



What am I getting ready for with organizational readiness?

Organizational readiness. What is that exactly? Ready for what? And how do you know when you're ready? Or - more specifically - when your organization and your workforce are ready? In other words, what exactly are you getting ready for?

In a word - change. Is the organization ready for change? And how do you determine if your organization is ready for change? Logically, your response may be "well, that depends". Is it a positive change or a negative change? Is it a necessary change or just a "good idea"? Is it a steady, gradual change, or a "big bang"? Is it supported by respected leaders throughout the organization or only by the top brass? All of these attributes influence the answer to whether or not your organization is "ready".

Other attributes of the change that influence whether you're ready or not include - the type of change, the driver of the change, and the impact of the change. So in assessing your "readiness", someone in the organization should be asking questions like...

- What are you getting ready for?
- How will things change?
- Who will be impacted by the change?
- Why is the change necessary?
- When is it going to happen?
- How will it impact other plans and projects?
- And "does my manager understand and support this change?"

Yes, many times members of the workforce may not understand all of the nuances and reasoning behind a business initiative or change. So they will look to their manager, their co-worker, or their friends to determine if this change makes sense to them. It's not that a person "can't" understand it. But that in the absence of clear information and/or information from a trusted resource, they will look for additional understanding in every possible location. Their friends and colleagues are the most accessible and the most trustworthy; and they will compare notes and try to separate truth from spin.

Change is always communicated in a positive way. To communicate it negatively would be counterproductive. So we all know there is a certain amount of spin that is going on when change initiatives start to show up. We are still an instinctive species and we will look for "chinks in the armor." We will listen to our "gut" and determine if this story we are being told rings true and matches information we are receiving from other resources. As a result, assessing organizational readiness also includes another question - "does your organization have one consistent understanding of why this change is necessary?"

If there are multiple stories about why a change is being implemented, those inconsistencies will start to undermine the credibility of leaders, the productivity of employees and stakeholders, and the rate of project implementation and success. Inconsistencies in the reasoning and support will erode confidence and buy in just like a virus starts first to disrupt simple programming and then the disruptions begin to impact the larger functionality. It's important for an organization to have a good reason behind the



change, otherwise the workforce may find it difficult to support. In other words, part of organizational readiness is designing a communication plan to market and sell the business initiative.

Convincing your stakeholders that your plans have merit is a continuous job. Just as we need to research and document our reason for making a change, so too must we justify it to the stakeholders in order to approach "readiness." After all, no organization can truly call itself ready if nobody believes in the justification.

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