

Building An Effective Business Case For Change

Top tips to guide you

By R. Kendall Lyman and Tony C. Daloisio

Organizations will embark upon large-scale change efforts numerous times throughout their lifespans. The degree to which these efforts are successful will vary, largely because of two common barriers to implementation—loss of focus and momentum, and resistance to change.

The loss of momentum happens so easily, as change initiatives take a backseat to day-to-day duties, client demands, and the endless list of time-sensitive things that arise. Author Patrick Bet-David [advises](#) dedicating intentional and constant attention to anything of importance, citing business, relationships, finances, health, and anything else for which momentum is crucial. It's essential to maintain progress and energy and not let it waver.

However, if you've identified that the momentum has already been lost, you'll have to do the work to gain it back. Inspirational writer and speaker Cam Taylor offers six tangible ways to [regain lost momentum](#):

- Acknowledgement that the energy has slowed or stopped.
- Assessment of readiness.
- Clear articulation of intentions.
- Bridge momentum from current successes.
- Enlist in a team.
- Establish a cadence of action.

The second barrier—resistance to change—is also almost always guaranteed, as change can be tough for many. Even quiet resistance is

an energy drain, so it's imperative to protect the initiative and keep it a priority. Human Resources expert Susan Heathfield acknowledges that while change produces anxiety when employees feel they lose their sense of security, it's also [a result of expectations and approach](#). Welcoming feedback and input will help mitigate negative reactions and help implement change from the onset.

Another way to combat these barriers head on is to create a clear case that generates enthusiasm and willingness to change, and communicates a sense of urgency. This case can be continually leveraged throughout the process to reinvigorate the mission and sustain momentum.

An effective business case for change includes the following:

Describes why the current situation is unacceptable. Leaving no room for interpretation, it does so in a clear and meaningful way. It should include irrefutable metrics like marketplace data, internal statistics, and historical information.

Describes the projected costs of NOT changing. It needs to define the business risks and costs both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Paints a compelling picture of the desired future state. Along with listing the benefits of change, it should outline concrete qualitative and quantitative goals.

Provides a strategic path. This should inform employees of the general path the change will take to get to the desired future state.

Produces a felt need for change within employees. Create an emotional tie and desire that compels people to want the change. The way to overcome resistance is to stoke true, personal acceptance on an individual level.

Leaders should take every opportunity to include others in the change process. Employees often have compelling data that management might not have. This can increase the effectiveness—and the leverage—of the business case and is bolstered by multiple perspectives.

The form your business case for change takes is up to you. It can be a written memo, formal presentation, series of questions and answers, or something more visual. The important thing is that it becomes a consistent message in *all* communications and presentations. It should be an underlying mantra throughout all business activity. **LE**



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