

Understanding Change & Transition

by Chuck Griffin

When you learn to manage change, you can manage anything

Change management is the critical ingredient in the process to establish a comprehensive asset management plan. We encounter change whenever we introducing something like a new computer system, new policies, a new office, new personnel, etc. The key to successful change, is to manage the transition. Transition is the psychological process people endure to come to grips with new or different situations and environments.

In preparing for the transition, it is important to view your organization from the inside out. On the surface ,you find well defined processes and an organization that is more than willing to tell you how things are supposed to work. The problem is that when you question "is that the way you do it? " The answer is most often "No."

Typically when asked why not, you hear "it takes too long,"or "we don't get enough information," or even "why are we doing this anyway?" Even though there is a well-defined business process, it may have outlived its usefulness or simply cannot support a comprehensive asset management program . It is also essential to carefully review any alternative processes which have been created to deal with inefficiencies.

Develop your strategic plan The inside out look at your organization will reveal there are still elements of your existing system that are serving you well. The goal is to identify those elements you want to keep and develop a strategic plan for managing the required change to incorporate new elements.

One of the critical success variables of the transition process is "unfreezing" your entire organization to allow you to integrate all the elements of the new facility management organization, for it to be truly functional.

This may disrupt the comfort zone of some people. There will be a period of time when the organization will be moving away from the known without having a clear image of what it is moving towards. Don't be surprised by the reaction of staff. This is a natural response which needs to be respected.

The foundation of designing in your success is a communication strategy. Change and the transition of change must be communicated to everyone, staff, strategic partners, customers and senior management. Don't fall into this type of trap:

- * They don't need to know yet;
- * They already know, we announced it, or;
- * I told the supervisor.

Communicate, communicate and when you think you have told people everything, tell them some more. During the transition the people working with you will need reinforcement.

You must also stop doing things that have no bearing on your future direction. You must identify and mark the milestones. Because there are business processes you are going to preserve, you need to make sure that it is clearly defined as to what has ended and what has not. There can be no confusion about the direction. Most people and organizations expect to move straight from the old to the new. They don't realize there is a period of transition necessary.

Audit the transition process. One of the most effective ways to achieve success is to form a transition team. This team, in effect, will navigate the change management process.

As the organization transforms, to preserve the momentum, you need to have quick successes. It will take time for the new organization to take root so you will need to reassure staff and reinforce direction while continuing to maintain a dynamic environment. One last thing, don't forget to have everyone celebrate in the success.