

Get a Grip on Managing Change: Deploying the Knoster Model for Successful Implementation.

Michael Nanfito, 2015

To put it bluntly, if you don't have a straightforward and easily shared project *vision*, it's difficult to draft a coherent and effective *plan* that will enable you to assemble requisite *resources* and *skills*, and to generate *incentives* for your partners. To get a grip on successfully managing change, you need to do the hard work of laying a solid foundation that considers each of these elements. Organizations intent on meaningful collaborative change must cultivate these elements in order to ensure enduring programmatic success.

A previous post on collaborative change ([Mastering Collaboration](#)) described the organizational capacities required including the capacity to:

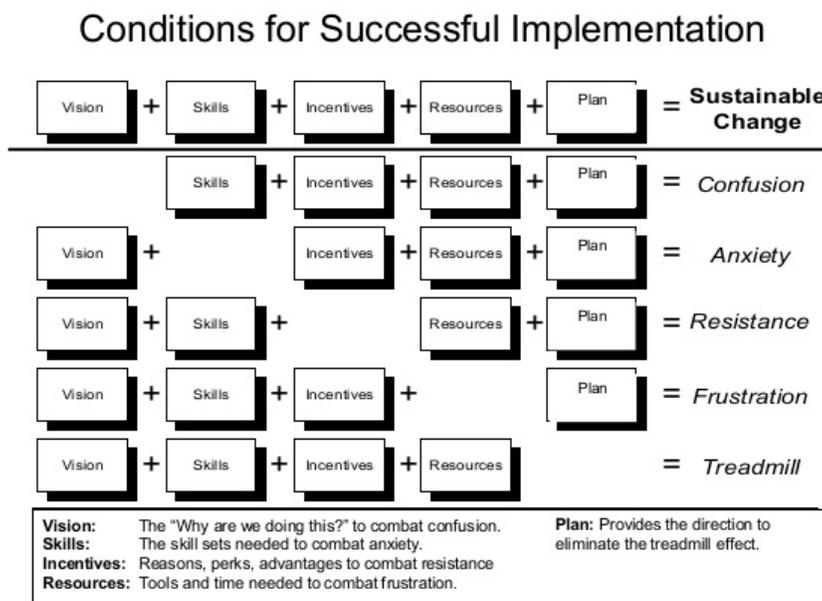
1. Ensure persistent exchange of information.
2. Consciously and responsibly alter activities to achieve a shared purpose.
3. Support extensive sharing of resources and turf.
4. Commit to substantial organizational involvement.
5. Demonstrate very high levels of trust.
6. Commit to enhancing the capacity of the other for mutual benefit.

Developing and sustaining these capacities takes significant organizational investment. The capacity to engage at this level does not come easy. How will you identify and rally the organizational capital to implement and sustain such capacities? Begin developing that investment by cultivating common sense elements known to support enduring organizational change: vision, skills, incentives, resources, and plans.



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Timothy Knoster identified several conditions for successful implementation of change (Knoster, Villa, & Thousand, 2000). Knoster's work explored and distilled existing organizational change models in an effort to provide educational leaders with a straightforward tool to help facilitate sustained programmatic change in schools (Ambrose, 1987). He adapted the models he discovered and graphically depicted resulting outcomes when required elements of change are absent (see the figure below). Specifically, Knoster argues that enduring organizational change requires the presence of [at least these] five elements: *vision*, *skills*, *incentives*, *resources*, and a *plan*:



Knoster, T., Villa, R., & Thousand, J. (2000)

While the chart above is neat and tidy reality is almost always messy. People don't fit into boxes and processes don't flow in straight lines. Nevertheless, matrices like this provide a starting point to structure a program that supports successful and enduring organizational change.

Part of the power of this illustration is that - in addition to identifying elements that must be present for successful change management (and perhaps most importantly) - it reveals and cautions against specific emotional outcomes for your team when any one element is missing:

1. Vision: A clear vision provides a vivid image of the desired future that will result as a result of the adoption and implementation of your project. Without vision, **confusion** will ensue among project participants.
2. Skills: Identify, argue for, and assemble the proficiencies necessary to successfully perform the tasks required by your project. The absence of the necessary skills will result in **anxiety** for everyone with responsibility for the project.
3. Incentives: Everyone needs something specific that encourages and motivates participation and action. Those specifics may vary from role to role. If key players are not provided incentives that help them see the value in enthusiastic participation, but are instead corralled into "getting on board," **resistance** is likely inevitable.
4. Resources: You have to have the means to achieve project success including money, staff, support, equipment, and facilities. Without these resources you can count on **frustration**, for yourself and your colleagues. Mostly for yourself though.
5. A Plan: Define the steps that must be taken for development and implementation to succeed. Lacking a plan will put participants on an unproductive "**treadmill**."

Interestingly, others have since built on Knoster's original model. In addition to the elements documented by his work, there are at least three other significant components of successful implementation, including:

1. Buy-in
2. Actionable first steps
3. Plan for evaluation

Without significant community buy-in, **sabotage** (conscious or not) will result. If actionable first steps are not laid out, **false starts** can be anticipated. When there is no plan for evaluation, **skepticism** will set in. To combat these fracturing and distracting outcomes, the project manager must work to consider and develop each of these elements in order to ensure sustained programmatic success.

Approaching program change with these elements in mind will help combat confusion, anxiety, resistance, frustration, and the sense of being stuck on an unproductive "treadmill" that gets your team nowhere. It will minimize (hopefully eliminate) false starts and potential sabotage, and guard against skepticism.

Such an approach will also help in underwriting the investment in the organizational capacities outlined in the Collaboration Continuum. Working on these elements will lend increased credibility to your project. Demonstrating that you have begun to connect these dots will serve to strengthen relationships and attract the sanction of senior sponsors and the support of program champions.

It is important to develop a toolkit of practical approaches that are transparent, easily articulated, and result in concrete outcomes. Personality-driven project management and evangelism (whether delivered through charm or cajoling), only goes so far.

Below are eight metrics derived from Knoster's change management model (as well as some of the addenda to his work) to help you gauge where you are in your capacity for change management. These can be used to draft a survey instrument, interview questions, or workshop discussions. (A sample survey in PDF format is freely available for [download](#). Once there, click on "*Equation for Change*." Feel free to modify to suit your needs).

Share these metrics with your colleagues. Note their reactions. The responses will help illuminate your potential for change management:

1. The published vision of the project is clear and easily communicated.
2. The skills necessary to complete the project are readily available.
3. There are clear incentives to actively participate in this program.
4. The resources to complete the project are available.
5. There is a clear plan of action to complete the project.
6. There is enough buy-in from participants to ensure success of the project.

7. The initial steps to get the project going are clear, easy to see, and act on.
8. There is a plan to evaluate success.

Again, without a straightforward vision it's pretty difficult to put together an effective plan enabling you to assemble resources and skills, and to generate incentives for your stakeholders. Subsequent posts will examine practical approaches to cultivating these elements and also provide views into examples of projects that put these tools to use.