



ALL CHANGE

DAVID T BINKS

David T Binks gives advice on how to effectively and efficiently carry out any changes to your business

As evidenced by London Stone's recent move into horticultural consultancy, we operate in a marketplace that is increasingly shifting and evolving; it is only a matter of time until it becomes necessary to effect some sort of 'change' within the business you work in or own. The reasons for this may be due to positive factors, such as diversification or business expansion, or due to negative influences – say, losing a key client account. Regardless of the reason, there are fundamentals that need to be in place if the transition is to be successful.

From the outset, the **values** of your business need to be clear and defined: what is your modus operandi; why do you do what you do; what makes your business unique? Without a clear understanding of your own values, the onset of any change within your organisation will result in confusion, as the rest of your team will be unsure about the reason behind it.

“IF YOU IDENTIFY YOUR VALUES, SKILLS, RESOURCES AND INCENTIVES, AND FORMULATE A PLAN, CHANGE SHOULD BE EASIER TO IMPLEMENT”

The **skillset** within your business needs to be able to cope with the changes that you want to bring about; one example of this would be making the decision to move from private projects to commercial contracting, without having anyone in the business with enough experience to manage these larger schemes. This would result in anxiety among staff, and could ultimately lead to resistance within the team.

If enough **resources** are not allocated to a process, it will frustrate those involved. To ensure



the success of a transition, there needs to be a commitment of people, time and, in some cases, funding. Imagine a business wants to gain a new accreditation, but doesn't allocate enough time or staff hours to undertake the lengthy paperwork, and doesn't budget for the accreditation fees. This will breed frustration among staff when it becomes apparent to them that an impossible task has been set. Provide what is needed to do the job well.

Your team needs to be aware of the reason behind the change and what necessitates it – what is the **incentive** behind it all? When people understand the motivation behind a change to the way they've 'always done things', it reduces their resistance to it. Say a maintenance team is used to 'cutting and dropping' on a site, but the client now wants all arisings collected, which results in more work. The staff involved should have it explained to them that if the business doesn't start doing 'x', it will lose contract 'y' – ultimately threatening the security of their jobs. Unsurprisingly, this should motivate them to champion the initiative.

We all need a **plan**, and never more so than when you are altering a system or process that is entrenched within your business. You can't manage what you can't measure, and without set goals and parameters, you'll run the risk of continually making false-starts to your initiative – once an idea loses traction and momentum, it is very difficult to regain it, so it is imperative to arrange review meetings, to guarantee that everyone is playing their part.

Effecting change is not a straightforward process and it won't always be welcomed with open arms, but if you identify your values, skills, resources and incentives, and formulate a plan, the it should then be easier to implement.

ABOUT DAVID T BINKS

David T Binks is managing director of Cheshire-based Landstruction, which was set up in 2010 and now has 40 employees. It has won Gold medals at RHS Chelsea and RHS Tatton Park. David also launched the Big Hedge Co., which supplies and installs mature hedging and topiary nationwide.
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