

# Patterns of Successful Organizational Change

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March 7, 2010

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## **Patterns of Successful Organizational Change**

- **Based on Sergio Fernandez and Hal G. Rainey, "Managing Successful Organizational Change in the Public Sector: An Agenda for Research and Practice." *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 66, no. 2 (March/April, 2006): 168-176. 2006.**
- **A review of research on successful large-scale organizational change, seeking points of consensus among researchers and expert observers.**
- **The research consists mainly of case studies and expert observations, and produces very general generalizations.**
- **The generalizations have value because they are easier said than done, and because change leaders often omit them or do not succeed at fulfilling them.**

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Table 1 Determinants of Successful Organizational Change in the Public Sector	
Proposition	Sub-propositions
Ensure the need. Leaders must verify and persuasively communicate the need for change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convince organizational members of the need and desirability for change.</li> <li>• Craft a compelling vision of change.</li> <li>• Employ written and oral communication and forms of active participation to communicate and disseminate the need for change.</li> </ul>
Provide a plan. Leaders must develop a course of action or strategy for implementing change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devise a strategy for reaching the desired end state, with milestones and a plan for achieving each one of them.</li> <li>• The strategy should rest on sound causal theory for achieving the desired end state.</li> </ul>
Build internal support and overcome resistance. Leaders must build internal support and reduce resistance to change through widespread participation in the change process and other means.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage participation and open discussion to reduce resistance to change.</li> <li>• Avoid criticism, threats, and coercion aimed at reducing resistance to change.</li> <li>• Commit sufficient time, effort, and resources to manage participation effectively.</li> </ul>

Table 1 (Continued) Determinants of Successful Implementation of Organizational Change in the Public Sector	
Ensure top management support and commitment. An individual or group within the organization should champion the cause for change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An “idea champion” or guiding coalition should advocate for and lead the transformation process.</li> <li>• Individuals championing the change should have the skill to marshal resources and support for change, to maintain momentum, and to overcome obstacles to change.</li> <li>• Political appointees and top-level civil servants should support the change.</li> </ul>
Build external support. Leaders must develop and ensure support from political overseers and key external stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build support for change among political overseers.</li> <li>• Build support for to change among interest groups with a stake in the organization.</li> </ul>
Provide resources. Successful change requires adequate resources to support the change process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide adequate financial, human, and technological resources to implement change.</li> <li>• Avoid overtaxing organizational members.</li> <li>• Capitalize on synergies in resources.</li> </ul>

**Table 1 (Continued)**  
**Determinants of Successful Implementation of Organizational Change in the Public Sector**

<p><b>Institutionalize change. Managers and employees must effectively institutionalize changes.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Employ a variety of measures to displace old patterns of behavior and institutionalize new ones.</b></li> <li>• <b>Monitor the implementation of change.</b></li> <li>• <b>Institutionalize change before shifts in political leadership cause commitment to and support for change to diminish.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Pursue comprehensive change. Leaders must develop an integrative, comprehensive approach to change that achieves subsystem congruence.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Adopt and implement a comprehensive, consistent set of changes to the various subsystems of the organization.</b></li> <li>• <b>Analyze and understand the interconnections between organizational subsystems before pursuing subsystem congruence.</b></li> </ul>

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- Widespread belief in the need for change
- Clear, sustained leadership, including support from top executives
- Broad participation in diagnosing problems and planning the change
- Flexible, incremental implementation, involving experimentation, feedback, and adaptation
- Institutionalization: building on prior success to institutionalize change

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### CONDITIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL CHANGE IN A FEDERAL AGENCY

1. *A durable power center, committed to successful change*
  - Strong, stable leadership by career civil servants
  - An internal change agent (career agency executive) with sufficient authority and resources
  - Active, creative bureau staff
  
2. *Appropriate timing for collective support*
  - A political “window of opportunity”
  - Political overseers (congressional committee heads) who are supportive but not interventionist
  - Political sophistication of agency leaders and staff—effective management of relations with Congress and oversight agencies (OPM, GSA)
  - Strategies that blend sincere employee involvement with decisive exercise of authority
  
3. *A comprehensive, clear, realistic alternative process*
  - A long-term change strategy, using group processes to develop new structures
  - A major structural reform, focused on measurable outputs, that decentralizes operational responsibility
  - Reasonable clarity about the nature and objectives of the new structure and process

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### Determinants of Lasting Change in Public Organizations

- Crafting a compelling vision for change and persuasively communicating the need for change.
- Transforming the vision for change into a course of action.
- Reducing resistance to change through widespread participation and other means.
- Top management support and leadership.
- Resource munificence.
- Support from political overseers and key external stakeholders.
- Adopting and institutionalizing change.
- Developing an integrative, comprehensive approach to change—achieving sub-system congruence.

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## **Patterns of Successful Organizational Change: Additional Sources**

- Glenn W. Rainey and Hal G. Rainey, "Structural Overhaul in a Government Agency: Implications of Social Security Claims Modularization for O.D. Principles and Techniques." *Public Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Summer, 1986): 206-223.
- Glenn W. Rainey and Hal G. Rainey, "Breaching the Hierarchical Imperative: The Modularization of the Social Security Claims Process," in Donald J. Calista (Ed.), *Bureaucratic and Governmental Reform*. JAI Research Annual in Public Policy Analysis and Management. Greenwich, Connecticut: JAI Press, 1986: 171-196.
- Hal G. Rainey, *A Weapon in the War for Talent: Using Special Hiring Authorities to Recruit Crucial Personnel*. Washington, D.C.: PricewaterhouseCoopers Endowment for the Business of Government, 2001.
- Hal G. Rainey, *Understanding and Managing Public Organizations*, 4th edition. Sa Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010.
- Hal G. Rainey and James Thompson, "Leadership and Transformation of a Major Institution: Charles Rossotti at the U.S. Internal Revenue Service." *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 66, no. 4 (July/August, 2006): 596-604.
- James Thompson and Hal G. Rainey, *Modernizing Human Resource Management in the Federal Government: The IRS Model*. Washington, D.C.: IBM Endowment for the Business of Government, 2003.