

Implementing Change: A 10-step Approach

1 Be up-front. Changes are made for a great number of reasons - threats such as a change in legislation, growth of a major competitor, falling sales, outdated processes or opportunities such as a new product, a new market, a fresh idea.

2 Consult at an early stage and ask people what they think. Gather data, ask for feedback, hold discussions. Get people's ideas, enthusiasm and fears out into the open.

3 Decide on whether to go ahead with the proposed changes. Listen to people's reactions. Allocate the right resources in terms of money, time, people and 'know how'. Make a plan, then announce the way forward.

4 Give the background. When implementing change it is essential to explain to people within (and sometimes outside) the organisation the background to the change. Give valid reasons. Let them see that you are not changing for the sake of change.

5 Clarify what will happen. Tell people about the change and its effects. Present the details objectively and unemotionally. Beforehand think about the questions that might arise from your audience. Try not to be caught on the back foot but have a strategy just in case. Show that you are aware of what the change will mean - this gives you credibility.

6 Be specific. Don't be foggy or confusing. Outline exactly what the changes are. Remember, you are not asking for opinions, the decision has already been made so there is no room for further consultation on whether or not the change *should* be made. The focus is simply on the change itself, its implementation and its effects.

7 Face resistance head-on. Acknowledge feelings of negativity and resistance. Reassure people that these are natural, reasonable reactions. Reiterate why the change is essential and that it *will* be implemented. Stress the positives and outline a vision for the future.

8 Ask for support. Having everyone on board is vital. Ask staff to make a positive commitment to the change. Take any positive ideas they have on smoothing the implementation and use them. You need their help to make the process as painless as possible.

9 Have an 'open door' policy. Make it easy for people to come to you - for information, to voice a concern, to make a suggestion. Even if people don't, they are reassured there are no obstacles in the way if they need to – and that's important in itself.

10 Follow up. Keep pushing the process forward, monitor progress and maintain momentum. Praise those who make a positive contribution. Congratulate when milestones are reached. Maintain open communications.