



# The Advisor

Organizational Effectiveness News & Trends

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## Five Keys to Successful Organizational Transformation



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ClearPath Alliance is a GPS for executives navigating change. We enable leaders to accelerate strategic initiatives for superior results.

Do your major change initiatives deliver? The promise of improved revenue, lower costs, and higher quality can be elusive. Too often change efforts fall short of these desirable objectives. The reason may be more simple, yet complex, than you think. Read on to learn about five keys to successful transformation initiatives.

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### Five Keys to Successful Organizational Transformation

#### **Changing Today to Prepare for Tomorrow:**

We have noticed an increase appetite for organizational transformation projects (aka, large-scale change) this year. The slow economic recovery has shifted the priority from incremental change and continuous improvement to something much more in order to get back on track. Success in 2011 will require a shift in vision and flawless execution of a new strategy.

We use the word "transformation" because two things must occur simultaneously: 1) the scope of change is high (affecting most who work in the organization), and 2) the degree of change is high (significantly altering how people and processes operate). In these cases, it is common for organization structure and culture to be changed as well.

#### **Why Transform:**

**ClearPath Alliance** recently worked with the executive team at two different organizations to launch their respective 2010-2011 organizational transformations. Both had well over 1,000 impacted employees in multiple sites, 100+ managers, and were part of Fortune 500 companies. Although their businesses were quite different, their transformation objectives were similar, and included:

1. Improving value-add, quality, and delivery performance to customers
2. Replacing cultural silos with a unified brand
3. Achieving in-year and next-year financial commitments

We facilitate dialogue that sparks new thinking, defines the real work to be done, and leads to decisions about what to do differently.

### **Important Considerations:**

Both organizations had the need to change today to anticipate and manage tomorrow's risks. And, in both cases the leadership teams launched their change efforts with a focus on the technical side of change (e.g., process redesign, new technology, organization structure). However, the human side of change (e.g., providing support, knowledge, skills, leadership) turned out to be equally critical to success. Our experience is that when dynamic change occurs people:

- May be anxious about being let go, left behind, or put in a different role
- Feel a total loss of control over their future
- May be not ready to let go of their old ways
- Feel cynical due to previous change projects that didn't deliver or were painful

### **What People Want:**

There is a predictable pattern when any of us must transition from the old to the new way (William Bridges & Associates). At first, our reaction may be denial, anger, and stress, typically followed by confusion and skepticism. What was your own reaction to a big change effort that directly impacted you? We find it takes time, dialogue, and thoughtful action before people express acceptance, hope, and enthusiasm about the change. These days, what we believe employees are really looking for from their leaders is:

1. A clear and convincing picture that the change makes sense for the organization and its future
2. Signs the change will be well managed
3. That the change will indeed lead to a new and better organization
4. Signals that "people" matter in the desired future state
5. Answers regarding what the change will mean for them

### **Two Success's - Two Approaches:**

**ClearPath Alliance** worked with each executive team to clarify their desired future state, validate the current state, and develop and implement a transition plan. The intention was to strengthen manager and employee commitment to the new vision and decrease commitment to status quo. What worked included:

- Assessing organizational culture, history, and stakeholder group perceptions to inform recommendations and actions
- Implementing a relevant communication plan to address manager/employee interests/concerns
- Forming multiple work-stream teams focused on solving high priority transformation issues
- Gaining momentum within the first 90 days, and using a toll-gate process for go/no-go decisions

### **Making A Difference:**

In both cases, outcomes included:

- Quickly discerning enablers and barriers to the transformation process

- Engaging the right people, at the right time, to define and drive the right changes
- Communicating a clear, compelling vision and roadmap with managers first, and then employees
- Managers meeting with their staff to discuss impact and benefits of the changes underway
- Implementing actions that support employee engagement and feedback, and drive results

**Summary:**

The key to successful organizational transformation is to create the conditions that enable managers and employees to adopt and then adapt to a new way of doing business - one that they understand, agree with, and are willing to act upon. Start today!

**Actions to Take Now!**

**ClearPath Alliance** has worked with numerous leaders in helping them more effectively plan and execute their transformation initiatives with improved outcomes. If you're thinking your company would benefit from an assessment and customized action plan we can help. **A conversation or meeting is free** - and may be the next step you need to move forward in achieving your year-end and 2011 goals.

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