



THE OPEN COLLEGE

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Personal & Professional Development Unit 3



QFI AWARD

Personal & Professional Development

QQI Level 6

6N1949

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Printed and published in Ireland

By The Open College

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Unit 3: The Process of Change

This unit will explore the process of change and will consider key topics within this area including the process of change, conflict, negotiation and feedback. Change is inevitable, regardless of the role you occupy or even the profession within which you work. An understanding of the change process is therefore essential to equip you with the skills and know-how of how to manage the change process effectively to ensure the best possible outcome for all stakeholders.

Over the course of this unit you will explore the key areas around change and will have the opportunity to complete learning activities to support your learning.

1. Change

As already mentioned, change is inevitable, regardless of your role or profession. Change can also be intimidating and stressful and it is therefore essential to have the skill set to manage change effectively – in so doing the level of stress experienced can be greatly reduced, the change can be less intimidating and the outcome of the change can be more positive and effective. Change can and will impact on the individual, the team and the organisation as a whole.

In order to successfully bring about change, the following process is the general guide:

Unfreeze current situation	Introduce change	Refreeze new situation
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This basically means that you remove or stop the current practice, introduce the change and then set the change as the status quo. The steps in doing so are outlined below and are adapted from Kotter International 2012.

Step 1: Create Urgency

For change to happen, it helps if the whole organisation really wants it. Develop a sense of urgency around the need for change. This may help you spark the initial motivation to get things moving.

This isn't simply a matter of showing people poor sales statistics or talking about increased competition. Open an honest and convincing dialogue about what's happening in the marketplace and with your competition. If many people start talking about the change you propose, the urgency can build and feed on itself.

What you can do:

- Identify potential threats, and develop scenarios showing what could happen in the future.
- Examine opportunities that should be, or could be, exploited.
- Start honest discussions, and give dynamic and convincing reasons to get people talking and thinking.
- Request support from customers, outside stakeholders and industry people to strengthen your argument.

Kotter suggests that for change to be successful, 75 percent of an organisations management needs to "buy into" the change.

In other words, you have to work really hard on Step 1, and spend significant time and energy building urgency, before moving onto the next steps. Don't panic and jump in too fast because you don't want to risk further short-term losses – if you act without proper preparation, you could be in for a very bumpy ride.

Step 2: Form a Powerful Coalition

Convince people that change is necessary. This often takes strong leadership and visible support from key people within your organisation. Managing change isn't enough – you have to lead it.

You can find effective change leaders throughout your organisation – they don't necessarily follow the traditional company hierarchy. To lead change, you need to bring together a coalition, or team, of influential people whose power comes from a variety of sources, including job title, status, expertise, and political importance.

Once formed, your "change coalition" needs to work as a team, continuing to build urgency and momentum around the need for change.

What you can do:

- Identify the true leaders in your organisation.
- Ask for an emotional commitment from these key people.
- Work on team building within your change coalition.
- Check your team for weak areas, and ensure that you have a good mix of people from different departments and different levels within your company.

Step 3: Create a Vision for Change

When you first start thinking about change, there will probably be many great ideas and solutions floating around. Link these concepts to an overall vision that people can grasp easily and remember.

A clear vision can help everyone understand why you're asking them to do something. When people see for themselves what you're trying to achieve, then the directives they're given tend to make more sense.

What you can do:

- Determine the values that are central to the change.
- Develop a short summary (one or two sentences) that captures what you "see" as the future of your organisation.
- Create a strategy to execute that vision.
- Ensure that your change coalition can describe the vision in five minutes or less.
- Practice your "vision speech" often.

Step 4: Communicate the Vision

What you do with your vision after you create it will determine your success. Your message will probably have strong competition from other day-to-day communications within the company, so you need to communicate it frequently and powerfully, and embed it within everything that you do.

Don't just call special meetings to communicate your vision. Instead, talk about it every chance you get. Use the vision daily to make decisions and solve problems. When you keep it fresh on everyone's minds, they'll remember it and respond to it.

It's also important to "walk the talk". What you do is far more important – and believable – than what you say. Demonstrate the kind of behaviour that you want from others.

What you can do:

- Talk often about your change vision.
- Openly and honestly address peoples' concerns and anxieties.
- Apply your vision to all aspects of operations – from training to performance reviews. Tie everything back to the vision.
- Lead by example.

Step 5: Remove Obstacles

If you follow these steps and reach this point in the change process, you've been talking about your vision and building buy-in from all levels of the organisation. Hopefully, your staff wants to get busy and achieve the benefits that you've been promoting.

But is anyone resisting the change? And are there processes or structures that are getting in its way?

Put in place the structure for change, and continually check for barriers to it. Removing obstacles can empower the people you need to execute your vision, and it can help the change move forward.

What you can do:

- Identify, or hire, change leaders whose main roles are to deliver the change.
- Look at your organisational structure, job descriptions, performance and compensation systems, to ensure they're in line with your vision.
- Recognise and reward people for making change happen.
- Identify people who are resisting the change, and help them see what's needed.
- Take action to quickly remove barriers (human or otherwise).

Step 6: Create Short-term Wins

Nothing motivates more than success. Give your organisation a taste of victory early in the change process. Within a short time frame (this could be a month or a year, depending on the type of change), you'll want to have results that your staff can see. Without this, critics and negative thinkers might hurt your progress.

Create short-term targets – not just one long-term goal. You want each smaller target to be achievable, with little room for failure. Your change team may have to work very hard to come up with these targets, but each "win" that you produce can further motivate the entire staff.

What you can do:

- Look for sure-fire projects that you can implement without help from any strong critics of the change.
- Don't choose early targets that are expensive. You want to be able to justify the investment in each project.

- Thoroughly analyse the potential pros and cons of your targets. If you don't succeed with an early goal, it can hurt your entire change initiative.
- Reward the people who help you meet the targets.

Step 7: Build on the Change

Kotter argues that many change projects fail because victory is declared too early. Real change runs deep. Quick wins are only the beginning of what needs to be done to achieve long-term change.

Launching one new product using a new system is great. But if you can launch 10 products, that means the new system is working. To reach that 10th success, you need to keep looking for improvements.

Each success provides an opportunity to build on what went right and identify what you can improve.

What you can do:

- After every win, analyse what went right and what needs improving.
- Set goals to continue building on the momentum you've achieved.
- Learn about **kaizen**, the idea of continuous improvement.
- Keep ideas fresh by bringing in new change agents and leaders for your change coalition.

Step 8: Anchor the Changes in Corporate Culture

Finally, to make any change stick, it should become part of the core of your organisation. Your corporate culture often determines what gets done, so the values behind your vision must show in day-to-day work.

Make continuous efforts to ensure that the change is seen in every aspect of your organisation. This will help give that change a solid place in your organisation's culture.

It's also important that your organisations leaders continue to support the change. This includes existing staff and new leaders who are brought in. If you lose the support of these people, you might end up back where you started.

What you can do:

- Talk about progress every chance you get. Tell success stories about the change process, and repeat other stories that you hear.
- Include the change ideals and values when hiring and training new staff.
- Publicly recognise key members of your original change coalition, and make sure the rest of the staff – new and old – remembers their contributions.
- Create plans to replace key leaders of change as they move on. This will help ensure that their legacy is not lost or forgotten.

(Kotter International, 2012).

Activity:

Think about a change process you were recently involved in. Complete the chart below in relation to the different stages of the process and the different actions you took to ensure each step/stage was successful:

Steps in the Change Process	Actions Taken
Create Urgency	
Form a Powerful Coalition	
Create a Vision for Change	
Communicate the Vision	
Remove Obstacles	
Create Short-term Wins	
Build on the Change	
Anchor the Changes in Corporate Culture	

2. Conflict

Conflict can arise from two varying sources, namely ***Cognitive Conflict***, which is conflict pertaining to the task, or ***Affective Conflict***, which is conflict pertaining to emotions. The consequences of conflict can be positive, including new ideas, constructive debate and innovative strategies, while there can also be some negative consequences, including decreased staff morale, hostility and misuse of time/resources.

Regardless of the barrier or the underlying cause or category of the conflict it is essential **not** to ignore it. Failure to deal with any incidence of conflict can result in any number of negative events including – though not limited to – breakdown in staff morale, teamwork and communication, impact on the children in your care or personal stress and/or ill health.

Many people mistakenly consider conflict to be a negative occurrence which should be avoided/prevented as far as possible. However, conflict can be a positive and productive experience, as well as being the stereotypical negative experience.

Conflict occurs in every team at some stage and while some can consider conflict to be negative and destructive to the teams functioning, current thinking considers conflict to be necessary for the efficient functioning of a team. Conflict can be considered as a continuum ranging from positive, constructive debate, through to divisive conflict as shown in the Conflict Continuum below:

Divisive Conflict ← Low-grade Conflict → Competitive Ideas

The following chart outlines a number of strategies which can be utilised when dealing with different types of conflict:

Strategy	Behaviour	When to use
Competition	Behaviour is assertive and uncooperative; individual attempts to overwhelm others, use of power evident; win-lose mentality	Quick decisive action required; selecting this conflict resolution is apt only when the conflict is not more important than the overall goals and objectives
Avoidance	Behaviour is unassertive and uncooperative; withdrawal from, or suppression of, signs of conflict, while not actually co-operating with other parties; win-lose mentality	Trivial issues; when people need an opportunity to cool down; more information is required; hidden agendas evident which may mask a more serious issue
Compromise	Behaviour shows intermediate amounts of assertive and co-operative; individual forsakes some personal aims in return for satisfaction of others; no winners-no losers	Goals are important, but not worth the possible disruption from more assertive approaches; stalemates likely and goals are similar; temporary settlements are needed; time is short
Collaboration	Behaviour is assertive and co-operative; joint problem solving with other party to reach a mutually beneficial solution; win-win situation	Both parties need to learn from the situation; no time constraints; commitment of both parties is essential; feelings which may give rise to future conflict must be worked through
Accommodation	Behaviour is assertive and co-operative; sacrifices own aim in the interest of the other party; win-lose mentality	The issue is more important to one party than the other; as a trade-off for an issue to be resolved at a later date

(Flood, McCurtain and West, 2001 pp 84-85)

A basic checklist for dealing with conflict is outlined below:

- Clear identification of the problem/issue – you must be specific here.
- Ensure each individual involved has an opportunity to express their opinion – be mindful of both strong and timid personalities.
- Determine what result each individual involved in the conflict hopes to achieve – brainstorming can help achieve this.
- Identify possible solutions to address the conflict – realistic solutions are required.
- Identify any possible compromise(s) - a win-win situation is preferable; any agreements reached should be for the common good and not for the benefit of one individual.

Activity:

Consider a recent conflict(s) in your work place. Use the above chart to determine the most appropriate strategy to use in dealing with this conflict.

Note the reasons for your choice.

Identify the conflict	Identify appropriate strategy to deal with the conflict	Outline reasons why you feel this strategy is the most appropriate for the identified conflict

3. Negotiation

In order to deal effectively with conflict, the skill of negotiation is essential. In essence, negotiation is the process which people use to work through a difference of opinion. Having a clear understanding of the stages/steps of effective negotiation is essential to ensure that all sides have an opportunity to express their views, argue their case and reach an agreeable solution.

The following chart outlines an eight-step negotiation process which can be used for any negotiation process, in any setting.

Prepare	Prepare your case; know and understand your points and aims
Open	Put your case and hear the other person's case
Argue	Make your case and hear the other individual's case
Explore	Seek understanding and possibility in each case
Signal	Indicate your readiness to work together
Package	Identify and assemble potential trades
Close	Reach final agreement
Sustain	Make sure the agreed actions happen

In any negotiation process, parties should seek to achieve a win-win outcome i.e. both parties achieve a win or a gain; the negotiation results in mutual benefit.

Activity:

Think of an occasion where you had to negotiate – this can be in relation to either your work or personal life. Identify the different actions you took and complete the chart below in relation to the different stages of the negotiation process.

Steps in the Negotiation Process	Actions You Took
Prepare	
Open	
Argue	
Explore	
Signal	

Package	
Close	
Sustain	

4. Feedback

Any job performance, activity, change etc. will be enhanced by receiving feedback on one's performance. Whenever we implement a change or try a new task/activity, receiving feedback from a trusted colleague will help us to decide if our actions were enough or if we need to complete additional work to further enhance our skills. Without receiving feedback, we can sometimes miss out on identifying areas which require development.

It should also be noted that feedback can – and should – be provided in relation to a job well done also. All too often, feedback is only provided when amendments are required. As professionals, we should make certain that we provide feedback to colleagues on a job well done, as well as when amendments are required. To provide feedback on a job well done acts as a very good motivator for individuals.

Feedback can therefore be considered an essential component of any professional role and is an area which impacts all of us, regardless of our role or profession. Feedback can be considered from both sides in terms of giving feedback to colleagues and staff, and also receiving feedback from colleagues and management.

Regardless of the situation or role, when giving feedback the key rule of Positive, Timely and Regular should be followed:

Positive– Giving feedback should be done in a positive manner, even if the content of the feedback is negative (or challenging). In maintaining a positive approach, the communication process should be smoother and the overall exchange should be more productive. Where feedback is concerned with a negative act, the skill of constructive feedback should be used. (This is often referred to as constructive criticism.)

In so doing, the person giving the feedback is highlighting the issue, but also offering suggestions for improvement and/or support for the person receiving the feedback. Giving feedback should be seen as an opportunity to support an individual's development rather than an opportunity to criticise or attack the individual. Needless to say it is both unprofessional and discourteous to criticise a colleague!

Timely- Feedback should be given as close as possible to the event/incident on which the feedback is based. This is particularly important where the feedback is of a constructive nature; in delaying giving feedback in such an incidence, the individual may feel that they acted correctly, when in actual fact they may not have. Where feedback is regarding a positive action, receiving immediate positive feedback can act as a motivator for the individual.

Regular- Regular feedback should happen in the workplace; this can take the form of formal feedback sessions which should occur regularly – weekly or monthly, depending on the work situation. Informal feedback, where feedback is given on job performance in an informal, conversational manner, should happen regularly also, perhaps as much as several times a day.

For example, simply saying ‘well done’ to someone when they do a good job is an example of informal feedback – think of how often you hear that said in your workplace, either to you or a colleague.

The general rule of thumb in giving feedback is the ‘feedback sandwich’ – start on a positive, then provide the constructive element and close on a positive. In so doing, you are aiming for a more productive experience from which the individual can learn.

Responses to feedback can be mixed, depending on the content of the feedback and the manner in which it is delivered. Whether you are the giver or receiver of feedback, your response/reaction should be professional and calm, regardless of how the other individual is responding or reacting. When feedback has a critical element to it, there is undoubtedly the potential for an irate response; in such circumstances it is essential to remain calm and not aggravate an already volatile situation.

When such situations arise and tend towards anger, it may be best to park the discussion for a while to allow the parties to calm down – in allowing such a situation to continue and potentially escalate, may result in unnecessary damage to the working relationships, which will ultimately impact on the rest of the team, and possibly the children with whom you work.

Activity:

Think of your own experiences of feedback (both giving and receiving) and complete the chart below:

Who was in the position of giving the feedback (you or supervisor)	Describe the process – was it positive/negative? How did you react/respond?	Is there anything you would do differently? Why?

This unit explored the process of change and considered the key topics within this area including the process of change, conflict, negotiation and feedback. You had the opportunity to consider each of these topics and complete learning activities to help you put this learning in the context of your own personal situation.

End of Unit 3.

NOTES: