

THE SKILLS YOU NEED GUIDE TO LEADERSHIP

MAKING IT HAPPEN:

Project And
Change Management Skills
For Leaders



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Skills You Need

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“Change is the law of life and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.”

John F. Kennedy

As a leader, one of your most important responsibilities is to make things happen. Whether that's to support small or large projects, or implement huge organisational changes, there are some key skills that you will need. We're not talking about detailed project management skills, but enough knowledge to understand what is going on, and to make sure that everything is on track.

There is a huge difference between leading a change programme, and acting as a project manager. This eBook is not designed as a project management textbook. Instead, it aims to help leaders to understand about project and change management, and ensure that their overview of change programmes and other projects is effective.

Like the others in the same series, this eBook is designed particularly for new leaders, or those who are preparing for leadership, whether on a temporary or more permanent basis. However, established leaders should also find interesting ideas here.

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PART 5:

**MAKING IT HAPPEN:
Project And Change
Management Skills For
Leaders**

1

Introduction to Change and Project Leadership

In this day and age, it's almost impossible to imagine any leadership job or position that does not, at a very fundamental level, involve change. Change is almost constant. But it is also very difficult. We all tend to resist change: we value what we have, and we are concerned about what we might lose.

“Change is hard because people overestimate the value of what they have — and underestimate the value of what they may gain by giving that up.”

*James Belasco and Ralph Stayer, *Flight of the Buffalo* (1994)*

As a leader, it is part of your job to put away any natural inclination against change and help those that you lead to accept necessary change.

The first step to change, as with leadership, is within yourself. You have to accept and embrace change before you can help and encourage others to do so. People are extremely quick to detect insincerity. You really do have to ‘walk the walk’ when leading change.

This eBook therefore starts with some ideas about personal change. It then moves on to consider change management more generally, and some ideas about implementing change including overcoming resistance. Finally, it turns to the ‘nuts and bolts’: how to achieve change.

2

Personal Change

“One key to successful leadership is continuous personal change. Personal change is a reflection of our inner growth and empowerment.”

Robert E. Quinn

Why do some people seem to sail gently through all the changes life throws at them, while others get upset if they have to change even their breakfast cereal?

The key is in how you view change, and your level of acceptance of uncertainty.

There is plenty of evidence that what we find most stressful as human beings is uncertainty, not change in itself. Even the most difficult life events, such as divorce or marital separation, can be more stressful in terms of the uncertainty.

There are some simple skills that you can develop that will help you to embrace change more readily, a vital skill for leaders who have to demonstrate active acceptance of change before they can lead others through it.

STRESS: SOME BACKGROUND

Stress is not all in the mind. It can cause genuine physical symptoms, including dizziness, tension headaches, diarrhoea and insomnia, which in turn can make you feel worse, and even more stressed.

This kind of 'negative feedback loop' is common in nature and is designed to make you stop. Your body is trying to tell you something and, if you don't listen to it, you could find yourself becoming very ill indeed. Don't be tempted to ignore the symptoms of stress, and hope that they go away by themselves. They won't. Instead, you need to deal with the causes.



WARNING! DON'T MESS WITH STRESS!

If you are struggling with stress and it's making you unwell, you should seek professional help from a counsellor or healthcare provider. Stress left unchecked can lead to depression, a potentially serious mental illness.

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