

Practitioners' Masterclass



Change processes that work for people



Change Management Templates

Applying The Practitioners' Masterclass

Limited Power and Influence (2)

First Line Management + Supervisors

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Limited Power and Influence (2)

(1) Status = Starting Out

Your organisation's CEO and senior management have an idea, a vision for a significant visionary change, and/or your organisation is facing major external challenges...

It is fairly obvious to you that the size, scope and complexity, priority, timescale and strategic importance of the proposed change is such that it is likely to have a big impact on your people, that it will probably disrupt your day-to-day running of your team.

Throughout this template, we are going to proceed on the basis that your boss (from here on whenever I refer to "he" read that as "he or she") has not read the Practitioners Masterclass and has a limited understanding of how to successfully lead and manage a step change.

We are also going to assume that your senior management and your boss is focused on achieving the benefits of the change as quickly as possible and mistakenly assume that everyone can be "managed through the change"; and that they also believe that either it can be handled within "business as usual"; or that they do recognise that it needs to be treated as a separate initiative, but under-estimate the scope and scale of what will be involved.

As a first line manager or supervisor, you are in the firing line. It will be down to you to implement their ideas.

We are making these assumptions, as these are the most common scenarios.

Stalling Points

(1) Failing to ask your boss questions

- ❑ Failing to understand that you – with the benefit of this knowledge and that which you have obtained from the Practitioners Masterclass – are in a privileged position
- ❑ Failing to act on this knowledge by seeking clarification and asking your boss questions
- ❑ Failing to appreciate that you may be helping your boss by asking questions, as chances are he won't know all the answers and you are giving him the information he needs to seek clarification from, and manage, his boss
- ❑ It is all too easy to take the line of least resistance. It is too easy to go along with whatever it is you have been asked to implement, without initiating an informed discussion with your boss about the implications of what has been proposed, and (based on your knowledge) an informed recommendation as to how to proceed in a way that is most likely to succeed

(2) Failing to understand the role and critical importance of involving your people in this change process

- ❑ Failing to understand that your people's active involvement and support is critical to the success or failing of your efforts to implement the change initiative
- ❑ To succeed with any change initiative you need the involvement and support of your people from the outset

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(3) Failing to understand that your people will need coaching and guiding, as well as managing, through the change

- ❑ Failing to appreciate that for any major change initiative to succeed your role is to provide the people for whom you have formal responsibility with facilitative leadership. This means that you have to help them to make it happen
- ❑ Facilitative leadership will require from you: communication skills, social skills and a supportive approach.
- ❑ In order to deliver this level of support, you need information, and it is of primary importance that you ask your boss the right questions in order to understand and communicate this to your people
- ❑ Whilst your formal power - via the command-control hierarchy - remains intact, the power needed to drive this change initiative is based on collaboration and support

(4) Failing to understand what has and hasn't worked before

- ❑ So many companies – especially in North America – just rush into the next change initiative without debriefing and assessing what did and didn't work last time, and why
 - ❑ You need to get that knowledge and insight now, right up front as it can help you repeating past mistakes and failing with this initiative
 - ❑ You need to look at the scars left by successful as well as unsuccessful initiatives as it is crucial to understand and address the scar tissue left by previous initiatives – you need to involve your people in this review process
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Critical Action Points

In order of priority and sequence you have 4 critical actions.

The basis on which you proceed with your involvement in the implementation of this change initiative will be shaped by the outcome of the following steps:

- ❑ Your first and most urgent and important task is to meet with your boss – probably more than once – and to seek clarification on a number of key questions (see below)
 - ❑ You need to reach clarity and agreement with your boss on how you proceed in implementing the changes
 - ❑ Having completed your discussions with your boss, and before instigating any action, and in addition to discussing this with your other supervisory/management colleagues, hold informal talks as soon as possible with a small group drawn from your wider team
 - ❑ Outline the challenges, give them the background and the reasons for the potential change and invite their views and feedback on how to implement – and listen
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Key Questions

These are recommended questions for discussion. Rephrase and supplement, as you feel appropriate:

- ❑ "Why are we doing this and how's it (the organisation) going to be different after the change?"
 - ❑ "How will the organisation benefit from the change, and how will we know it's benefited?"
 - ❑ "Who's this change going to affect and how are they likely to react?"
 - ❑ "What can we do to help them deal with the impacts (on them) of the change and how can we keep them 'on side'?"
 - ❑ "What steps do we have to take to make the changes in ways that work for the organisation (so that it benefits from the change) and also for those who are going to be impacted by the change?"
 - ❑ "What could go wrong - what are the risks and issues we'll have to face?"
 - ❑ "How are we going to do this so that it happens and we succeed?"
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Initial Objectives

Your initial objective is to reach clarity with regard to your boss's perspective on each of the points listed below which are the essence of the key questions.

Your secondary objective is to reach a shared perspective – your other supervisory/management colleagues and then to hold informal talks as soon as possible with a small group drawn from your wider team - of a high level view of each of the following points:

- ❑ The organisational **need** for the change
- ❑ The **specifics** of what will change
- ❑ The **benefits** of the change
- ❑ The **impacts** of the change

This not a negotiation, this is not a planning exercise, this is an informal discussion.

It is highly likely that this will involve a number of meetings – each of the above points could involve a separate session.

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What is most likely to go wrong?

Problems are likely to arise from 3 areas:

(1) Your boss

- ❑ Your boss will find it difficult to respond to your questions because he doesn't know the answers and he feels uncomfortable and thus unwilling to seek clarification from his boss
- ❑ He will become impatient about what he sees as time-wasting discussions and put you under pressure to "get on with it"
- ❑ This why the initial discussion you hold with your boss in which you explain your practical need for this information is so important

(2) Members of your team

- ❑ If you have not involved members of your team in discussions before and especially in previous change initiatives, and if you and/or your organisation has a poor track record on running change initiatives then they will likely be suspicious or even hostile to your initial invitation to meet and talk informally
- ❑ They will be trying to figure out what your hidden agenda is and may be reluctant to participate and will stall you

(3) You

- ❑ The change you are tasked with implementing within your part of the organisation starts with you. This will probably mean changing and adapting the way you manage your relationship with your boss and the way you manage your team
- ❑ With your team this may mean admitting past mistakes – mistakes that may have disrupted and negatively impacted their personal and emotional lives

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- Your leadership and management style quite likely has to change. You are now an enabler and facilitator
 - If your psychological and emotional profile matches that of the typical first line manager, whilst you may agree in principle with some of what you have just read, you will quite probably experience a degree of resistance
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Quick metrics on progress

- ❑ You have a documented list of answers to the key questions that you have asked your boss
 - ❑ You have in your possession a single sheet summary of the lessons learnt from past change initiatives
 - ❑ You catch yourself (maybe uncharacteristically) reflecting more on the people side of your proposed change initiative
 - ❑ A member of your team emails you personally or phones you on your mobile phone with ideas and suggestions
 - ❑ You feel a certain level of dis-ease and mild discomfort about where all this is leading
 - ❑ You sense that a shared perception of the initial objective is starting to emerge from meetings with your team
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