1. Strong & Powerful Rationale for Change.

What does that mean?

Understand the nature of the business before embarking on a change project and have a consensual answer to the question ‘why change?’

Each organisation has its own, unique ‘fingerprint’. That fingerprint is a result of its history, the sector it operates in, the people that work for it, the management style, the way it is organised, its geography, its strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities it has and the challenges it faces.

Whilst there may be similarities with others on some aspects, the specific mix is probably unique. This is very important from the perspective of designing and undertaking a business change programme, it is so important to understand the nature of the business before embarking on a change project.

Business change is often challenging, doing a business change project that is simply a copy of someone else’s programme, (however successful), is not a good idea! By all means, listen to and learn from others successes and failures. However in our experience the probability of success is much higher when organisations work out and articulate their rationale for change in their own organisation.

How can that be done?

We advocate a combination of leadership and participation. That does not necessarily equate to democracy.

We do need people who are outward, forward, strategic thinkers who gather in ideas from others and see potential new ways of operating. Ideally these ‘thought leaders’ are able to engage people within their organisations to explore these possibilities, to relate them to their own perceptions of strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities and hence to help shape and internalise the validity of the need for proposed change programme.

The result; a consistent and consensual answer to the question ‘Why Change?’

How might CfF assist?

Professional support from independent facilitators, to design and run your change programme events and workshops. This frees up key people within the organisation from managing and facilitating the meetings; thus enables them to fully participate in open, meaningful conversations to unlock good understanding required.
2. Aligned Leadership – consistent communication of purpose and strong commitment to shared values

What does that mean?

Consistent communication of a purpose and strong commitment to shared values enabling each person to ‘walk the talk’. What counts is the how the leadership team behaves with joined up messages and actions through all stages of a change programme from the inspirational launch to when the going gets tough and hard decisions have to be made.

To ‘walk the talk’. In many ways clichés such as these sound bland, but in practice, what really makes the difference is the way people in organisations actually behave throughout all stages of a change programme. It is not all about how inspirational the programme launch speech is, rather it is about what happens when the going gets tough, when hard decisions have to be taken. Do all of the leaders and managers continue to operate consistently?

For example, in a programme it might be openly known that there will probably be some redundancies as a result of a change programme, and then a very good employee who is very important to the success of the projects finds another great opportunity, either within or outside of the organisation. How is that situation dealt with? The suggestion is that the actions taken would be perceived by all in the organisation to be consistent with shared values.

How is that done?

Leaders and managers need to discuss and determine their shared ways of working in advance of a change programme. There are some essential questions to be answered. How will tough decisions be made? Is this decision making process robust enough to cope with the most challenging situations, and agile enough to respond to the unexpected? What communications need to be planned and prepared that are both inspirational yet honest and delivered with integrity? The reality is that whilst there will be many communications that need planning there will be more informal the likelihood is that there will be more informal conversations about the change that will need intuitive thought. Aligned leadership will support successful informal conversations.

The result; joined up messages and actions.

How might CfF assist?

We do not prescribe any particular set of values. We do facilitate workshops for senior people within the organisation that provides the space, time, and environment to have the meaningful discussions that lead to internalised understanding of ‘what we say and how we will act’. Our wealth of experience ensures you will achieve the required alignment in less time than if the workshop was self facilitated, and the team will be robust.
3. Collaborative working – across all boundaries commitment

What does that mean?

Create the environment to enable people with apparent differing objectives to be able to hear, listen and understand the perspectives of others, and then thoroughly discuss the emerging needs. The reality is that it is very easy for different parts of an organisation to operate according to conflicting objectives. To provide some examples; imagine the Procurement department of an organisation insisting on a purchase order number for all procurement in advance, then a Finance department that insists on a 3-way match between purchase order, supplier’s invoice and booked-in goods/services before the supplier is paid. This would probably be described as good governance. Then in that same organisation a Service Engineer orders and collects some spare parts from a 3rd party supplier, which enables him to fix a customer’s plant in the early hours of Sunday morning. Rules have been broken. The Procurement or Finance team take up the issue, only to learn that the customer’s MD has written a letter of thanks to your organisation for the fantastic support from the Service Engineer.

Ways of working need to be established that work for each and every role, business unit and in international organisations, each and every country.

How do we do that?

At the early stages of defining a change project it is necessary to build a picture of the different perspectives on wants, needs, likes and what is both good and bad about the current situation. Then solutions can be worked out that optimise the result for the whole organisation. Recognise that there will be emotionally-driven behaviours such as reluctance, cynicism, resistance, fear and excitement. This shouldn’t be perceived as negative; rather an indicator that good processes are needed to help people emerge from such concerns in a positive frame of mind.

The key requirement is to create the environment to enable people with apparent differing objectives to be able to hear, listen and understand the perspectives of others, and then thoroughly discuss the real needs.

How might CfF assist?

We run many workshops for multi disciplinary groups. We are able to steer workshops objectively. We create the environment that enables people to share views openly, constructively and honestly and build viable solutions to the emerging issues.
4. Ability to see the whole picture – systemic thinking

What does this mean?
The ability to see the whole picture when visualising how business processes, procedures, IT systems, people etc. really operate. Without the opportunity to see the whole there is every possibility that changes will be made to one part that will have ‘unintended consequences’ elsewhere.

For example the Project Manager who postpones the booking of goods received onto the computer system until they are installed and working, which eventually leads to the supplier putting our organisation ‘on-stop’ which delays another key project. Taking the matter up with Projects department reveals that the Project Manager involved is perceived to be the most successful in the company. And another example is the policy for suppliers to book travel and accommodation through the internal system yet the system requirement for a personnel number prevents this from being a possibility.

To meet the needs for robust systems with the ability to deliver excellence to all customers, exceeding expectations. To achieve this collaboration is essential, understanding each users essential and desirable requirements, remembering to also understand customer and supplier requirements.

How do we do that?
Identify internal and external Stakeholders and building an engagement plan and review process.

It is essential to take the time to map thoroughly the ‘as is’ to the ‘to be’. Frequently change programmes hit unnecessary difficulties as a result of the ‘as is’ being vague or incomplete. It can also be helpful to include process mapping and activity analysis to understand the ‘documented as is’ vs. the ‘real as is’ vs. the proposed ‘to be’. The people doing the work are best able to such mapping and analysis.

How might CfF help?
We can help with mapping activities, but many organisations already have these skills in-house. We also help organisations by facilitating ‘interpretation and next steps planning’ in a collaborative way enabling progress to be made from having data to making decisions.
5. Innovative and creative thinking and problem solving skills

What does this mean?
During the definition, design and implementation of any change there will be the need to create new ways of doing things. By having people engaged and participating in this there is every likelihood that innovation, creativity and ownership can flourish.

Often, ways of doing things over time become cumbersome. For example a system is developed to send reminders on a Tuesday and make payments on Thursday to suit the demands of a particular employee or the bank’s processes. This may historically be the best way of working however these reasons can change rapidly. As our systems and processes are less responsive to these changes ways of doing things become fixed and habitual. Change programmes must provide the opportunity to challenge current ways of working and seek innovative and creative solutions to both known and unknown existing problems. The ‘challenging the status quo’ requires a tolerance of ambiguity, risk within the organisation and an ability to learn from what does and doesn’t work.

How do we do that?
The Managers set the leadership style in terms of creating a positive environment for attributes such as innovation, creativity, problem solving. There are lots of tools and techniques that can be used in workshops to encourage innovation, creativity and problem solving and should always be used in preference to meetings that ‘discuss’ which is beset with some of the issues you are sure to have experienced in other meetings that sap the energy from the team rather than maintain engagement and passion for the initiative.

How might CfF help?
We have considerable experience to help the Managers think through and develop their Leadership style to support this. We can also help with a number of processes, tools and techniques that enable people to express their innovation, creativity and problem solving skills to get the breakthrough thinking that enables projects to become transformational.
6. Capability and capacity to manage and support the change

What does this mean?

Change programmes are demanding on organisational resources, capability and capacity. There is a danger that the organisation assigns just enough resource to get started and to get into trouble. Then the programme might stall, or get shelved, or stagger on ineffectively.

Far better to realistically resource the programme right from the start. The harsh reality is that the time required is frequently greater than anticipated.

There can often be significant passion for change initiatives at the start and people will be willing to go ‘above and beyond’ to support. However, as time marches on; if the resource is expected to maintain high performance in their role as well as support the change programme; it becomes increasingly hard to give the required level of commitment to both. Better to be clear with internal resource and release them all or part of their contracted role for the duration of the change programme and provide clear expectations and deliverables for their role in the project.

Certainly for managing change there are certain skills that make the difference between a change programme flying and one that flounders. Whilst passion is important, ensuring the internal resource has the capability is essential.

How to do that?

Primarily by learning from the experience of others who have successfully implemented similar changes. Also listen to the times suggested by IT system vendors and external consultants who will have valuable experiences to share. Consider deploying a robust ‘recruitment’ process for internal support to ensure you have the capability, and explore the benefits of further training for all in the various roles to support them and the project. Be very realistic about the time capacity for people to do the change work and do the ‘day job’. Sometimes a degree of ‘back-filling’ day job work can release internal people to deliver the change project.

Consider how to maintain engagement and motivation, which will get tougher during the mid points of the change programme.

How might CfF help?

We have experience of managing change; in that way we could offer some valuable guidance. We can also enable these issues to be explored alongside the rationale for change and collaborative working already described above to maximizing the benefits of our support.