



## **The 3 Biggest Change Management Mistakes Exposed**

*Restructures, Process Improvements, Acquisitions, Mergers, Divestments, System Implementations, Product and Service Launches, Projects.*

Change is a constant in business today – in fact, it's the only thing that's guaranteed! Yet, if it's so common, why do so many organizations get it so spectacularly wrong every day?

After 10 years on the receiving end of 'change initiatives' in various front line to executive roles, I applied my experience as a senior change management consultant for a large IT consulting firm, advising others on how to make change happen. Now, as a successful business coach, my mission is to make change as easy as possible. After all, who said change needs to be hard?

Here are the most common mistakes I repeatedly encounter, regardless of the industry, organization or type of change organizations want to introduce. Making these Change Management Mistakes disengages the people most impacted by the change and guarantees the failure of almost any change initiative.

### ***Mistake #1: Buying a 'One Size Fits All' Approach where Change is Done To You***

Many consulting firms sell impressive Change Management approaches that are heavy on theory, rhetoric, process and price. Promising to come in and implement the change, they follow a formulaic approach that has worked for many big name clients in the past. Breathing a sigh of relief that this firm has the skills and experience make the change happen quickly and effectively (albeit expensively!), you sit back and let them loose on your organization.

Benevolent senior partners oversee intense and eager young graduate consultants who have rarely experienced wide scale change, first hand. The 'suits' come in and book countless meetings and workshops with all the 'stakeholders' who still have 'day jobs' and other non-change related commitments to meet. This results in impressive, though often lengthy, documents which are barely read beyond their Executive Summaries. Engaged on a fixed term contract, the consulting firm's goal is to do the change as quickly and effectively as possible and leave you to it.

There are a number of shortfalls with this approach and if you are going down this path, take a moment to ask yourself how well they:

- Demonstrate understanding of the unique context within which your change is happening.
- Demonstrate understanding of your business, beyond reading the home page of your companies' website.
- Take time to engage your people, respect and understand how they will be impacted by the change.
- Apply their 'Change Management Model' and theory to your specific change and organisation's culture.

Chances are that if you've made this mistake, you'll know what it's like to be left with the 'mess', long after the consulting firm has moved onto their next gig. At best your staff will be disillusioned and disengaged with no ownership of the outcome of the change. At worst, motivation, absenteeism and retention will be adversely affected as your best people move on – burnt out but wiser for the experience.



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### *Mistake #2: Abdicating Responsibility for the Change – where Change is Done For You*

This mistake happens when under the veil of 'leadership', you happily abdicate all responsibility for the way in which the change happens. Giving both the responsibility and power to an external consulting firm is a major blunder that can lead to a result far removed from your original vision and goals for the change.

Often driven by the 'I don't have time/too busy' belief, many organizational leaders push on with other seemingly more important priorities and are blissfully unaware of how the change initiative is progressing – until things start to go wrong. Feedback drifts back on the grapevine that the change is failing to gain traction and disrupting 'business as usual' with no perceived benefit. The project is burning \$ and people, yet missing its deadlines.

You know when the change has been 'Done For You' when, soon after the consultants depart, you:

1. Notice that **nothing has changed** – people are still doing what they've always done, the way they've always done it. In fact, there are no tangible, measurable benefits at all and your organization is struggling to manage the resulting disruption.
2. Realize that you actually have **very little understanding of how the change has impacted** your entire organization. What was the outcome and where has it left your business?
3. **Come to the blinding realization that there is no way to sustain the change** because your people have neither the ownership or skills to make the new way the 'norm' or 'the way we do things around here'.

### *Mistake #3: Underestimating the Power of your People to Make Change Fly or Die*

Regardless of the catalyst for the change, it will be your people who determine whether it successfully achieves its desired outcome. You can design the most technically advanced system, streamlined process or flexible organizational structure but if your people don't 'buy' it, the change will fail.

Often perceived as the most difficult part of any change initiative, effectively engaging your people is the most vital ingredient for its success. What's more, it doesn't need to be hard!

Your people have invaluable collective knowledge, expertise and skills, the power of which needs to be harnessed to make your change initiative succeed.

1. Create a clear vision of what needs to be achieved.
2. Delegate responsibility with clear accountabilities.
3. Remove roadblocks.
4. Provide them with change management skills, tools, techniques and support.
5. Get out of the way; guide the change and help your people sustain it.

With a vested interest in the success of the business, motivated and engaged internal change practitioners are invariably the best people to make the change 'fly'.

Regardless of the change you are embarking on, there are many simple ways to ensure its success. Contact [Possibility to Reality](http://www.possibilitytoreality.com.au) today to find out how to build your internal change management capability. The benefits will last long after the change objective has been achieved as your people apply what they know to future changes.

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