

Best Practices in Managing Change

Overview

This table summarizes the ten best practices for leading change identified by one of the leading researchers on change, Harvard Business School professor John Kotter. It identifies the practices, the action steps you can take, and the things to watch out for.

Practice	Actions Needed	Pitfalls
Establish a sense of urgency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine market and competitive realities for potential crises and untapped opportunities. Convince at least 75% of your managers that the status quo is more dangerous than the unknown. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Underestimating the difficulty of driving people from their comfort zones Becoming paralyzed by risks
Form a powerful guiding coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assemble a group with shared commitment and enough power to lead the change effort. Encourage them to work as a team outside the normal hierarchy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No prior experience in teamwork at the top Relegating team leadership to an HR, quality, or strategic-planning executive rather than a senior line manager
Create a vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a vision to direct the change effort. Develop strategies for realizing that vision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presenting a vision that is too complicated or vague to be communicated in five minutes
Communicate the vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use every vehicle possible to communicate the new vision and strategies for achieving it. Teach new behaviors by the example of the guiding coalition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undercommunicating the vision Behaving in ways antithetical to the vision
Empower others to act on the vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove or alter systems or structures undermining the vision. Encourage risk taking and nontraditional ideas, activities, and actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failing to remove powerful individuals who resist the change effort
Plan for and create short-term wins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define and engineer visible performance improvements. Recognize and reward employees contributing to those improvements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaving short-term successes up to chance Failing to score successes early enough (12-24 months into the change effort)
Consolidate improvements and produce more change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use increased credibility from early wins to change systems, structures, and policies undermining the vision. Hire, promote, and develop employees who can implement the vision. Reinvigorate the change process with new projects and change agents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Declaring victory too soon—with the first performance improvement Allowing resisters to convince “troops” that the war has been won
Institutionalize new approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articulate connections between new behaviors and corporate success. Create leadership development and succession plans consistent with the new approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not creating new social norms and shared values consistent with changes Promoting people into leadership positions who don’t personify the new approach