Even though the skills needed today for managing change are as critical as those for managing performance routines, there is no generic model or game plan for managing change. The IMPROVE model for managing change attempts to remedy that situation by identifying the seven functional requisites for effective change management: increasing organizational readiness for change, management approval, preparing leaders, raising employee motivation for change, operationalizing change interventions, validating the change process, and embedding change into the organization. Methods and techniques for satisfying these functional requisites are provided. By following this overall process, the chances for successful and efficient organizational change are increased.

THE COMMON NARRATIVE TODAY among scholars and practitioners alike is that the scale, pace, and effects of social and economic transformations are so great that organizations must continuously adapt or face extinction. The forces pushing for change come from several sources: global competition; a workforce that is older, more diverse, and lacking basic skills; sweeping technological change; unstable public policies; and more demanding consumers. The response to such pressures must be more than simply working harder; rather, organizations must become more innovative and responsive; leaner, more efficient, nimble and flexible; more responsible or accountable; and more effective. In short, today, managing change effectively is as important a general competency as is managing routines efficiently (Beckhard & Prichard, 1992; Conger, Spreitzer, & Lawler, 1999). By the mid-1930s, the fundamental practices of management were memorialized in the acronym POSDCORB (Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting, and Budgeting) (POSDCORB, 2009; Wren, 1994), providing managers convenient guidance for their administrative duties. Yet, there is no comparable general model for change management, much less a comparable mnemonic to enshrine change management practices. This is not from want of trying as change management models proliferate, creating more cacophony than chorus.

These existing change management models can be placed into several broad categories. First, there are general-purpose change paradigms that offer sweeping yet simplistic guidelines. Lewin’s (1951) process model of unfreezing, changing, and refreezing is a leading example. Thus, regardless of the change required, a person with change duties is advised to shake up or disturb the status quo, introduce new approaches, and then crystallize those new ways of acting. While not necessarily wrong, the model falls short of providing any specific procedures or guidance on doing any of the three. Second, many specific change programs come with their own set of implementation steps, identifying the specific kind of change needed along with a list of the steps to be followed. Randall (2004) called these N-step approaches to change, where the specific change program includes N number of prescribed steps, often in a determined order, for bringing about change. Consider just these few examples:
Today, managing change effectively is as important a general competency as is managing routines efficiently.

- Reengineering became a popular change intervention in the late 1990s, promising to shed waste and inefficiency from operations by restructuring and reorganizing workflows. Hammer and Champy (2001) indicated that this intervention required the following six steps: creating a powerful rationale or message for the change, getting top management support, preparing leaders, changing jobs and empowering employees, carrying out the actual process of reengineering itself, and creating a new performance management system.

- To overcome suboptimal performance due to “stovepipe” operations, Ostroff (1999) proposed a “horizontal organization” to restructure hierarchical, functional bureaucratic departments (the stovepipes) into more integrated, lateral systems based on complete workflow processes. There are 12 “principles” that need to be realized to bring about this kind of change, including reorganizing around processes and creating process managers, establishing operating teams, employee training and empowerment, installing information technology, and creating a corporate culture of openness and collaboration.

- Albrecht (1992) focused on how to bring about a total quality service transformation to an organization. His plan for change involved 17 steps, such as educating managers to gain their commitment, creating a guiding task force and then employee action teams, identifying a customer value model, defining the firm’s mission and values, profiling the firm’s culture, improving quality-critical processes, setting up customer feedback systems, and realigning all support systems.

It would seem that every author prescribes his or her own unique approach to change management, operationalized as a set of recommended steps or procedures. The rationale is understandable enough — how to increase the chances that their change program will be implemented effectively — and the models do contain useful guidelines. But can the process of managing change be understood in a more generic way rather than in 10 or 15 or more unique distinct change-management strategies? Is there not some deeper and more underlying structure to the process of managing change that could account for this variety in a more economical and memorable manner? Is there an approach that provides sufficient detail and nuance that can also be applicable to a variety of applications?

MANAGING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE: THE IMPROVE MODEL

The answer to these questions is Yes. That is, even though there are any number of distinctive surface strategies for managing specific organizational changes, it is possible to reduce that diversity to a more simple core set of change management fundamentals, identified here as the IMPROVE model. This model presumes that certain generic issues must be addressed for any organizational change initiative to increase its chances for successful implementation. IMPROVE can accommodate the rich diversity of specific recommendations found in these and other models in the field. Moreover, the IMPROVE model integrates three dynamic elements that are critical to any change: (1) organizational processes (communication and decision making, in particular) that are necessary for guiding and adopting any change initiatives; (2) employee motivation, skills, and opportunities to act (the so-called “performance equation”); and (3) the variety of interventions that constitute the game plans for change.

The IMPROVE model is intended to provide practitioners with a generic blueprint or meta-strategy for how to approach any change-management project as effectively as possible.

The IMPROVE acronym represents seven fundamental issues — or functional prerequisites — that need to be addressed in starting up, executing, and consolidating any kind of organizational change. In addition, while the model suggests a linear, sequential approach to managing change, a lock-step sequence is not entirely necessary. That is, one can begin the change process at different points, depending upon circumstances; if certain functional prerequisites are already met, those issues can be sidestepped. For example, if most employees are already motivated to change, the change agent would not need to devote time or resources in any degree to address that issue.

The seven basic issues and requirements for any successful change as identified by the IMPROVE model are shown in Table 1 and are reviewed more fully in the sections that follow.

INCREASING THE ORGANIZATION’S CAPACITY FOR CHANGE

The first functional issue is increasing the organization’s capacity for change. This refers to an ongoing set of
practices for which human resource or organization development staff (the ones with the likely designated responsibilities in this area) should be responsible. As such, this first issue precedes any specific change initiatives. That is, this issue is one that is ever-present and is not dependent on a specific need or project for change; rather, it is really about creating an organizational culture and workforce that is appreciative of the need for change, improvement, learning, growth, and innovation. Essentially, the issue here is one of creating and sustaining a “change-ready” culture.

Suppose that you could look inside the heads of two employees. In one employee, you discover the following: Jill has a good understanding of the dynamic, competitive nature of the industry in which her organization operates. She knows that her organization will need to make changes and adaptations to thrive and wants to support those changes. She feels comfortable with the idea of “change” and values learning and growth, has the skills to respond to change, and trusts that her managers will do a good job in navigating through any specific changes that might be indicated. By contrast, another employee, Jack, does not understand how the business operates, much less how it is doing. He is frightened by the idea of change and feels helpless at the thought of having to make changes. Further, he distrusts management’s announcements about the need for specific changes, much less its ability to carry out such changes effectively, and will generally not support any changes that might be introduced. What we see here are the polar extremes of the construct “change readiness” (Choi & Ruona, 2011).

Now assume you measured the degree of change readiness in an organization’s workforce. Given employee differences in their change readiness, there would be a distribution of change readiness scores anchored by an average score plotted somewhere on the Jack/low–Jill/high dimension. Obviously, the goal is to have a workforce scoring as highly on the change readiness scale as possible. For the IMPROVE model, it becomes a standing obligation of leaders in general and human resource

| TABLE 1 | THE IMPROVE MODEL FOR MANAGING CHANGE |
| --- | --- | --- |
| FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS | ACTIVITIES | STATUS CHECK |
| Increasing the organization’s capacity for change | Educate employees about organizational conditions. | The workforce has a capacity and readiness for change. |
| Management approval for change | Increase employee confidence in dealing with change. | |
| Preparing direction and leadership for the change process | Identify organizational performance problems or opportunities. | The change agent has the authority and support to proceed with the change initiative. |
| | Make the business case for change. | |
| Preparing direction and leadership for the change process | People selected to be facilitators, agents, advocates, and champions | There are leaders who can play an effective role in implementing the change and there is an implementation plan. |
| | Project leader preparation | |
| | Project planning | |
| Raising employee motivation for the change | Employee participation in planning and preparation for change | Employees have a sufficient level of understanding of the need for change and the motivation to carry it out. |
| | An effective roll-out or announcement | |
| Operationalizing the change | An intervention plan as a set of actions or events designed to produce desired changes | An intervention best suited to bring about the needed changes has been adopted and implemented. |
| Validating that the change process has been successful | Change initiative is evaluated focusing on this question: To what extent did the initiative produce the desired outcomes? | The change project has been evaluated in terms of whether and to what extent it worked. |
| Embedding the change into the organization | Formal human resource policies and procedures | Policies, procedures, and systems are in place to support and maintain the new kinds of behaviors. |
| | Management and supervisory practice | |
| | Other system supports | |
development (HRD) and organizational development (OD) staff in particular to create a change-ready workforce.

Two primary processes can be used in this regard. First, it is important to heighten employee awareness of organizational operations and conditions. Employees can be taught about the nature of the business or industry in which their organization must function, how it operates, the competitive forces at play, and how to understand how the business is doing. These basic issues apply to both private and public and profit and nonprofit institutions. All have operations that must compete for dollars in changing environmental conditions. There are several techniques that can be used for this purpose:

- **Business literacy programs** teach employees about the business and how to read and understand company financial and related organizational performance statements (Case, 1998).
- **Organization scorecards** provide transparent indicators of company successes along with areas needing change in productivity, customer service, or employee development (Kaplan & Norton, 2001).
- **Competitive intelligence** may spur change by finding out what competitors are doing. Competitive intelligence programs look for details about how competitors are operating and what they are doing as a way, again, to signal the need for change (Kahaner, 1996).

Second, a change-ready culture can be promoted by increasing employee confidence in dealing with change. Change can often seem more intimidating and stressful than it needs to be. A lack of confidence can dampen even the best intentions. Here, confidence in dealing with change would include both a motivational and skills component. It can be possible to increase employee confidence in dealing with change with these techniques.

First, establish expectations for dealing with change; motivation for supporting change can be neutered when change comes as a surprise, violating the psychological employment contract. This can be avoided by including messages in new employee onboarding programs that emphasize change as normal and expected.

Second, train managers and supervisors how to manage change; low confidence in dealing with change would occur if employees do not trust that their managers can carry out change initiatives effectively. Knowing that managers are trained in how to carry out change may alter those beliefs and reinforce the expectations for change established in the employment contract.

Third, provide change management training for employees that teaches them how to best deal with change, including diagnosing their own attitudes towards change and building their skills in reacting constructively to change.

Again, the purpose of all these techniques is to create a workforce whose change readiness profile shows as a narrow distribution with the average score at the high end of the scale.

**MANAGEMENT APPROVAL FOR CHANGE**

Initiatives for change in an organization can arise from any level in an organization—from executives at the top, from managers and/or staff, or from frontline employees (individually or in teams). When a change project is focused on an area under a manager’s responsibility and within his or her range of authority, the change project does not necessarily need any higher-level clearance. Similarly, directives may come from superiors directing managers and employers toward some kind of change initiative. In both of these cases, approval for the change project comes with the directive. However, when a change project requires unexpected resources or steps outside of unit boundaries or implicates larger cultural, organizational, or technological matters, it is likely that senior management approval for change is needed. In this case, how does one get the green light to proceed?

An important first step in the process of obtaining management approval for change is identifying and diagnosing organizational performance problems or opportunities in such a way that they can be addressed through appropriate interventions. In this context, diagnosis is the prelude for identifying and recommending interventions. Suppose that employee morale has been falling or there has been an increase in customer complaints about service. Prior to acting, it is essential to identify the primary cause(s) of the problem. Since there could be any number of possible reasons for the problem, each of which might require its own distinctive solution, diagnosing the most important reasons will in turn suggest the most appropriate actions to take to resolve the problem. In addition, the most appropriate actions will mean that the actions recommended should have a higher probability of being effective and efficient. Thus, diagnosis and analysis by a change agent is an essential preliminary step in recommending solutions to experienced performance problems.

But this diagnosis, analysis, and set of recommendations may need to be sold to upper-level managers and executives in order to get the green light or approval to move forward. Getting support for change may be approached in several ways. At a more informal level, it may be possible to influence decision makers to support a change project through such influence strategies...
as cooptation or negotiation. A slightly more advanced procedure would be a stakeholder commitment analysis. Stakeholders might either be resistant to (either actively or passively), indifferent about, or supportive of (actively or passively) a proposed change. The change agent would identify what kind of reaction is needed from each. For example, a manager who is resistant to a change may simply need to be indifferent, an attitude that might be induced by the simple assurance that the change will not affect him. Another manager, currently indifferent, needs to be an active supporter; this would suggest doing other things to get her active engagement.

Finally, some change projects may need to go through a more formal review and analysis process. Thus, an additional skill here is one of persuasion, presenting the information effectively to the right decision makers to obtain their approval. This process of persuasion involves more than simply packaging an argument into a PowerPoint presentation. Decision makers are particularly responsive to the business case—the change project, its costs, projected outcomes, and returns. In other words, the argument recommending change needs to be a business one that shows costs and benefits and how the project will be managed. A caution to the wise in putting together proposals would be to under-promise in terms of outcomes and over-request in terms of resources. It is no doubt better to violate expectations by delivering more than what was promised and at a lower cost than the opposite case.

This functional requisite for change is satisfied if the change agent or leader has the appropriate authority and support to proceed with the change initiative.

PREPARING DIRECTION AND LEADERSHIP FOR CHANGE

In a field experiment at a large Hong Kong bank, Lam and Schaubroeck (2000) tested the effects of using frontline opinion leaders as part of a service quality improvement change project. Three large branches were randomly picked, with one being the control; at the second, six experienced tellers were selected; and at the third, six opinion leaders were identified by management. The tellers were trained together in how to implement the program. Customer satisfaction, job satisfaction, and turnover were measured. As hypothesized, the branch of the opinion leaders produced significantly better outcomes on all measures.

The point here is that, once approved, change projects need effective leadership in implementation. Once a change proposal has the needed approval, the set of personnel involved should be expanded. This issue, then, is about preparing leaders for change. There are three areas needing particular attention in this context:

1. Identifying and Recruiting Individuals to Be Project Facilitators, Agents, Advocates, and Champions

The desired characteristics of people for these roles are that they believe in the desired outcome or objective of the project; are flexible and adaptable; can be good, visionary communicators; and are able to work well with a variety of people. It would be doubly helpful if these people also work in the areas or functions to be affected. Not only will they add credibility and influence to the initiative once underway, but they can bring important insight into plans for implementation and roll-out (Cummings & Worley, 2001).

2. Project Leader Preparation

Once identified, these individuals need to be trained in the leadership role they will assume. While the details of the training will undoubtedly depend on the specific change initiative in play, it is likely that this training should cover four areas: (1) project background, including a review of the analysis or directive given that explains the rationale of the project, (2) the goals or desired outcomes of the change initiative, (3) the specific details of the intervention(s) to be implemented, and (4) training in the skills the leaders need to use in their part of the intervention.

3. Project Planning, Implementation, and Roll-Out

In spite of calls for change initiatives to be implemented on an experimental basis (Beer, Eisenstat, & Spector, 1990), in fact, change initiatives are often undertaken as a special project with all that implies: plans, schedules, assignments, budgets, and so on. While the broad outlines of the implementation may have been covered as part of the management approval request package, details may need to be fleshed out and finalized at this time. The leader preparation training can also be a good time to involve the leaders in this planning process; their knowledge of local “shop floor” conditions and concerns can help guide and shape plans for best effect. One particular topic in which their input can be most valuable will be planning for the project roll-out—how to announce it, what to say, who will say it, and so on. In general, project planning will involve creating a project management plan, responsibility charting, and budget planning.

This functional requisite for change is satisfied if the change initiative is staffed with people who can play an
effective leadership role in implementing the change, and there is a plan for how the project will be introduced and carried out.

**RAISING EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION FOR THE CHANGE**

With executive backing and a prepared project leadership, the change initiative is nearing the time for implementation or unveiling. At this point, one issue that may likely need to be addressed is the motivation for change among the people to be affected—that is, those employees and other organizational stakeholders (e.g., suppliers, consultants, support staff, customers, clients, among others) from whom change is expected. This issue is different from increasing the organizational capacity for change in that now the change is specific and imminent. The focus is on how to increase employee motivation about the specific change program so that they will participate in it and support it.

There are two theoretical concerns: the performance equation and resistance. The performance equation (Maier, 1958) is a long-standing heuristic in the field of organization behavior that basically says work performance is a function of opportunity times ability times motivation. That is, to obtain desired performance (or to explain inadequate performance), three factors are necessary: (1) the person must have the opportunity to do a task (it would be difficult for a baseball player to have a batting average if he is never put into the game), (2) the person must have the skills required, and (3) he or she must have the motivation. Moreover, these factors exist in a multiplicative relationship so that if any one factor is absent (= 0), performance will not occur. Organizational change is ultimately about getting employees to perform their work differently. If their motivation to perform differently is flagging, the change effort will also.

Typically, conventional wisdom holds that people resist change. This is often attributed to inherent traits in the human being, making resistance chronic and ever present. In fact, the situation is much different; there are a number of ways that people can react to proposed changes, only one of which is resistance. Further, rather than being a trait-like quality of all people, it is equally likely that resistance is a situational response to specific conditions. That is, rather than explaining resistance as a near-instinctive reaction of all to any change, resistance may be a specific response by some to how a specific change is introduced, making resistance as much an indicator of clumsy change management as of human nature.

At least five kinds of reactions to change may be possible. First, readiness and commitment would indicate high motivation toward the change, showing an acceptance of the importance and direction of the change, a willingness to expend effort to make the change, and persistence in the learning and performance process. Second, compliance would indicate that the employee is going along with the new expectations and routines, but perhaps without passion or persistence. Compliance can easily shade into, third, reluctance or a hesitation to commit to the process as when efforts are half-hearted and easily abandoned. Fourth, skepticism is a bit more of an active distancing from the change, revealing cynicism and deeper questions about why the change is needed or whether it can even work. Fifth, resistance would be active and intentional opposition to change that can be seen in such responses as misdirected actions (like playing dumb or doing everything exactly by the book), spreading confusion and mistrust (by misrepresenting communications, spreading rumors, or blaming others for problems), or by acts of sabotage (from misplacing files or intentionally entering wrong information to intimidation of coworkers or the destruction of property). Each kind of reaction is likely to have its own sources and reasons.

For the change agent, the issue becomes how to increase readiness and commitment, even simple compliance, while minimizing the less helpful reactions. In general, at this point in the process, there are a variety of techniques that may be used to help raise employee motivation for change. These can occur in two contexts.

1. **Engaging Employees in the Process of Planning and Preparing for a Change**

It may be possible to engage employees in certain activities in the early stages of the change process in such a way as to affect their understanding and attitudes about the need for change. Two variations can be noted. First, benchmarking (Camp, 1989) involves critiquing some aspect of an organization’s current operations against the way another organization does the same thing, only better. Suppose you wanted to improve the standards of customer service in your stores. You could create a task force of influential customer service representatives from different units, train them in benchmarking basics, then send them to see how, say, Nordstrom’s employees provide service. Essentially, benchmarking becomes an exercise in highlighting the differences between current practices and those that are better and should arouse motivation to act.

A second approach, particularly recommended as a way to fight resistance, is employee participation in the change planning process. Several rationales apply here. For example, the demands/control theory of stress (Karasek, 1979) predicts that people will react to a loss of control
over their work by feeling increased stress, which fuels resistance; participation provides a way to retain some control over working conditions. Goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) holds that participation will increase acceptance of goals. One organization-wide example of participation in planning is the future search conference (Bunker & Alban, 1997).

Another technique is survey feedback (Nadler, 1977), gathering attitudinal and opinion information from employees, summarizing that data, and then feeding it back to managers and employees as the basis for action. If turnover has been increasing and morale has been dropping, by collecting information from employees about how they are feeling about things and then reporting that information in a constructive way, motivation to change can be affected by engaging them in suggesting ways to fix the underlying problems. Customer feedback is the external version of this same process; for example, by showing employees customer satisfaction ratings or video clips of focus groups.

2. The Roll-Out or Announcement

When change initiatives are announced to the workforce, the symbolic, showmanship dimension should not be ignored, because there can be real value in signaling the start of a change project. Some kind of kick-off ceremony, large or small, can provide the staging that arouses attention and shows commitment to the new endeavor. As part of this process, it can be as important to make symbolic breaks or detachments from the past ways as well as model what the new will look like. For example, see Kanter’s description of the merger ceremony of two airlines (Kanter, 1989, pp. 83–84). Whether done by email, corporate video, or an all-hands employee meeting, the roll-out message is particularly important. Such messages should include explanations for why the change is being undertaken, descriptions of the change process, and communications about performance expectations. In some cases, employees may be concerned about job security, and this issue must be addressed in some way.

This functional requisite for change is satisfied if there is a sufficient level of employee understanding of the need for change and motivation to carry it out.

OPERATIONALIZING THE CHANGE

Change initiatives are often defined as an intervention. Reengineering, for example, is an intervention for changing the structure of workflow and its administrative processes; empowerment is about shifting decision-making authority to lower levels in the organization; team-building interventions help a team work together more effectively. For each of these change initiatives, specific actions are involved (respectively): mapping workflow, analyzing inefficiencies, and redesigning processes; making information available, creating new rewards, and teaching employees how to make decisions (Lawler, 1988); gathering data on team processes, analyzing that data, and agreeing on different procedures.

An intervention, then, is a set of planned actions or events designed to produce desired changes. There are several general guidelines for interventions. First, the intervention should be based on the diagnosed causes or needs of the client system. I recently encountered a situation where there were numerous operating problems related to ineffective organizational structure and ineffective management systems. One consultant proposed an assessment center as the intervention—apparently his specialty and (one senses) his recommendation regardless of the circumstances. More importantly, his intervention had nothing to do with the real underlying issues. Second, there should be a clearly stated goal that details what the new conditions or results should be. Third, it is important for the initiative to build a sense of confidence or self-efficacy among the people involved that the change can be achieved. Interventions should plan for small victories and early wins or achievements that can help build participant confidence in the learning curve quickly (Kotter, 1996).

No discussion of interventions can neglect the role of training, because training is often the “flagship” intervention for implementing change. That is, often, any sort of organizational change intervention will typically involve training employees in some capacity or the other. At the least, employees may need to be briefed and trained in the new activities and behaviors required by the change. Beyond that, it may also be necessary to train their supervisors and managers in how to manage under this new skills and activities regime. Supervisory skills such as setting goals, role modeling and coaching, monitoring and responding to employee performance variables, and methods of continuous process improvement would all likely be important to teach or refresh. Beyond these obvious skills areas, training may be used to increase readiness for change (by explaining the rationale for a change project or by increasing self-efficacy or confidence in one’s ability to perform in new ways) and to increase motivation to improve work performance through learning (Holton, Baldwin, & Naquin, 2000). Thus, any training should be well designed and executed.

Perhaps the most important general guideline for interventions is that an effective intervention usually requires multiple actions and events. Seldom will a one-hour or one-day training program be sufficient;
changes may be needed in human resources procedures, reporting processes, workflow layout, information flows, technology, and so on. Change impacts a total system; consequently, changes to various components of a system are usually required. Because of the systemic and complicated nature of organizational change, the last thing to remember is that change takes time; the deeper or more profound the change, the longer it will take. For profound changes, the cycle would be better thought of in terms of years rather than months.

Most organization development textbooks catalog different types of intervention methods. Typically, interventions are grouped by level, from organization-wide to departmental and team to individual. A different approach is presented here. Interventions should first be described as either general-purpose or outcome-specific. That is, some intervention strategies can be used in a variety of situations to address an equally large range of issues or concerns. The defining characteristic of these approaches is their emphasis on using a generic process, rather than working toward a specific content objective. All are data-based, participative in form, and longitudinal and iterative in operation; they are really variations on a collective self-guided learning and discovery process that is almost experimental in essence.

Three generic intervention methods can be noted. First, in action learning, participants identify operating issues or concerns, then formulate action plans for solving them; these actions are tried, results assessed, and corrections made. Second, unlike problem-focused approaches, appreciative inquiry tries to set in motion a self-fulfilling process based on successes and strengths. Plans are based on what we do well and how we can use our strengths. Third, total quality management is a general process of monitoring production processes in terms of customer standards of value and following a process of continuous improvement to remove systematic sources of waste, inefficiency, and error in production.

Beyond these general intervention strategies, there are a large number of outcome-specific interventions that are designed to produce a specific type of result in a specific domain of practice. In this context, interventions can be considered on two dimensions. First, on what domain of practice is the intervention focused? Specific change interventions usually focus on one of these five domains of practice: (1) the processes used to guide and direct an organization, (2) organizational structure, (3) workflow and techno-structure, (4) internal relationships of various kinds, and (5) performance capacity. Second, is the intervention directed at modifying and improving existing operations (so-called first-order change) or is it directed at the fundamental transformations of operations (second-order change)? Of course, some interventions can be used either way. The set of change interventions is shown in Table 2.

This functional requisite for change is satisfied if an intervention best suited to bring about the changes needed has been implemented.

**VALIDATING THAT THE CHANGE PROCESS HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL**

Change projects should be carried out with a goal in mind; it is important to ascertain whether that goal has been or is being achieved. In short, the change initiative should be evaluated by focusing on the question: To what extent did the initiative produce the desired outcomes? If the change process succeeded, victory should be declared and conditions should be institutionalized; if not, other decisions and actions may be needed.

Program evaluation is a tricky process, and guidelines for effective evaluation design far exceed what can be covered here. Still, certain fundamentals deserve note. First, an outcome or summative evaluation can begin in earnest only after the change initiative is well underway, if not completed. Of course, the particulars depend on the specific change initiative undertaken. Say a change project involves four interventions (training, workflow redesign, technology enhancements, and team building) as part of a change program at a 15-site organization; the interventions are implemented as a package, one site at a time. In this case, one could begin to track outcomes as soon as the package has been implemented at each site. Different timing would be indicated if the same four interventions were implemented separately.

Second, what were the effects, if any, of the change project? The proverbial bottom line is whether the summative evaluation determined that the desired outcomes were accomplished. Were there gains in productivity or service quality? Are employees holding new beliefs and values? While an outcome evaluation should clearly look at the targeted outcomes, other variables that can have general relevance to the evaluation should also be examined, such as employee understanding of strategy; industry economics and challenges facing the firm; the percent of employees who believe in the new strategy (share of mind); and the diffusion of new cultural assumptions, beliefs, and values.

If the evaluation shows less than the expected or desired outcomes, obviously decisions must be made about what to do and how to proceed. If the evaluation points to an acceptable level of success, though, showmanship can be important. Celebrations and rewards or honors all around create a great precedent for successful change.
management that will be folded into the organization’s history and culture.

This functional requisite for change is satisfied if the change project has been evaluated and a determination made as to its success in implementation.

### EMBEDDING THE CHANGE INTO THE ORGANIZATION

One important reason to evaluate whether intended changes have been realized is because, if they have, the

<table>
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<th>TABLE 2 OUTCOME-SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DOMAINS OF APPLICATION OR PRACTICE IN WHICH CHANGE MAY BE TARGETED</strong></td>
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| Organizational guidance and direction | Administrative systems:  
• MBO  
• Project planning  
Assumption-based planning  
Management training and development | Integrated strategic change  
Organizational behavior management or performance management systems  
Future search conference  
Open-systems planning  
Strategic planning | Strategic redirection: e-business  
Culture change  
Leadership development |
| Organizational structure, reporting relationships, accountabilities | Reorganization  
Role and relationship clarifications | Downsizing  
Mergers and acquisitions | Horizontal organization  
Self-directed work teams |
| Workflow and technostructure | Work simplification  
Cycle-time reduction | Automation  
Information management systems | Reengineering  
Lean production systems |
| Relationships:  
With employees  
Internal processes  
With customers and external stakeholders | Survey feedback  
Team building  
Conflict management  
Organizational mirror  
Process consultation | Human resources management  
Labor management partnerships  
Tgroups  
Customer feedback  
Service quality management  
Diversity management | Quality of work life |
| Performance capacity:  
Organizational learning and change  
Individual motivation or skills | Organization development  
Quality circles  
GE: Workout  
Job enrichment | Empowerment  
Incentive compensation  
Training  
Competitive intelligence | Learning organization |
changes—new ways of thinking, feeling, and acting—need to be maintained, thereby avoiding relapse to the old ways. In short, change must be institutionalized or embedded into operating routines. The key to successfully embedding a change is to reengineer a performance management system to align with the new way of life. An aligned performance management system has two hallmark features: all the components of a performance management system are configured to support the new organizational goals, mission, and strategy, and all the components are internally consistent and mutually reinforcing.

A simple example can illustrate a misaligned system. Say the change initiative focused on improving customer satisfaction through the use of teams. But when the features of the performance management system are analyzed, it is found that nothing has changed; the selection process does not screen people in terms of their dispositions toward service or working in teams. Training still focuses on technical skills; performance appraisals rate productivity, not service; compensation adjustments are based exclusively on individual performance; people still sit in isolated cubicles; and supervisors still emphasize moving paper, not satisfying customers.

Some of the factors that can be used to embed change may have been included as part of the interventions used to operationalize the change. Training is a good example. Suppose all current employees were trained in whatever new methods or skills were needed as part of the intervention. The problem is that turnover, infrequent use, and diminished management attention can all begin to erode the availability of those skills. This means that the training must be continued or institutionalized, positioned for new employees joining the system as well as for retraining purposes. There are three domains that should be addressed to align the organization's performance management system and embed changes into routine operations.

- **Formal human resource policies and procedures.** These define the employment relationship and will probably need to be revamped. This process may include rewriting job descriptions to list new responsibilities; rethinking base and incentive pay structures; using new selection criteria and procedures to recruit, screen, and hire individuals with certain specific dispositions, abilities or talents; refocusing performance evaluations on the new, needed behaviors or outcomes; offering training (for employees, managers, and supervisors); and examining the career and succession planning processes.

- **Management and supervisory practices.** Just like employees, managers and supervisors function in accord with the performance management system that governs them; their performance management systems may need to be adjusted, too. (If employees are now rewarded for better customer service but their bosses are being rewarded for productivity, it is likely the bosses will emphasize the latter at the expense of the former.) Supervisory practices that should be honed include: goal setting; the control and feedback systems supervisors use to monitor employee performance; how supervisors address performance issues (training? coaching? disciplining? reinforcing and rewarding?); and whether and how they keep employees informed through various communication techniques.

- **Other system supports.** Finally, corresponding changes may be needed to office or shop-floor layout, to organizational structure (new reporting relationships or employee empowerment and delegation), to workflow processes, and to technology.

This functional requisite for change is satisfied if policies, procedures, and systems are in place that support and maintain the new kinds of behaviors that have been shown to have resulted from the change process.

**SUMMARY**

Managing organizational change effectively is becoming as important a management capability as supervising routine performance. The IMPROVE model is offered as one universal set of guidelines for managing a process of planned organizational change. IMPROVE represents seven functional requisites for change, conditions that need to be met in order for change to occur successfully. Those seven requisites are as follows:

1. Increasing the organization's capacity for change
2. Management approval for change
3. Preparing direction and leadership for the change
4. Raising employee motivation for the change

**Change is never guaranteed; at best, it may take a long time and require extended effort and attention.**
5. Operationalizing the change using a set of interventions designed to alter existing conditions
6. Validating that the change process has been successful
7. Embedding the change into the organization

Within each phase, change leaders can call upon a number of specific methods and techniques.

Change is never guaranteed; at best, it may take a long time and require extended effort and attention. The real issue is how to increase the likelihood that a change initiative will be successful. By attending to the functional prerequisites noted in the IMPROVE model, one’s chances for successful change management should be much improved.

References


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