



Committing to change is difficult for any organization regardless of size. There are numerous case studies and white papers with prescriptions for implementing change within an organization, and an equal number of reviews on the relative success of each approach. Fifth Star Consulting's approach includes a differentiator for the front office: a Market Readiness Team.

SITUATION

Let's agree that in order to implement change you should have some variation of the following:

1. A Clear Goal or Target
2. A Structure and Timeline for Execution
3. A Commitment to Provide Resources
4. Visible, Strong Leadership
5. Concise Communication

Each of these steps is noted as a key to successful change management in most texts on the subject. However, change is particularly challenging when dealing with the front-office employees who are the defenders of the client. These client-facing employees must maintain an external focus and continue to serve their customers throughout the implementation of any project. Many change management programs fail due to lack of engagement from the front office, whose objections include lack of understanding, lack of time and lack of client-orientation from project team.

SOLUTION

Fifth Star Consulting helps their clients establish a Market Readiness Team. The purpose of the Market Readiness Team (MRT) is to give the front office a voice within the change management organization without disrupting the ability to keep the client-facing employees focused on the client. The Market Readiness Team reports to the leader of the front office organization and sits in between the front office and the Project Management Office (PMO). The primary responsibilities of the MRT include:

- Advocate for the client and employees within the PMO structure
- Define and manage stakeholder interests
- Serve as the Market Liaison to the PMO
- Ensure that market involvement is prioritized based on the most impactful changes

In order to successfully fulfill these responsibilities, the Market Readiness Team must be comprised of individuals who:

- Understand the products, services, and tools of the front office
- Have previously held client-facing positions
- Have credibility with both clients and employees



Equally important in ensuring the success of the MRT is the engagement of front office leadership.

The Role of Leadership

In order for the Market Readiness team to be successful the Market leadership has to set the example for the market to follow. This starts with creating a compelling story supporting the goal of the change. The most dynamic leaders are able to create a story that not only provides context for the change as it relates to the company and its shareholders, but also about why the change is good for the customers, employees and society.

Important reminders for market leadership during change:

- Stay energized and involved throughout the change process.
- Focus on strengths and achievements, not just problems
- The small stuff matters. Consider phone calls, hand written notes, group lunches, public acknowledgements and inexpensive gifts to recognize contributions and show gratitude for outstanding efforts.
- Appoint a Market Champion that is a senior and recognized leader within the Market.
- Appoint readiness representatives for employees making sure each audience is represented:
 - Relationship Mgmt
 - Service
 - Product Sales
- Insist on reporting that reflects the progress of the readiness efforts:
 - Client contact
 - Attendance/progress of agreed upon training
 - Actions required of employees and progress towards targets

Once the leadership has assumed their role in guiding the project and fulfilled these crucial responsibilities, the Market Champions become the gatekeepers for the front office.

The Role of the Market Champions

The Market Champions manage the participation of the readiness representatives and together they partner with the Market Readiness Team to do the following:

- Tell the Market's story from their perspective and ensure that perspective is represented throughout the change process.
- Advocate for what is right.
- Strike a balance between goals of change and what is appropriate for clients and employees.
- Pay attention to fairness and handle market objections.
- Consolidate feedback from clients and employees.
- Ensure that communication to both clients and employees is targeted and actionable
- Confirms that training is role-specific and the delivery is appropriate for both the content and the audience.



BENEFITS

Market participation and engagement is crucial to a successful change implementation. Having the market's voice represented ensures the change be executed in the best way possible.

- Facilitates the identification of key stakeholders' needs and viewpoints early in the process
- Allows for customization and differentiation of change management approach by audience instead of one-size fits all
- Identifies and breaks through barriers to change due to credibility within front office
- Effective allocation of resources—front office stays focused on client not project management
- Sustained Momentum
- Reporting specific to front office that speaks to the engagement of the client and employee in managing the change

For more information visit our Web site at: www.fifthstarconsulting.com