

The secret to successful change management

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The vast majority of change management efforts within organisations fail. According to new research from Nyenrode Business University, change can only truly be successful when you listen to the people in your organisations and (try to) understand their perspectives on an issue as well as their vision for the future.

The study was carried out over a period of eight years and respondents were interviewed about their perceptions and vision of the future of hospitals.

According to lead researcher Jolanda Kroon; “Everyone has different (and partly opposing) interests and views, but in spite of their role and tasks actors look from a different perspective and therefore see a different reality. In order to come to a set of solutions and give direction to the future, you have to harmonize these viewpoints in a certain way.”

“This starts with language-based communication. It seems so obvious but I asked the respondents a rather simple question, namely to define what a hospital is. All respondents gave a different answer. It all starts with an exploration of perspectives.”

According to the research, there is a misconception that there always has to be a common goal. In order to combat this, organisations must clarify different interests and be aware of various perspectives, which will result in a goal that is compatible with and incorporates all those different perspectives. In this way ownership will be created for a shared purpose, instead of a common goal, which is not supported by the various stakeholders.

In order to be agile to an ever-changing environment, it is also important for the board to set adjustable frames. Professionals are responsible for the implementation and they perform in the set of frameworks. Management has a facilitating role rather than imposing direction top-down.

Kroon indicates that there is no right or wrong in a change process. The various perspectives can offer totally different viewpoints. Stakeholders come up with solutions that you may initially think are improbable. It is crucial to explore elements of resistance and listen carefully to find out what the underlying motives are. It is essential for success to look at a person’s interests based on their role, their different views as a result of the position and their perspective on the situation.

Right now, the challenge in organizational change is speed. So much is happening at the moment and change is coming from all angles. It is hard to be agile all the time. Therefore, it is more important than ever to put people first and see their perspective.

According to Kroon; “The success of change lies in the way people look at their reality and their joint future.”

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For more information, a copy of the research paper, or to speak with the researchers, contact Kate

Mowbray at BlueSky PR on Kate@bluesky-pr.com or call +44 710022871