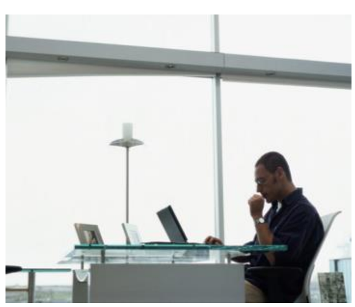
Change Readiness Assessment

Change Management
A Highlands Group White Paper Series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Change Readiness Assessment

Research shows that 70 percent of all change efforts fail. Why? Because when leaders introduce a new change into the organization, they rarely determine the degree to which the organization is prepared for change. Leaders become so enamored with the technical side of change (new strategy, restructuring, information, technology, etc.) they often fall victim to change failure factors, such as:

- Lack of leadership experience in implementing change
- Low leadership commitment to change
- Lack of leadership ability to follow through and sustain change
- Weak or unclear business case
- Weak or unclear change vision
- Low felt need for change among employees
- Unwillingness and inability of middle management and supervisors to implement a new way of doing things
- Lack of resources for the change
- Low degree of trust within the organization
- Poor communication vehicles to disseminate information and engage hearts, heads, and hands

The Change Readiness Assessment provides leaders with data about employee commitment and ownership to change. It's a *change readiness check-up* that extracts data from surveys, focus groups, and interviews. This data helps leaders put their fingers on the pulse of the organization and take appropriate steps so they can be among the 30 percent of successful change efforts.

A Change Readiness Assessment includes four key steps:

1. Conduct a change readiness survey.
2. Interview select focus groups.
3. Conduct one-on-one interviews.
4. Tabulate findings and determine key themes.

1. Conduct a Change Readiness Survey

A change readiness survey allows participants to anonymously provide input about the organization's ability to successfully implement change. It is a highly efficient instrument to survey a lot of people in a short time. The survey targets people from all levels of the organization and collects data across many different functions. A change readiness survey focuses on the following areas:

- The climate
  - Level of trust within the organization
  - Previous experience of the organization in making major change
- The imperative
  - Clear business case for change
  - The magnitude and urgency of the need for the change program
- The will
  - Leadership willingness to invest time and resources
  - Individuals associated with the effort placing it as one of their top priorities
- The means
  - Level of skill in implementing change successfully
  - Experience dealing with employee transitions in supportive ways
- The commitment
  - Leaders that demonstrate consistent, sustained support for the initiative
  - Leaders that promptly reward behavior consistent with the new direction
- The change roles
  - Leaders with needed skill sets and authority to make appropriate changes
  - Clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities for those involved

Tasks

Complete the following tasks to conduct a change readiness survey:

1. Start with an established survey and determine what minor modifications would make it applicable to your specific change effort.
2. Determine needed demographic data and build that into the survey (e.g., time with the company, area in the company, level, etc.).
3. Determine the distribution methods and timing for the survey. Many surveys can be administered electronically. However, at times a paper-based survey is easier to distribute depending on the nature of employees' work.
4. Analyze the data from the survey. Engage senior leaders and change agents to determine key improvement areas and to develop detailed action plans to improve results.
5. Communicate! Share findings, learnings, and action plans with employees throughout the organization as you move forward.

2. Interview Select Focus Groups

While surveys gather anonymous data from across the organization, focus groups gather targeted data about specific areas of interest in the Change Readiness Assessment. Use focus groups to: (1) understand additional questions that need to be answered on the survey, and (2) extract deeper meaning after the survey has been administered.

The table below is a simple way to organize your thoughts about focus groups.

Group	
Characteristics	
Questions to Ask	
Timing and Responsibility	

Tasks

The following tasks ensure successful focus groups:

1. Identify groups who could help determine additional survey questions or extract meaning from the survey data.
2. List characteristics of the group to help you understand them better.
3. Determine key questions you want to ask each group.
4. Create a standard interview template to capture findings.
5. Determine timing for the focus group and schedule the meeting.

It is helpful to have more than one person conduct the focus group. Additional eyes and ears in the room enable more accurate analysis of the findings and help facilitate the focus group discussion. Typical roles include discussion leader, scribe, and documentation expert. Just be clear about the role each person will play prior to the interview.

Guidelines

Use the following guidelines to conduct focus groups:

- Who to do focus groups with?
  - Identify a diagonal slice of 10 to 15 percent of the people in the organization, such as Division Manager, Division Leadership Team, Managers, Front-line Supervisors, Front-line employees, and functional support groups. From this slice, create two to three focus groups of 10 to 20 people each.
  - Select a diverse group of formal and informal leaders (e.g., time with the organization, experience level, seasoned and new leaders, etc.).
- What to ask?
  - Review the change readiness survey and choose five to seven key questions or select areas of focus from the Change Readiness Assessment.
- How to do focus groups?
  - Introduce yourself and explain the purpose of the interview.
  - Have the participants introduce themselves and explain their roles in the organization.
  - Explain that the information is confidential and you will not report names, but you will use information and direct quotes anonymously.
  - Explain that you will explore different aspects of the readiness survey, so while no one person will be asked questions about *all* of the survey, the group at large will cover all major areas.

Note: Often people have something on their minds that they want to tell you. It may be helpful to “go with the flow” in some cases and allow people to talk freely.

- Ask open-ended questions that encourage explanations.
- Ensure that all participants have a chance to provide input (not just the extroverts).
- Make notes of challenges, issues, and concerns.

- How to assign responsibility for focus groups?
  - The Change Leadership Team is responsible for determining participant mix, scheduling, facilitating, and assigning someone to document the discussion and learning points.

3. Conduct One-on-One Interviews

Similar to focus groups, use one-on-one interviews to: (1) understand additional questions that need to be answered on the survey, and (2) extract deeper meaning after the survey has been administered.

The table below is a simple way to organize your thoughts about one-on-one interviews.

Individual	
Role	
Questions to Ask	
Timing and Responsibility	

Tasks

The following tasks ensure successful one-on-one interviews:

1. Identify individuals who could help determine additional survey questions or extract meaning from the survey data.
2. List individuals' roles.
3. Determine key questions you want to ask individuals; add additional questions that might be more relevant to each role.
4. Create a standard interview template to capture findings.
5. Determine timing for the interview and schedule the meeting.

Guidelines

Use the following guidelines to conduct one-on-one interviews:

- Who to interview?
  - Identify and schedule the following for interviews: half of the leadership team, one key influencer per function, 5 to 10 front-line supervisors, and 5 to 10 front-line employees.
  - Select a diverse group of formal and informal leaders (e.g., time with the organization, experience level, seasoned and new leaders, etc.).
- What to ask?
  - Review the change readiness survey and choose five to seven key questions or select areas of focus from the Change Readiness Assessment.
- How to do one-on-one interviews?
  - Introduce yourself and explain the purpose of the interview.
  - Have the individual introduce himself or herself and explain his or her role in the organization.
  - Explain that the information is confidential and you will not report names, but you will use information and direct quotes anonymously.
  - Explain that you will explore different aspects of the readiness survey, so the interviewee may not be asked about *all* of the survey areas.
    Note: Often people have something on their minds that they want to tell you. It may be helpful to "go with the flow" in some cases and allow people to talk freely.

- Ask open-ended questions that encourage explanations.
- Make notes of challenges, issues, and concerns.

• How to assign responsibility for the interviews?

- The Change Leadership Team is responsible for determining the interviewees, scheduling, interviewing, and documenting the discussion and learning points.

4. Tabulate Findings and Determine Key Themes

The purpose of doing surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews is to better understand if the organization and its employees are ready for change. This step focuses on finding similarities and differences that can impact the change effort.

Tasks

Common tasks to tabulate findings include:

1. Identify the strengths (high scores) in the data. Build on these areas in the change initiative.
2. Identify areas of opportunity (low scores) in the data. Watch out for these areas and build specific intervention strategies to prevent them from derailing the change effort.
3. Look for correlation between different survey questions. Does one answer give you better insight into another answer?
4. Summarize the division's change readiness by placing each key theme into the following Change Formula:

   C = *f*(A,B,D) > X

   C = the change to be accomplished
   A = a dissatisfaction with the status quo
   B = a clear vision of the desired future state
   D = some practical first steps
   X = the cost of making the change

   Change can occur when the multiple of ABD is greater than X—the costs the change might require (e.g., financial, ego, political, comfort zone, etc.). When X is greater than the multiple of ABD, the resistance to change will be strong and might derail a big improvement.
5. Schedule time with senior leaders to review findings, discuss implications, and develop change strategies to successfully implement the change initiative.
6. Communicate with the organization about the process of assessing the organization's readiness for change. Key points to communicate include who was involved (survey, focus groups, interviews); what was asked; key findings and themes; and the plan to move forward.

Conclusion

Arnold H. Glasow said, “The trouble with the future is that it usually arrives before we’re ready for it.” The same can be said about change. Leaders need to determine the degree to which the organization is prepared for change—including both the technical and the people issues. Other considerations include leadership experience in implementing change, leaders’ and employees’ commitment to the change, strength and clarity of the business case, and employees’ felt need for change. A Change Readiness Assessment helps leaders put their fingers on the pulse of the organization and take appropriate steps so they can be among the 30 percent of successful change efforts.

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