Moylan's Mulligans article for April 2020

Using Organizational Change Management to Improve Adoption and Success of Projects

By April Callis-Birchmeier PMP, CCMP

As project professionals, we are in the business of change.

Helping to prepare people for change does not have to be confusing and hard. Identifying the change and helping those involved to get ready not only increases success, but it also adds to the bottom line as our change is adopted more quickly.

Change can be technological, involving a computer system or upgrade; programmatic, such as the introduction of a new health care program; or cultural, like merging two companies or departments into one. The growing recognition that Organizational Change Management (OCM) is an important and necessary component to implement projects and changes successfully has increased the demand for an organized approach to change.

Using OCM helps people adapt to a new way of working or adopt a new system. The change is more successful, less stressful and those involved return to being productive quicker than if we do not use a thoughtful approach. OCM used to be considered a "nice-to-have" component of a project, but it has become apparent is that change management is a "must-have" to ensure the people side of change is recognized.

After beginning my career in training and development, I pursued a master's degree in communications. I discovered that I loved working with leaders to further develop their management skills, which included crafting messages and stories to engage and enlist others in pursuit of a vision or goal. In working with leaders, I would often facilitate sessions to help redesign processes. I was able to use my training and communication skills to help my clients identify why a process was not working and redesign through a collaborative approach.

I had not heard the term Organizational Change Management until I was offered a role as a change management lead for a large project. When the team described the role as communications, training and process redesign, I knew I had found my niche. I began to learn all I could about change management. I attended conferences, trainings, and seminars and voraciously read books by change management leaders like John Kotter and Daryl Conner. I quickly learned that the success of any change is measured through business

results and outcomes. A question to ask is "What percentage of the success of this project will be determined by the acceptance and use of the change by the business?"

The goal of OCM is to help stakeholders adopt and use the change to benefit the organization. The benefits of change vary with the project and are usually identified by leadership as the reason to pursue change. Benefits may be described as positive financial outcomes, productivity improvements, integration of multiple systems, or enhanced user experience. This means that if we know what we expect as an outcome and if we can help others change the way they do things to meet that outcome, our change is successful.

More than two decades after my first change management role, I still use the skills I developed during that project. I've been experimenting, defining, and refining how to provide an understandable and easy-to-follow approach to help people prepare for and adopt change. The results of my desire to make implementations – particularly technology projects – easier and more productive and to get the business back to business has led me to create a new framework for change, the READY-Set-Change Model.

As a Project Management Professional, having a simple way to implement change makes sense. Stay tuned over the next few months for more information about this framework and how to apply it to your change initiative.

April Callis-Birchmeier PMP, CCMP is an organizational change expert, keynote speaker and author of the bestselling READY, Set, Change! Simplify and Accelerate Organizational Change. In addition to doing her best to change the way we help people change, she loves to split wood and tend to her 11 chickens. www.aprilcallisbirchmeier.com