

## Effective change management: Is your business hanging in the balance?

Change management plays a pivotal part of any business, regardless of its size or the services offered to the public. All organisations will experience change at some point because change is constant and necessary in a competitive environment.

Tokozile Marah an Associate Director for PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) says, "Change happens when a specific entity enters the process of transitioning from a known environment to an unfamiliar situation where new knowledge is required to perform the duties expected of individuals involved."

Most government departments are currently going through fundamental changes as our new South African President, Jacob Zuma, takes over the top position in the country. The approach used to implement these changes is vital because the transition needs to happen smoothly without hindering productivity. Government departments are mostly filled with intellectuals and introducing change in an authoritative way might be met with resistance. In this case, change management needs to be adapted and approached more carefully to suit the needs of the individuals who will be experiencing this change.

Marah explains that research done by PwC states that 75% of all change initiatives fail or do not reach their intended objectives, nine of the 10 reasons cited for this failure are related to people issues. "The need for change management therefore becomes clear and a detailed strategy must be implemented to ensure a smooth transition. Strategies implemented to facilitate this change should be designed to suit the characteristics organisation."

Marah highlights the importance of change management in an organisation saying, "Managing change should be viewed as a strategic tool and should be controlled from the CEO's office with the support of the Strategic Development Office. Human Resource departments should be dealing with cultural and capacitation issues while departmental heads deal with matters related to operational excellence and increased productivity."

Senior management should always be involved in the change process and must be aligned with the intensity and level of change. The CEO of the organisation should focus on implementing a best fit approach which will act as a roadmap to reach the ultimate goal. Evaluating the situation closely is imperative. The execution of change from the existing situation to the desired end state, exists to facilitate in achievement of most predetermined objectives.

As change is implemented, new insights, unexpected results and crucial opportunities that could translate into productive and lucrative prospects arise and, if it is handled correctly, will result in substantive benefits being realised. Change management is not only about people's emotions, it is a structured process supported by tools and insights designed to enable the successful and seamless execution of a project or to address the strategic objectives of the organisation.

Change management requires effective utilisation of a number of disciplines ranging from people skills, project management, business management, process management, and technical skills. Marah suggests that institutions wishing to embark into a change journey should not hesitate to obtain the services of a change management professional, "A best fit approach minimises mistakes and avoids change fatigue, it can accelerate the key processes and dramatically increases the confidence of the individuals involved in achieving project outcomes across the entire organisation."

Companies throughout South Africa are increasingly realising the importance of implementing effective change management processes in order to achieve strategic and operational excellence. PwC has developed an integrated model that takes into account the effect of any

change on the organisation as a whole in a manner that enables an organisation to remain agile. This integrated model is designed to assist businesses implement change as quickly and smoothly as possible using a combination of global and local research.

“Life changes every day and it is the responsibility of individuals to adapt to the changes in order to become successful. Change is inevitable and the sooner individuals of an organisation take a conscious decision to accept and adapt to change, the quicker the rewards of implementing holistic change will be experienced,” concludes Marah.