

## Chapter Four

# Ten Tactics For Successful Change

LET'S START BY CLARIFYING WHAT WE MEAN BY "TACTIC." In *Webster's*, a tactic is "a device for accomplishing an end." In other words, it's a means to help you achieve a specific objective. Take a chess game, for example. You may know the rules of the game, the logic behind the game, and the objective of the game. You may have a high-level strategy to win by outmaneuvering your opponent, but without employing well-thought-out tactical moves, your chances of actually winning the game will be slim. The same can be said about organizational change. While you may know what you are trying to accomplish, you are at a distinct disadvantage without a tactical plan in place to help you achieve your objective.

At this point, you may be thinking, "This is nothing new. Everyone knows you have to have a strategy in place to get you from Point A to Point B." And of course you would be right. In fact, there are countless books on organizational change that describe how to get you from A to B. These books are in many ways like driving aids, giving you guidance on everything from how to operate a vehicle to how to read a road map to reach your destination.

But what these books *don't* cover are tactics to help you on your journey—tactics that will help maximize your chances of arriving safe and sound while minimizing any unexpected delays. Sticking to our driving analogy, tactics would include such things as: (a) make sure your tires are properly inflated before setting out, (b) bring

# THE TACTICS

### TACTIC 1

*Define change as a compelling element of organizational strategy.*

### THE ISSUE

Unless the proposed change finds its way into a grander set of organizational priorities, it is unlikely that the change will be sustainable over time. The reality in most organizations today is that organizational priorities are driven by the annual business planning cycle (as well as the quarterly results and related mid-course corrections). Unless both public and private shareholders' short-term and long-term expectations are met, organizational initiatives will be discarded, regardless of the expected longer-term impact. It will be difficult to sustain the change effort unless there is a clear and unambiguous reason for it. Tying the change to organizational strategy creates such a reason.

### THE TACTIC

Make the change effort a critical part of your business strategy. The change should not be an end in itself, such as buying the latest software for the sake of being up-to-date. The change should extend the organization's capabilities in order to improve its financial or competitive position. You should be clear about how the change will move the organization toward a strategic advantage.

To define the change effort as part of your business strategy, the change effort must be part of the business planning process. A clear purpose behind the change enables you to establish the priority of the change effort versus other organizational needs. Establishing the change as a priority will, in turn, ensure the allocation of resources and scheduling of project activities.

The business rationale is a prerequisite for the assessment, planning, and design phases of organizational management. Because of this, there is a tendency to lose sight of the business need by the time you get to implementation. The implementation plan should reaffirm and add detail to the business rationale. It should be the starting point for framing the strategy as well as for defining the success criteria for the implementation effort.

## CONQUERING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

A clear purpose also helps to remind stakeholders of why they are going through the pain and frustration of a lengthy, complex change project. We have seen implementation fail because stakeholders and employees, in particular, believed that the change project was above and beyond the responsibilities of their regular jobs. This can lead to frustration and can destroy motivation. Linking the initiative to your organization's business strategy helps avoid this reaction and makes it easier for stakeholders to see the change as "business as usual."



### CRITICAL ACTIONS TO EXECUTE TACTIC 1

- 1 Assure strong executive sponsorship
- 2 Quantify impact of current state
- 3 Agree on specific goals
- 4 Incorporate recommendations into annual business cycle
- 5 Measure impact of implementation

#### 1 *Assure strong executive sponsorship*

Having a strong executive sponsor ensures a constant link between the change effort and the people responsible for developing the organization's strategy. The higher positioned the sponsor is the better; in the ideal situation, the CEO assumes this job. In our experience as consultants, there are clear correlations between the sponsor's position in the organization, the level of sponsor involvement, and project success. In cases where the CEO is not the direct sponsor of the project, frequent reviews of progress must occur with the participation of the entire executive team.

#### 2 *Quantify impact of current state*

Unless the organization can point to a current problem that may impede the organization's ability to achieve its strategic objectives, there is little reason to change anything. Prior to embarking on a major change effort, you must ensure that the organization quantifies the impact of doing business the current way.

This is most often done through a detailed analysis of the current situation. It may involve interviews with key stakeholders and financial specialists who can help identify and quantify performance inhibitors. A performance inhibitor is any barrier or defect that prevents performance. For example, an insufficient number of copy machines in the workplace would be a performance inhibitor because it would result

#### Tactic 1