

4

PLANNING

Drive and determination are essential when working with change, but reality is often the opposite. It is difficult to gather around what is best for the business if it involves a diffuse or uncertain future for many people in which areas of responsibility are affected or altered significantly. An enormous need for information and supportive activities requires very careful planning. People can become paralysed, each one putting themselves first, and they can waste energy guarding their own territory. You must also allocate more time and be more accessible. This should also apply to management teams and management activities.

A management that has consistently and persistently worked to form a basic sense of security in the organisation, marked by openness, honesty, respect and caring for the individual, will have an excellent foundation from which to face the changes. In simple terms, people who are in sound physical and mental condition are more resilient to stress. It is important to uphold the organisational self-confidence and create the conditions to sustain it throughout the change process. This can be achieved through a lucid, open culture in which active measures are taken to give each other feedback and allow group reflection.

PARALYSIS AND EXCLUSION

In conjunction with more radical changes, the severity of the situation and the weight of the issues on the table can lead to agonising over a decision. The decision-making and communication routes do not always function as before. More line managers may be directly involved, or perhaps they themselves will be leaving their positions when the new

organisation takes shape. They often feel excluded. It is vital that managers and employees do not feel excluded from the flow of information. If people are forced to live in a vacuum of absent information, rumours surface and it becomes difficult to constructively pursue the essential issues.

The most crucial issues in the entire planning effort include the questions "Why?" and "How does this affect me as a person?". Management must prepare a concise and straightforward message that everyone can support and which explains why the company will undergo the change and defines the goal.

VISIONS MOVE US FORWARD ...

It is a huge benefit to your change efforts if you can consistently and persistently work with one vision and an attractive image of the future. An excellent vision clarifies the general direction in which the company will move toward, it motivates the employees to act in that direction and it helps co-ordinate all crucial activities. The more you can work with images of the future, visions, targets, etc, the more distinctly you can answer the questions "Why" and "What's in it for me?".

It is essential to give a clear, comprehensive picture but it is equally important to work with a relevant picture of the present situation.

...AS DOES EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION...

A fundamental concept in all change efforts is involvement. Good planning makes it easier to start the change. During the initial phase, it is appropriate to limit the planning to a change team, preferably the

*Need to allocate more time
and availability.*

"Why" is a crucial question to answer.

*A clear, understood and shared picture
of the present situation and vision
is the key.*

*Employees need to feel included
in the information flow.*

Anticipate the human reactions.

Be proactive with support!

management team. They should work on the principle of providing information as openly and honestly as possible. It may, however, be necessary to keep certain information secret for business reasons.

All important information should be presented to those concerned at the same time and as early as possible. We will address how you can work with information and communication in conjunction with change in a later chapter.

...AND INSIGHT INTO HUMAN REACTIONS.

To be able to help and support separate individuals and groups in the new situations that arise during the course of change, both you as leader and your employees need to be aware of and understand how people react in the face of change and that there are different stages. Everything cannot be factored into the chaos that sometimes arises, which means it is also about being able to live with uncertainty in the face of the unknown. Building up confidence in the new situation is a gradual process.

PLAN SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

Support systems are something we need to review and develop regularly (see **EXERCISE** My support system). Support activities may be required when dramatic changes are being made. As leader, you must plan in advance since an emergency situation can arise and quick, efficient support can be difficult to find. It is also important that you prepare several types of support activities and the option of adapting them to the individual. Remember also that support activities are as important for those

remaining in the organisation as they are for those that have to leave.

The following are examples of support activities:

- adviser-led group discussions (for both managers and employees)
- professional conversation partners (internal and external)
- outplacement support
- financial counselling
- change process and crisis management training
- extra physical activities
- family counselling
- support from friends
- employment clubs
- self-strengthening activities
- life and career planning
- wake for the old organisation
- rewards

Support activities, particularly for those remaining with the company

- crisis management
- goals and personal development dialogues
- goals and vision teams
- team-building for new or re-formed teams
- rewards for efforts and loyalty

USE YOUR SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

There is a great deal of qualified help and support available, both internally and externally. Make sure you contact the support functions available to you and find out what they can offer. Below is a brief presentation of the primary support functions.

Human resource staff generally have extensive experience and training in how people react to change and is one of the first support functions you should contact. They are familiar with the organisation, usually from a perspective that differs from the one we have acquired during our time as leaders in the organisation. The HR staff can also help with important legal and administrative issues that arise.

Depending on previous relationships, *union organisations* are also a potential support function. It is essential that the work is done with mutual consensus. The unions can serve as support groups and provide extra security by safeguarding the employees' needs and rights. If good relationships are formed and promoted during the company's normal circumstances you will have a wealth of confidence to draw on when times are hard and dramatic changes need to be made.

A highly qualified support function that is often forgotten in this context is *corporate healthcare* services. They usually have a good idea of how the organisation's individuals are feeling. Many talk about their emotional state during a visit. In some cases, employees make appointments to talk about how they feel and find someone to whom they can talk. Corporate healthcare services have expertise in crisis support and can be an enormous asset in dealing with people who fall outside the normal pattern for crisis management and need extra support.

An important support function we do not normally consider is our employees' families. *Families* are often the only form of security when everything around

us feels as if it is in a state of chaos. The support that a family can offer is extremely valuable if the entire family has general knowledge about an individual's loss curve. It can therefore prove extremely valuable if we can offer families this type of input.

Last but not least, leaders also need support for their own thoughts and emotions. It can often feel lonely and the notion "I'm probably the only one that feels this way" is not uncommon. It is important to have a *network of other managers* that allows us to reflect and express our feelings. We often wrestle with the same issues for which we need to find solutions. If you are not already part of this type of network it is a good idea to start one.

As leader you also have a need to speak in private with someone. Do not be afraid to contact one of the above support functions for a private discussion. In some cases it may feel better to speak to an *experienced behavioural scientist* or psychologist. Do not be afraid of this type of contact as it could well be worth the time you invest.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

When drawing up new visions, strategies, goals and structures, it is important to know the stakeholders and their expectations. Maintain a dialogue in which you check what the mutual expectations are in dealing with the new circumstances and challenges. The final document is not what is most important here but the process in which we work to merge our expectations (see **EXERCISE** Stakeholder analysis).

FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

A **force field analysis** is a good tool when you face a difficult situation. The analysis is a way of visualising and mapping the forces and energies that exist in needs, desires, fears and other emotions present in the individuals concerned. The analysis visualises the forces working for or against a given change (see **EXERCISE** Force Field Analysis).

BALANCED SHORT-TERM PLAN

You also need to work with short planning horizons in conjunction with major changes that demand in-

dividual growth and adjustments. This is because there are so many unexpected reactions and events that surface on both the visible content level and the invisible process level. It is a good idea to have a rolling three-month plan that you review and update once or twice a month with your change team, depending on how much impact the change has on individual people in the organisation. (See **EXERCISE** Balanced plan.)

ISSUES FOR REFLECTION

- 1.** What vision or long-term goal do you have for the change you are facing? Is it known, understood, manageable and attractive?
- 2.** What forces exist for and against the change you are facing?
- 3.** Who are the stakeholders with expectations of the change and are these expectations known and shared by all concerned?
- 4.** What type of support systems (individual and collective) do you have or need in order to manage the transition?

