any change process to make it successful.

➔ What actions can you take to overcome each?

- 1. Allowing too much complacency.** Change efforts always fail when complacency levels are high. How well have you created urgency for change before ploughing ahead with your program?
- 2. Failing to create a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition.** Individuals, no matter how energetic or committed, will not pull off a major change initiative. Several individuals, including members of the senior team, MUST be committed to your program's success. Have you developed a powerful guiding coalition?
- 3. Underestimating the power of vision.** Vision plays a central role by helping stakeholders and the front line to align their actions. A "plan" will not substitute for a well-articulated vision. How well have you created a vision that EVERYONE can verbalise easily and with understanding? What actions can you take to develop a vivid and compelling change?
- 4. Under-communicating the vision by a factor 10.** A one-time communication event or retreat, or a short-term effort at notifying the front line is not sufficient to ensure buy-in to the change. How well are you consistently, creatively and relentlessly communicating your vision?
- 5. Permitting obstacles to block the vision.** Obstacles can be organizational structure, procedures and policies, or supervisors and managers who resist the new change and therefore block the efforts. How well are you acknowledging and confronting the obstacles in the path of change? What actions can you take to empower a broad base of people to take action?
- 6. Failing to create short term wins.** Transformation takes time and therefore short-term wins must be part of the strategy in order to keep everyone on the journey. How well have you planned short term wins and milestone achievements?
- 7. Declaring victory too soon.** Because new methods and workflow takes time to sink deeply into the culture, be careful about assuming completion too early. How well are you maintaining vigilance and reinforcing the vision long after the project plans are completed? What actions can you take to consolidate gains?
- 8. Neglecting to anchor change firmly in the culture.** When the new ways of operating result in improvement and are also adopted by the next generation of leaders or front-line operators, they become "the way we've always done things." How well are you planning for how leadership successors and new employees will be champions of the vision? What actions can you take to institutionalise change in the culture?



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