

Change Management is an emerging discipline in the design of modern office working environments. Although aspects of Change Management (CM) are applicable to even the simplest of corporate relocations – including those where the “before” and “after” are largely identical – any change in the working environment will have some affect on the staff of an organization. Most people are wary of change, especially as it touches on their comfort or routine. Radical change in the workplace is one of the most likely ways that a company can cause major negative backlash amongst staff that can ultimately undo all of the good intentions that a new workplace initiative might offer.

Effective Change Management can serve as a major asset in motivating employees to embrace change. A carefully considered design solution will enhance employee well-being and productivity by offering new ways for staff to interact with each other in the pursuit of common organizational goals.

The CM team would consist of several key players:

**▪** Client ‘s own project management team

**▪** Client’s designated Change Manager

**▪** Client’s leadership team (executives specifically engaged in the relocation process, perhaps through a Building Committee)

**▪** The design team, including architectural design and furnishings specification principals

**▪** The Move Consultant (either in-house or contracted)

Each of these has specific responsibilities for the outcome. The Project Manager will be tasked with communicating overall project schedule, budget, incremental progress and activities to all concerned. This would include the preparation of Cost Estimates and the Business Case outlining the projected benefits, economics and recovery mechanism for the project. Some of these benefits will result from a considered analysis of additional cost and payback periods for options considered in the LEED process. The Project Managers responsibilities must be continuously communicated through documentation that is available to all team members, and a major task of the PM is ensure that adequate resources are available to accomplish the goals of the initiative.

The Change Manager will take the lead on aligning the methodology of the CM team with Client’s expected outcomes. This includes guiding change and reducing risks; mobilizing leaders, where needed; and engaging and communicating with user groups throughout the project’s development. The Change Manager has a critical role in easing the organization through the process, and is responsible for overall CM team activities and coordination. This team defines the scope of implementation; the overall strategy of implementation; the objectives and major milestone dates; the executive-level and staff-level communications; the ways success can be measured; and the assemblage of any benchmarking or success stories that will aid in the process.

Our experience with the CM as a role model points to several key factors that will ensure success:

**▪** The Change Manager should be an employee of the Client’s, not an outside consultant.

Users expect some credibility on the part of the CM as knowledgeable about the Company



and its activities, as well their ability to be a champion within the organization of their potential concerns.

**▪** The Change Manager should have a background in human psychology, as the interaction

with stakeholders will inevitably include numerous types of engagement. Sensitivity and understanding of the issues and concerns of users is critical to the effort.

**▪** It is important that the Change Manager radiate a positive attitude about the project’s

expected outcomes. Cascading the wishes of the executive team down to the staff level should be characterized as “good things” as opposed to “mandates”.

**▪** Communication skills and facility with communication tools are essential.

**▪** Most importantly, the Change Manager needs to be fully engaged. Success is more likely to be achieved if the CM is present at each and every programming interview with the design team and user groups. We find this to be the most direct and effective way to control expectations and deal with misconceptions at their onset. The commitment of the Client’s resources to the role of the Change Manager cannot be underestimated.

The Executive Team has special needs and concerns that the CM Team must address. Monthly review meetings are incredibly useful in keeping the leadership informed of CM Team activities; stakeholder feedback; project metrics (budget and schedule); and, most importantly, decisions needed. Occasionally the CM Team may identify other areas of impact, such as regulatory impacts or IT and AV implementation, requiring additional resources to address.

The Design Team must be poised to provide solutions for architectural, space planning and furnishings problems that the programming and design process will present. In so doing, they must be responsive to inputs from the various stakeholders. They must also prepare deliverables for use the CM Team’s communications plans. We have found one of the most useful delivery methods is the Town Hall meeting format, where at various points throughout the project development the design team presents their findings and recommendations (design schemes, renderings, finishes and materials). Although there is always the chance that there will be pushback in a public forum, people usually are more open to new concepts if they feel like they are part of the process.

The Move Coordinator plays an essential role in preparing employees for the move, primarily through careful planning and communications (through Departmental Move Coordinators) well before the actual move date. If the actual, physical move is accomplished in a manner that is relatively painless for the employee – and without any loss in productivity

– the overall goals are much more likely to be met. Conversely, if it doesn’t go well, the best laid plans will be a failure.

In summary, the awareness of the need to employ Change Management is an excellent indicator of ultimate success. The design team plays a critical role in the CM process, but it is not the only participant. It takes a team effort to convert a vision into a reality, without losing a critical constituency along the way.