



WOLF CALLINGS

Managing Change is More Important Than You Think

In busy Washington State government, more change seems to be underway than is usual. HR reform has exploded to a whole new series of changes: a new statewide HR system; competitive contracting; new job classifications; and new labor/management negotiations. IT support is chasing what are still too few IT resources. The legislature returns in January to add its pressure, and of course, there is the matter of a new Governor in the offing.

With so much change in the air, how do you keep your sanity while trying to hit multiple moving targets? Day to day operations must not suffer, even as strategic changes are being implemented to improve those operations. What is the magic to handling all this more effectively?

A big factor, among others, is Change Management. Many people do not see Change Management as a skill to be learned; however, I've found that mastering just a few Change Management techniques makes a world of difference to help managers handle all your "spinning plates" with more confidence and effectiveness.

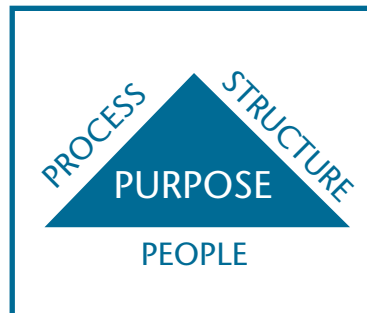
I view these techniques through three main categories: Structure; Process; and People. Like a tripod, the lack of one of these three makes the pur-

pose impossible. But when all three are present, strong and in balance, control comes back to you, the business leader.

Structure is about authority, relationships, and roles and responsibilities. A solid structure helps ensure that appropriate decisions are made at the appropriate levels. It's no fun to discover, usually by accident, that someone very low in your organization has made (in all good faith) a decision that ties you into a strategic direction for a significant time.

An assessment of your structure with an eye to Change Management will help you see where you may be exposed to sub-optimal decision-making. Pushing down non-strategic decisions is just as important as pushing up those with strategic impact.

An effective process for Decision Triage works with a sound structure to create clarity around decision types. This process should be *values driven* and recognize the formal (*cont'd on page 2*)



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Diane did an outstanding job of conducting an assessment of our current security and disaster recovery environment to identify gaps with the enterprise mandates. Her skills in project management and her knowledge of enterprise architectures are only two of the strengths in her professional portfolio.

—Washington State executive

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plans and strategies already in place in your organization. Above all, it must be grounded in business priorities. It must allow for continual review of tactical business initiatives against strategic direction, even as day-to-day operational pressures prevail. It must be able to get past people's "wants" to the organization's real needs. Development of this process is a valuable learning opportunity for all those involved. Organizations rarely take the time to examine how decisions are made, yet there are many unrecognized values that drive them. Creating clarity around these values, challenging them and getting agreement on them will lead the organization through an important team-building experience.

This brings us to the third category in successful change management, which is People. This is actually the most important dimension yet it is seldom addressed on its own.

How do people view their accountability in relation to the change management structure and process? Do they embody the values in their talk

and the areas where they choose to spend their time? Are behavioral expectations actually put out on the table and discussed in a healthy manner? Is there a common language which enables safe discussion about behavior? Is the "culture" blamed for non-accountability?

These questions need plenty of sunshine and fresh air until they become easy to discuss and a normal part of doing business. Staff members can then "call foul" when behavior gets off track. Remember, it's a balancing act between respect for each individual and respect for the organization's goals.

In the final analysis, organizations that pay time and attention to increasing their staff's skills in Change Management will find that their managers feel more confident and in control.

Soon the organization as a whole can spend a higher percentage of time on more pressing issues. ▲

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Need an active, neutral facilitator for an important planning session? Group problem resolution meeting? Or your Change Management process? Wolf Consulting specializes in small, targeted engagements that design and deliver a healthy decision-making experience. As a leader, wouldn't you rather participate than run the meeting? Call 360-264-5082.

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