

# PROMPTU

magazine

The Official Publication of Chartered Professionals  
in Human Resources in Atlantic Canada

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ressources humaines agréés au Canada atlantique

SUMMER/FALL 2022  
ÉTÉ/AUTOMNE 2022



**NAVIGATING CHANGE  
AND ORGANIZATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

**COMPOSER AVEC LE  
CHANGEMENT MALGRÉ  
L'ÉPUISEMENT PROFESSIONNEL**

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**SHARON ROBINSON, CPHR**  
CHAIR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
CPHR NOVA SCOTIA

# CPHR

Nova Scotia

**ONCE AGAIN, I LOOK FORWARD** to connecting with CPHR members across Atlantic Canada through the Summer/Fall edition of *PROMPTU Magazine*. I hope you continue to enjoy the informative articles from our contributing members who take the time to share their expertise and experience.

The human resources landscape is evolving at an unprecedented speed, and global drivers are changing the world of work. Beginning in 2020, significant external influences have affected workplaces and therefore, our human resources strategies, programming and practices must align and keep pace.


The COVID-19 pandemic required many of us to adapt to remote work on an urgent basis. As the pandemic endured far longer than initially anticipated, it demonstrated that many employees could work remotely and be productive and effective, in workplaces where it was not previously envisioned. As a result, the shift to hybrid work models was fast-tracked for many organizations.

While respectful workplace, diversity and inclusion policies have been part of HR programming for many years, the global impact of Black Lives Matter and Every Child Matters movements have employers recognizing the strategic importance of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in their workplace and as a member of the broader community in which they operate. According to *Glassdoor.com*, more than 3 out of 4 job seekers and employees (76%) report that a diverse workforce is important when evaluating companies and job offers.

HR professionals are integral in navigating organizational change and development, whether the changes are transformational and stem from external influences like COVID-19 and international anti-racism efforts, or are incremental in nature through the introduction of new business processes or require large-scale adoption through the deployment of new technologies.

I think about the role of Human Resources in navigating organizational change and development as threefold. Sometimes the change is under the people umbrella-like D, E & I strategy and led by Human Resources at both the program level and the change management lens. In other instances, the HR professional develops the change management plan and tactics for other project sponsors across the organization. It's also HR's responsibility to provide ongoing programming that builds individual and collective leadership change capability for the organization.

Effectively managing change and development enables a culture of innovation where leaders and employees see change with a willing mindset, open to the opportunity the initiative or project brings. HR professionals with skills in navigating change and development help to equip their organizations to adapt, evolve, remain competitive and achieve their strategic objectives.

Enjoy your summer and see you in the fall. 



**LUC PAGE, CPHR**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER /  
DIRECTEUR GÉNÉRAL  
CPHR NEW BRUNSWICK /  
CRHA NOUVEAU-BRUNSWICK

# CPHR / CRHA

New Brunswick      Nouveau-Brunswick

**ONCE AGAIN, CPHR NEW BRUNSWICK** is pleased to collaborate with our colleagues across Atlantic Canada on this latest issue focusing on Change Management.

Communities across Atlantic Canada have been analyzing and improving their efforts to overcome various challenges within the Change Management Area. The pandemic has surely brought many obstacles for various organizations when it comes to Change Management. Throughout the last year and a half, we have witnessed a significant increase when it comes to burnouts and other challenges such as Mental Health where it requires important changes into the various levels of organizational management.

As HR professionals, we are aware that building strong and genuine relationships with employees is key to Change Management. However, virtual connections have given us the opportunity to connect in more intentional ways where we can focus on having real conversations, face issues head on and dig deeper to resolve issues collaboratively. When it comes to Change Management within the corporate world, the concept is the same. HR professionals appreciate how important it is to have new values that reflects changes in the various level of management within the organization. It's very important that every organization educates and has an open mind with it comes to Change Management. ■

**CRHA NOUVEAU-BRUNSWICK A LE PLAISIR** de collaborer une nouvelle fois avec ses collègues de partout au Canada atlantique pour ce dernier numéro, axé sur la gestion du changement.

Des collectivités de tout le Canada atlantique ont analysé leurs efforts et apporté des améliorations pour surmonter différentes difficultés dans le domaine de la gestion du changement. Il va sans dire que la pandémie a engendré de nombreux obstacles pour diverses organisations en matière de gestion du changement. Au cours de la dernière année et demie, nous avons assisté à une augmentation importante des cas d'épuisement professionnel et d'autres difficultés – sur le plan de la santé mentale, notamment – exigeant d'importants changements aux divers niveaux de gestion organisationnelle.

En tant que professionnels des RH, nous sommes conscients que l'établissement de relations solides et authentiques avec les employés est essentiel à la gestion du changement. Les liens entretenus de façon virtuelle nous ont cependant donné l'occasion d'interagir de manière plus intentionnelle, nous permettant de nous concentrer sur de vraies conversations, de nous attaquer de front aux problèmes et d'aller plus loin pour résoudre les problèmes en collaboration. En ce qui concerne la gestion du changement dans le monde des affaires, le concept est le même. Les professionnels des RH comprennent à quel point il est important de se doter de nouvelles valeurs qui reflètent les changements apportés aux divers niveaux de gestion au sein de l'organisation. Il est très important que chaque organisation offre une éducation et fasse preuve d'ouverture d'esprit en matière de gestion du changement. ■

## MESSAGE FROM CPHR NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR



**LEROY MURPHY, CPHR**  
PRESIDENT  
CPHR NEWFOUNDLAND &  
LABRADOR



**I AM DELIGHTED TO BE** part of another edition of *Promptu*. Each edition is a wonderful opportunity to highlight some of the expertise of our region. This edition's theme of organization change seems quite timely given our hopeful emergence from a pandemic that has disrupted lives so much.

In the context of this magazine, the pandemic disrupted the way we work. As I look back to how organizations reacted to the first lock downs of 2020, I recall there was generally an agreed upon urgency. The changes that happened were quick and many have lasted until now. Most significant of those changes was the mass adoption of remote working. Many organizations are now considering how to return to the workplace, or if it is indeed necessary to make that change back. Others consider a more flexible hybrid approach. Many organizations have not settled on what the new change is and are still learning.

From an academic standpoint, there are a number of theories about change management. Most theories agree that there must be a feeling among employees that the change is needed, and preferably, there should be a sense of urgency for that change. In 2020 we had that sense of urgency. It was literally forced upon us. As organizations move forward, that sense of urgency may not be the same motivator. Often, in organizational change, it is not so apparent to everyone that a change is necessary. That becomes a challenge for managers and HR professionals. As we all know, change is both unavoidable and necessary for the most successful employers. I look forward to reading the advice provided by the various authors of our region. ■

## MESSAGE FROM CPHR PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND



**WENDY MACINTYRE, CPHR**  
CHAIR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
CPHR PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND



**SPRING HAS FINALLY SPRUNG ON PEI**, and we have several updates to share. On May 17, we held our AGM and elected three new Board members, Denise Gallant, CPHR, Susan Bruce, CPHR, and Jessica Fields, CPHR. We also thanked former board members Jason Rendell, CPHR, Kelly Drummond, CPHR, Carey Arsenaault, CPHR, and Michelle Penwarden. We are so pleased to see these dynamic HR leaders joining us and are so grateful for the former members who kept the wheels on the bus during the most chaotic times of the pandemic.

CPHR PEI has also released its 2022-2025 Strategic Plan after much thoughtful discussions and collaboration. Of highest importance is member service. It has been challenging for a few years now, #pandemic, and as a group of volunteers, but now that we have our priorities, we are creating more opportunities and awareness for HR professionals on PEI.

*Continued on page 7*

CPHR PEI is closely watching and engaging in discussions regarding employment legislation including the *Employment Standards Act Comprehensive Review* and the new pay transparency, for example. Connecting with members to understand their views and how changes impact their work is important for the association to understand and support our practitioners.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the labour shortage and inflation. PEI has been the province with the highest inflation rate in the country for a few months and when combined with the labour shortage, well, it is daunting. But when there are challenges, innovation often thrives. Let's hope this holds true!

As always, I am very much looking forward to having conversations, discovering possibilities, testing new approaches, and no doubt failing forward all along the way...with my HR colleagues. ■

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# Navigating Change Through Burnout

By Rosalynn Alessi & Karla Pooley

**YOU ARRIVE AT WORK ONE MORNING MID-week,** and surprise surprise, there's a new initiative being rolled out...or a new government policy...or a new complaint that must be addressed immediately, or...

You settle into your day, mentally preparing yourself for yet another conversation. Which do you do first?

- Educate senior management on why HR must be included before a decision is made; or
- Educate your colleagues on why change management is everyone's responsibility (and not just HR's); or
- Hold these discussions simultaneously without anyone knowing you are trying to educate them.

There's just one problem. It's not even 9:00 am, and you are exhausted. No, you are more than exhausted – you are completely burned out. The previous two years have brought about so much change, and for HR in particular, it means balancing a continuously changing "new normal" with no guide, roadmap, or best practices.

As an HR professional, it is statistically unlikely that you are taking care of yourself mentally or physically. Do you work longer and longer hours? Do you skip breaks and forget to stretch? Do you lie awake at night, pondering who is HR for HR? Do you even recognize that you are burned out? Do you wonder how you will effectively lead and navigate change for your organization in the new normal?

## RELIABILITY OVER INNOVATION

Innovation requires passion, diverse perspectives, and a desire to generate ideas and see new possibilities. When you're burned out and exhausted, your energy is spent just keeping the lights on, and it's near impossible to find and navigate through areas of improvement.

**Trust what you know** and trust what works. Don't be afraid to go back to basics. Ask yourself if the status quo is ok, and encourage others to do the same. They are likely exhausted too. Innovation should not be forced or accepted when timing isn't





# Composer avec le changement malgré l'épuisement professionnel

Par Rosalynn Alessi et Karla Pooley

## VOUS ARRIVEZ AU TRAVAIL UN MATIN

en milieu de semaine et – surprise! –, il y a une nouvelle initiative en cours de déploiement...ou une nouvelle politique gouvernementale...ou une nouvelle plainte qui doit être traitée immédiatement, ou...Vous amorcez votre journée, en vous préparant mentalement à une nouvelle conversation. Que faites-vous en premier?

- Éduquer la haute direction quant aux raisons pour lesquelles les RH doivent être consultées avant qu'une décision soit prise ; ou
- Éduquer vos collègues quant aux raisons pour lesquelles la gestion du changement est la responsabilité de tous (et non uniquement celle des RH) ; ou bien...
- Avoir ces discussions simultanément, sans que personne ne s'aperçoive que vous essayez de l'éduquer.

Seulement voilà, il n'est même pas 9 heures, et vous êtes épuisé. Plus qu'épuisé – vous êtes complètement vidé. Les deux dernières années ont été marquées par de nombreux changements et, pour les RH en particulier, cela implique de parvenir à un équilibre dans une « nouvelle normalité » en constante évolution, sans guide, feuille de route ni pratiques exemplaires.

En tant que professionnel des RH, il est statistiquement peu probable que vous preniez soin de vous mentalement ou physiquement. Vos journées sont-elles de plus en plus chargées? Avez-vous tendance à ne pas prendre de pause et à oublier de vous étirer? Vous réveillez-vous la nuit en vous demandant qui sont les RH pour les RH? Reconnaissez-vous, vous-même, que vous êtes épuisé? Vous demandez-vous comment vous allez diriger efficacement le changement pour votre organisation et vous y adapter dans la nouvelle normalité?



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right. To do so can contribute to change fatigue, which continues the cycle of exhaustion. Sometimes the status quo is the best way to manage change while keeping things moving forward.

### SETTING BOUNDARIES VS. GIVING IN

When you're burned out, you can feel emotionally and mentally distant. This can turn into feelings of negativity or cynicism towards work, which may make you feel like your efforts don't matter, that your skills aren't good enough, or that your company doesn't care about you. It is at these points, more than ever, that you must be clear about your boundaries with yourself and with others.

**Realistically identify what you can and cannot do**, without compromising your personal and professional values. Ask for help, and delegate work to others if necessary. Don't back down or away from an important conversation you feel strongly about. You can't effectively navigate change if you don't take a step back to identify what will make the biggest impact(s). During these times, it's more important than ever to manage your energy tank. You can't win them all, but being aware of your boundaries will help ensure that you don't give up.

### GOOD ENOUGH VS. EXCEPTIONAL

When you're burned out, you are likely not producing exceptional work. If you are producing exceptional work, it is likely not at the rate you are used to. Either scenario is challenging for HR professionals to accept.


**Choose to remain authentic** to your capabilities, whatever your pace. Sometimes "good enough" is good enough. Recognizing this through times of change can have much more of a positive impact on you and your organization than you may realize.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

As a leader, you may feel like you are bearing the weight of the organization on your shoulders. You are the coach, the teacher, the model, the moral compass, and the scapegoat. You are managing and supporting change in an environment that likely doesn't

Sometimes "good enough" is good enough. Recognizing this through times of change can have much more of a positive impact on you and your organization than you may realize.

understand or appreciate the impact that HR can bring.

When navigating change, context matters, and you are part of that equation. Remember that if you aren't feeling innovative, you have your knowledge to rely on. When you feel like giving up, it's time to reassess your boundaries. If you aren't feeling exceptional, you are good enough. Use the principles of change management so your "as is" is to put yourself first. Otherwise, your "to be" is a statistic: another talented HR professional leaving the field...or workforce. 

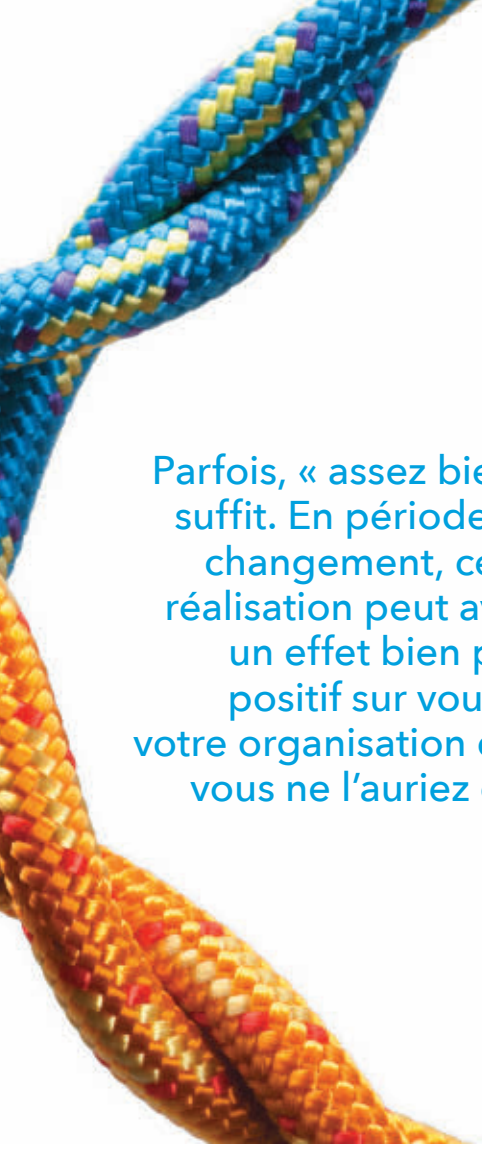


Rosalynn Alessi is an HR leader who is passionate about people, community and elevating the HR profession. A generalist with experience in all functional areas of HR, she focuses on motivating and empowering teams to

reach their full potential. An advocate of life-long learning she has her certificate in Applied HR, her MBA, and holds her CPHR designation through the province of New Brunswick. Rosalynn has been an active volunteer with CPHRNB since 2016, and serves her community thorough her work on boards and committees throughout Fredericton.



Karla Pooley is the Manager of Talent and Development for Alcool NB Liquor. She brings nearly 15 years experience in HR, with a focus on domestic and international recruitment, talent management, and workforce planning. Karla holds a degree in International Relations from Mount Allison University and a certificate in Leadership Development from eCornell.



Parfois, « assez bien » suffit. En période de changement, cette réalisation peut avoir un effet bien plus positif sur vous et votre organisation que vous ne l'auriez cru.

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### LA FIABILITÉ AVANT L'INNOVATION

L'innovation exige de la passion, des perspectives diverses et un désir de générer des idées et d'envisager de nouvelles possibilités. Lorsque vous êtes épuisé, les tâches habituelles accaparent toute votre énergie, et il est presque impossible de trouver des domaines d'amélioration et d'y entreprendre quoi que ce soit.

**Fiez-vous à ce que vous savez fonctionner.** N'ayez pas peur de revenir à l'essentiel. Demandez-vous si le statu quo est acceptable et encouragez les autres à faire de même. Ils sont probablement épuisés, eux aussi. L'innovation ne doit pas être forcée ni acceptée lorsque les circonstances n'y sont pas propices. Cela risque de contribuer à une certaine lassitude face au changement, qui alimente le cycle de l'épuisement. Le statu quo représente parfois le meilleur moyen de gérer le changement tout en faisant avancer les choses.

### FIXER DES LIMITES OU CÉDER

Lorsque vous êtes épuisé, vous pouvez vous sentir « détaché » mentalement et sur le plan émotionnel. Il risque d'en résulter un sentiment de négativité ou de cynisme à l'égard du travail, qui peut vous donner l'impression que vos efforts ne comptent pas, que vos compétences ne sont pas suffisantes ou que votre entreprise ne se soucie pas de vous. C'est à ce moment-là, plus que jamais, que vous devez établir clairement vos limites, vis-à-vis de vous-même et des autres.

**Déterminez de façon réaliste ce que vous pouvez et ne pouvez pas faire**, sans compromettre vos valeurs personnelles et professionnelles. Demandez de l'aide, et déléguez si nécessaire. S'il vous faut avoir une conversation importante qui vous tient à cœur, allez-y franchement. Vous ne pouvez gérer efficacement le changement sans prendre de recul pour évaluer ce qui s'avérera le plus efficace. À l'heure actuelle, il est plus important que jamais de gérer vos réserves d'énergie. Vous ne pouvez réussir à tout coup, mais en étant conscient de vos limites, vous parviendrez au moins à ne pas abandonner.

### ASSEZ BON OU EXCEPTIONNEL?

Lorsque vous êtes épuisé, il vous est probablement difficile d'accomplir un travail exceptionnel. Si vous y arrivez, ce n'est probablement pas au rythme auquel vous êtes habitué. Les deux scénarios sont difficiles à accepter pour les professionnels des RH.

**Choisissez de respecter vos capacités**, quel que soit votre rythme. Parfois, « assez bien » suffit. En période de changement, cette réalisation peut avoir un effet bien plus positif sur vous et votre organisation que vous ne l'auriez cru.

### DERNIÈRES RÉFLEXIONS

En tant que cadre, vous avez peut-être l'impression de porter le poids de l'organisation sur vos épaules. Vous êtes l'entraîneur, l'enseignant, le modèle, la référence morale et le bouc émissaire. Vous gérez et soutenez le changement dans un environnement qui ne comprend probablement pas l'effet que peuvent avoir les RH.

Lorsqu'il est question de changement, le contexte est important, et vous faites partie de cette équation. Rappelez-vous que si vous ne vous sentez pas en mesure d'innover, vous pouvez compter sur vos connaissances. Lorsque vous avez envie d'abandonner, il est temps de réévaluer vos limites. Si vous ne vous sentez pas exceptionnel, vous n'en demeurez pas moins suffisamment bon. Utilisez les principes de la gestion du changement pour gérer la situation actuelle sans pour autant vous oublier, sans quoi vous risquez de n'être bientôt plus qu'une statistique : un autre professionnel des RH talentueux qui quitte le domaine...ou le marché du travail. ■



Rosalynn Alessi est une directrice des RH qui se passionne pour les personnes, la communauté et

la valorisation des RH en tant que profession. Généraliste, elle possède de l'expérience dans tous les domaines fonctionnels des RH et se consacre essentiellement à la motivation et à l'autonomisation des équipes, pour leur permettre d'atteindre leur plein potentiel. Fervente partisane de l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie, elle est titulaire d'un certificat en RH appliquées et d'une MBA et détient son titre de CRHA dans la province du Nouveau-Brunswick. Rosalynn est bénévole active auprès de CRHANB depuis 2016 et sert sa communauté dans le cadre de son travail au sein de différents conseils d'administration et comités à Fredericton.



Karla Pooley est gestionnaire des talents et du perfectionnement pour Alcool NB Liquor. Elle cumule près de

15 ans d'expérience dans les RH, particulièrement dans le recrutement national et international, la gestion des talents et la planification de la main-d'œuvre. Karla est titulaire d'un diplôme en relations internationales de l'Université Mount Allison et d'un certificat en développement du leadership de Cornell.



# Beyond Popular Belief: What Works in Organizational Change

*By Dr. Jeroen Stouten and Dr. Denise M. Rousseau*



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## ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE IS CHALLENGING

for both change participants and organizers alike. As organizers of change, managers and HR professionals don't just need to promote it, they must cope with its consequences – for themselves and their interpersonal relationships. Our review of the change literature<sup>1</sup> identified 10 practices shown to promote a successful change process.

**Diagnosis.** A good diagnosis requires a process. It's the key step to figuring out whether change is needed and what kind of change that should be. What outcomes do we need? Why are we currently falling short? Clearly identifying the problem(s) we are trying to solve builds a case for change from the perspectives of its many stakeholders and helps gain buy in. Most important, it helps us solve the right problem! Treating diagnosis as a process of inquiry and analysis helps various stakeholders develop a mutual understanding of the need for change and the solutions to be taken. Complementing stakeholder beliefs and insights with organizational metrics brings together multiple sources of evidence that bring credibility to the change process and its organizers. For example, a company introduced the "best practice" of self-managing teams and reduced its hierarchical levels. No particular problems were targeted, except to follow what other firms were doing. The frustrating results that followed stemmed from adopting a solution without identifying a need or problem.

**Assess change readiness.** Readiness has a past and a present. Successful change is closely connected to how stakeholders have experienced change in the past. Positive and constructive, or demanding and frustrating? Change history colors how current changes will be viewed. What frames of reference do our change participants have and how do we overcome a negative change history or reinforce a positive one? The present demands that change participants face also affect readiness. High job stress and workload limit their bandwidth for new things – unless we take steps to reduce these stressors first. Readiness can involve early work in the change process to put the new change on a positive footing, showing care and concern for employees that might have been missing before, and rolling out changes in a fashion that expands bandwidth and reduces job stress, like co-designing implementation to make it easier for employees to engage.

**Choosing evidence-based interventions.** Knowing what change results are needed is one thing, finding fitting solutions is another and requires its own process. For example, a firm may identify the need to better support employees, but how best to do so is another matter. To determine

appropriate interventions, information from within the company can be gathered to tap member experience and insights. Identifying research findings that point to feasible solutions for our problem can point to evidence-based interventions. Vetting solutions with trusted employees and knowledgeable others helps shape up their content, delivery, and ease implementation. A clear intervention plan allows creating a designated time window for new training and practice. Multiple change interventions that synergistically reinforce each other can then better align with strategic objectives to help employees make sense of the change. In our example above, change organizers didn't take time to gather facts regarding the change, but immediately began implementation.

**Leadership Capabilities.** Change leaders themselves need the ability and motivation to effectively manage the change. They must be prepared to respond to the consequences of the change for their own job or department. Building change competence is essential – don't assume managers have it. The empirical and case literature on successful change shows the value of training change leaders to facilitate the change process. In our example, leadership capability was assumed, even though many managers faced radically redesigned jobs where they became coaches not bosses.

**Vision.** A change vision expresses a common goal and compelling future to be realized through the change process. Using multiple channels from all hands meetings and one-on-one conversations to mixed media helps communicate clearly and transparently. Communicating the vision means helping each audience understand what the change means for them. Effective vision communication uses (1) repetition and (2) quality evidence to convey its logic for reaching change goals. A sudden pause or prolonged silence in change communication can trigger uncertainty and undermine confidence and trust. Our review also makes clear that while some popular change models advocate creating a sense of urgency, research does not support this practice.

**Social networks.** Social networks and interpersonal ties represent the formal and informal web of relationships within a team or department. Research shows that change participants are powerfully influenced by their social networks. Communicating to intact networks, like talking to physicians or scientists as a group, reinforces shared understanding.

**Enabling processes.** Several enabling processes help motivate employees throughout all phases of organizational change.

**Goal setting** promotes attention to clear attainable goals that move change forward. In complex change, it can help to sequence goals: setting learning goals first to help participants develop skills and then performance goals to target results. Goal setting also can be used as a basis to monitor the progress made in the change process including whether levels of participation, skills, and change-related activities are increasing.

**Learning** allows for employees and managers to develop the necessary competencies change requires. Typically change initiatives involve new understandings, skills, and behaviors. Allowing employees to make mistakes in a psychologically safe environment, to voice concerns and surface problems within the change all facilitate learning. Most certainly, even the best designed change plan has its gaps and disconnects. Supporting participants to identify such problems and encourage their participation in resolving them leads to the learning and local adjustments essential to move the change forward. In our example, supporting managers and teams to develop change skills and behaviors aid both the transition and effective functioning of the newly-developed self-managing teams.

**Transitional structures** are temporary arrangements like task forces that help oversee the change and special projects, practices, or trials that can be used to design or modify the change as needed. Organizations can have multiple transitional structures at the same time, seeking to reach the entire organization and build knowledge and change capability at all levels.

**Micro processes and experimentation** help make local adjustments needed for effective implementation. These small tests and trials are sandboxes, letting local units try small changes for themselves, learning what works and what should be adjusted. These micro processes let local units take ownership of the change and adapt it to their purposes. In contrast to popular models which prescribe short-term wins, our review highlights the notion of "small wins," where change recipients, often at lower levels in the organization, make improvements that inform them about the change's potential and provide proof of concept with respect to possible benefits. The company in our example transitioned the entire organization including multiple satellite offices in different locations without supporting local experimentation and testing, leading to a one-size fits all approach that ultimately failed to create sustained change.

**Monitoring** to keep a close eye on whether the change initiatives result in the desired outcomes. These could be objective metrics or process-related indicators regarding uptake of change practices, changes in skill levels or change commitment. This assessment helps detect locales where critical change resources are missing or when there is insufficient local management support for the change.

**Routinization** integrates the change into company processes, systems and HR practices. It embeds the change into the organization, allowing its gains to be captured while keeping the change from unraveling. Research suggests that routinization need not be static and should be tweaked, refined and adjusted as learning progresses and consequences are known. Routinization in our example required further integrating self-managing teams into the systems of the organization through HR processes such as recruitment and performance appraisal. It calls for sustained practice and training in the development and guidance of self-managing teams.

*Continued on page 24*

# The Importance of a People-Centred Approach to Leading Workplace Change

By Anna Marenick

**IT IS NOT AN EXAGGERATION TO SAY** that these are turbulent times. Fundamental changes to ways in which people think, work, and live are happening everywhere. No matter personal circumstances, the impacts of climate change, political unrest, and the evolving COVID-19 pandemic (to name but a few!) are felt everywhere to some degree.

There is also an unprecedented change taking place at work. No matter the industry, organizations are dealing with change at a scale and pace that has not existed before. Technology. Remote and hybrid work. Workplace mental health. The long overdue reckoning with systemic barriers and unconscious bias. The list goes on and on.

There has never been more need for HR professionals to help organizations lean in harder to support employees through change. The recognition that strategic and focused change management is important for organizations is a relatively new one – and unfortunately, every new change carries the failures of the past changes that came before it. Most organizations have their fair share of initiatives that were not implemented as planned. Poorly executed change can lead to frustration and disillusionment. Whether the costs of poorly managed change come through apathy and lowered productivity, higher levels of turnover, or both, HR professionals

are a critical resource to help both employees and employers navigate the relentless pace of change.

Organizations do not change. It is only people who change – and who likes being forced to change? If leaders want to help employees build change resiliency, and help them through the uncertainty that comes from the myriad ways all facets of work are changing, we need to take a people-centric approach.

Here are a few things leaders can do to help lead organizations successfully through change:



## **1 REMEMBER CHANGE COMMUNICATION INVOLVES LOGIC AND EMOTION**

Change is an intensely emotional process. Some employees cannot identify any issues with the current state, so the thought of change can strike fear into the heart of employees who have done something the same way for many years. For others, perhaps it is a concern that their level of productivity may decrease, and they could lose their job as a result. If leaders combat the emotion of change with an argument based in logic or command and control posturing, the result is more (and likely more intense) resistance. Most employees fear a loss of control, either real or perceived. Give people as much time as you can to work through the emotional reaction that comes from any kind of change. Even positive changes garner emotional responses. As an HR professional, the opportunity exists to support leaders to be more comfortable with the emotion that will invariably come from change. The more that reality is ignored, the longer implementation will take.

## **2 COMMUNICATE – FREQUENTLY AND CONSISTENTLY**

As the pace of change accelerates, communication efforts must accelerate as well. When it comes to change, there is no such thing as too much communication. When communication efforts go silent, employees will often make assumptions about what might be happening behind closed doors. It is important to build a communications plan using as many communications channels as possible; sending an email simply will not do. If employees have not been given information in a timely way, suspicion arises. The communications challenge has then been made harder because the organization is not only trying to get accurate information out to the workforce but is also now combatting the rumour mill. It may not be enough to communicate only when you have something to say. Employees will trust you when they feel you are sharing as much as you can. Do not let perfect be

the enemy of the good when it comes to change communication; good may be good enough!

## **3 WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME (WIIFM)**

A common mistake is for leaders to focus most of the communications efforts on the benefits of change to the organization. However, as was noted earlier, organizations don't change – people do. Within any one change, employees can be impacted in very different ways. Messages focused on change at a systems level do not get to the root of what employees want to know. Employees want leaders to be very granular about what the changes will specifically mean for them and the way they do their work every day. Even if employees are dissatisfied with the current state, it is still familiar, and changing daily routines and practices takes time. Painting the picture that includes the WIIFMs helps employees visualize the organization's desired future state, as well as their own.

## **4 CHANGE IS A TEAM SPORT**

Front line leaders play an incredibly important role when leading change initiatives. They are the leaders best equipped to know which of their staff will resist or embrace changes and can help ensure that the implementation plan is sufficiently tailored to the needs of their team. They should be able to understand the high-level needs of the organization and link that to the WIIFMs that will resonate with their teams. Engaging front-line managers early is critical – they need time to process the change themselves before they can effectively lead change. When organizations ask front-line leaders to simultaneously process the change as an employee and as a leader, successful implementation can be put at risk.

## **5 CELEBRATE ALL ALONG THE WAY**

Organizations do not celebrate small wins nearly often enough. When celebrations do occur, they are often large, well organized, and sometimes feel contrived. When it comes to navigating change, small, frequent celebrations

help build (and sustain) momentum. These can come in many forms. It could be as simple as the recognition of a milestone met; celebrating an employee who was resistant and is now a champion of the change; an email from a Senior Leader congratulating a staff member for doing something in support of the change. Some changes are the product of many years of work and a lot of people working thanklessly behind the scenes. The more that work is celebrated the more staff begin to trust the people-centric approach taken to navigate change.

## **6 "CHANGE RESILIENCY" IS AN ORGANIZATIONAL COMPETENCY**

The current pace of change is not likely to slow down at any point in the future. Change resilience as a competency is becoming more and more critical to ensure organizations remain competitive and can compete for talent. Leaders cannot help staff "get through" current changes until that day when everything goes back to normal; this is our new normal. For employees to be encouraged by that reality, ensuring changes are well managed is now becoming an expectation of the way work is done. Change fatigue sets in when employees are part of poorly managed changes, not simply because of the changes themselves. How change is led is as important as the change itself, and ensuring organizational systems are set up to improve change resiliency among all employees is a critical effort.

## **7 CELEBRATE AT THE POINT OF BENEFITS REALIZATION, NOT "GO LIVE"**

While Project Management and Change Management are interconnected disciplines, change management has a different cadence. A critical mistake leaders make when leading change is declaring success at the time of "go-live." A successful change is measured when employees are working using the new processes and systems as seamlessly as they were the old – or, when the benefits of the business case are realized. Change



implementation will never happen perfectly; leaders must be prepared for the adjustment all staff will have when the proposed changes become real. There may be gaps in ability or knowledge that need to be addressed. In some cases, employees will make creative workarounds to go back to the old way of doing things. This is normal, and planning for it in advance helps the organization realize its return on investment faster as well as helps employees feel less uncertain about this new state. Sadly, post-implementation support is often neglected during a change. Ensuring employees feel supported through this transition state is critical to meet organization – and employee – objectives.

## 8 EXAMINE THE ENTERPRISE, NOT JUST THE PROJECT

As the pace of change accelerates, and the sheer number of improvement initiatives increases, taking an enterprise view of change is becoming increasingly important. Without a holistic

view, it is easy to miss the changes that are happening in the workplace. Sometimes, the changes that are of most concern to frontline staff are not the same ones leaders spend their time thinking about. Understanding the benefits of one change can be challenging enough, but in today's world, change is all around us, not just in the office. The compound effect of the changes each employee experiences can be the very thing that risks successful changes – even if each change is positive. Leaders need to pay attention to the full scope of change initiatives to ensure staff are able to absorb the changes coming their way. Managing projects in discrete silos misses opportunities to make improvements at the systems level, and also misses opportunities to communicate to employees about how the changes themselves impact their work.

If there has ever been a moment for HR leaders to humanize work, normalize change, and ensure an employee-centric

view to the way change is led in the workplace, it is now.



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*Services with Nova Scotia Health. Prior to her time at NSH, Anna has experience working in both private and public sectors in a variety of strategic roles. She has also taught Strategic Communications at the Nova Scotia Community College and has taught Strategic Human Resources Management in the SMU MBA program. She sits on the Boards of Directors of Immigrant Services Association of NS, Saint Mary's University, and Alice House She also co-chairs the Nova Scotia Study tour for the 2022 Governor General's Canadian Leadership Conference. Anna holds a Bachelor of Arts from St. Francis Xavier University and an MBA from Saint Mary's University.*



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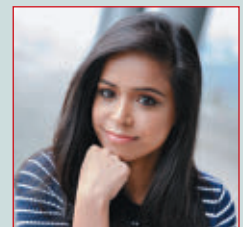
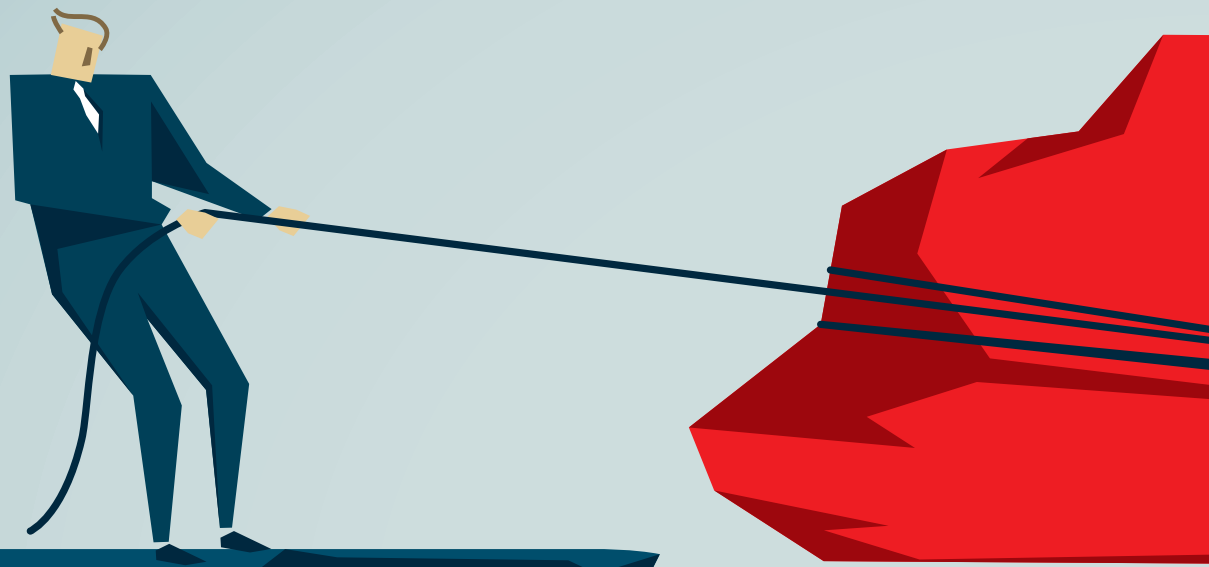
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# People, The Key to Successful Change

By Nancy Painter



"If you recognize a gap and feel it needs to change, be bold. HR departments play defence most of the time, but for change management, we need to take the lead, go on offense and fight for it."

—Aman Malhi, CPHR

**BENJAMIN FRANKLIN FAMOUSLY** said, "...in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."

Today, we'd add change to that list.

Every modern organization faces some degree of change, and sometimes has an entire department devoted to managing it. Recent history shows that organizations that don't adapt to change often don't survive.

Yet, experts estimate anywhere from 50 to 70 per cent of change initiatives ultimately fail. However, increasingly, people are identifying and isolating what makes change successful.

From 2012 to 2014, Eduarda Hodgins served as the director of organization development and change management at the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC). Today she's director, people, culture and performance at Tapestry, a division of Concert Properties Ltd.

While at ICBC, she led, "a change that turned the organization upside down, sideways and backwards," she said. The corporation introduced new software that had more than 100 integration points, changed long-established processes, protocols, jobs, responsibilities and organizational hierarchies, and affected 5,000 employees as well as external groups.

"It changed the organization in a profound way. It went beyond a system change. It changed how we interacted with customers, each other, partners and suppliers, and how we changed our service model. It was extraordinarily difficult to accomplish it without significant interruption to our customers and the ongoing business."

Hodgins' background as a communications professional prepared her well, she said. "It's all about enabling the people side – the human side of change. We were constantly looking at groups' different characteristics and needs to find out how we could best communicate with each of those audiences."

"Change is often to inform or change an opinion – without calling it change management, we've been doing it for years. I was fortunate that this experience gave me the opportunity to learn and formalize my methodology."

#### **PLANNING EFFECTIVE CHANGE**

Hodgins learned that there are common elements required to make change successful, whether small or



"Success is inextricably linked with the effectiveness of your leadership and their understanding of their critical role in change."

**–Eduarda Hodgins**

transformative. “You can’t shortcut these things,” she warned, listing:

- Determining and understanding the case for change – why is your organization doing it?
- Defining who your various stakeholders are and how they’ll be impacted by the change.
- Planning how to prepare your stakeholders, using different avenues to ensure messaging gets to them.
- Cultivating critical leadership support.
- Effectively managing the change as it’s occurring and after it’s implemented.

“Regardless of its size, it’s a process,” she said, “and any change I’ve led, I’ve approached the same way, considering the same fundamental elements.”

### **HR’S ROLE IN IMPLEMENTING CHANGE**

“Good change management is all about the people side of change,” Hodgins added.

Aman Malhi, currently director, people and culture, at The Flow Corporation in Kelowna, led a significant cultural change at a previous employer, a long-established company with more than 200 employees in three locations in Canada.

“There was a traditional top-down culture and decision-making process, which was a mismatch with who we were hiring – mostly millennials. It seemed ineffective to them. They also couldn’t align with existing strict policies, for example, that everyone had to work set hours, in the office.

“We needed to change how we recognized our top performers. Our bonus plan was very outdated; it only measured corporate performance, not an individual’s, and people felt they had no control over the bonus they were making. We also didn’t have an RRSP program or any other measures to help employees with saving.”

The HR department conducted research and heard what employees needed in exit interviews, employee surveys and even in recruiting interviews. “The biggest thing was recognizing the gap, creating awareness of what was missing and why we needed to make changes,” Malhi said.

“In my experience, members of the C-suite are very much focused on their specific areas of expertise. Recognizing the gap between being a decent place to work and being an amazing place to work is entirely on the HR team.”

### **ONGOING RESEARCH A BASIS FOR SUCCESS**

HR should be able to recognize employee needs because it has a responsibility to monitor how things are going all the time, not just during change, Malhi added. “Lots of HR teams rely heavily on employee engagement surveys and more structured ways of getting feedback, but connecting with people outside those structured ways is so important.

“Every two weeks, I hold a coffee session – very informal, low-key, in a lunch room, where I bring coffee and treats – where people are welcome to come in and talk about what they want to talk about. What I’ve learned is invaluable. Employees ask questions about what the company is doing and why, and I can build informal teams and bonds. Getting creative about how you collect feedback from your employees is what HR should be doing all the time.”

The first step before doing anything is understanding why you’re doing it and what the need is, Malhi said.

“You need to really understand who your stakeholders will be, what you’re trying to accomplish and for whom. Then, put together a plan based on the vision, how you’re going to communicate it, how you’ll work through organizational politics. And have a contingency plan, because there will always be some things that don’t go as you expected.

“For most change management processes, you only get one chance. You don’t have to get it 100 per cent right, but if you get it wrong in a massive way, people get a negative mindset that is very hard to change. You always have to remember you’re not going to get multiple chances.”

### **CHANGING ORGANIZATIONAL PROCEDURES**

Even what may seem like common-sense procedural change needs to

be managed. Jaiveer Singh Pahwa is a recruitment consultant who spearheaded major changes in Fraser Health Authority (FHA) recruitment practices.

“We were doing it mainly for hard-to-fill positions,” he said. “We need a lot of physicians and nurses, and we don’t have the depth of talent in Canada to fill all the vacancies.”

By changing tactics, FHA reduced its average time to fill a position from 200 days to 50-to-60 days.

“We have put more focus on using LinkedIn, Indeed, Facebook and Instagram,” Pahwa explained.

“Instead of just posting a job, it’s best to have testimonials from the same department, telling potential applicants why someone should join FHA and that team – so they can clearly see the vision and think, ‘I want to be like that person.’ Videos are our preferred tool. People connect more, get more relevant information and retain it better.”

Once results became evident, reaction was positive, he added. “Team management loves it. Other departments at other hospitals are adopting the same practices. We never had a position for marketing recruitment, but now we have created one.”

There was definitely pushback when he first suggested the new ways to approach recruiting. As is often the case, the workforce was reluctant to change, wanting to do the same screening and posting they had always done.

“We had to explain that now we’re living in a digital world and we have to get out there or other health authorities will take our talent,” he said.

Initially, departments were uncomfortable with the less formal language and increased emphasis on the organizational reputation. There wasn’t much response to requests to current employees for testimonials to use in recruiting; people didn’t want to put themselves forward.

“We had to convince them sometimes, say this is good for your teams and will help fill the positions. We made up a dummy ad to show them what we envisioned.”

Ultimately, results overcame resistance.

## CHANGE FROM THE GROUND UP

Sometimes change isn't just altering existing processes or culture, it's creating them. Currently a human resources consultant at Vancity Credit Union, Jasdeep Dhaliwal was heavily involved as an HR advisor at the British Columbia Liquor Distribution Branch in the establishment of its cannabis division.

"The biggest difference between the LDB's existing business was that it was mature, in operation for 98 years, while ours was brand new," she explained. "Working for a start-up, which is how the cannabis operations division operated, was far different than working for an established organization such as the liquor side."

They also faced a tight government-set timeline – nine months from appointing the LDB as the official cannabis distributor in B.C. until it had to be selling product. Other factors beyond their control included individual policies that varied between municipalities, and competing against the black market selling similar products.

They began by looking at the LDB's existing purpose, vision and service model, and deciding what to keep and what to change.

"There was a lot of push and pull at the leadership team level," Dhaliwal said. "The executive director of the cannabis division had to explain why we wanted to do things differently, and how that would be better for this line of business. We wanted to leverage and align the LDB's established values for cannabis operations."

"We had the opportunity to plant the seeds of the culture we were wanting to cultivate for cannabis operations," she added. "It was imperative that we did this from the beginning."

Within that challenge, flexibility was key and hiring the right people was paramount. "Individual responsibilities changed more frequently. Individuals were required to find their own solutions to problems presented to them from resources provided."

"Individuals were not managed closely, and it was apparent that everyone hired was trusted to take ownership of the scope, work cohesively with team members and deliver results.

Everyone who was hired needed to be really open in sharing information, not assuming that people were going to come to them with the information they required."

The result was a dedicated, highly functioning program that was clear on what needed to be done, Dhaliwal said.

"The team consisted of passionate, deeply committed, hardworking individuals. Empowering them and expressing gratitude went a long way. We had to embrace flexibility, adapt to ever-changing circumstances, take on more when needed, and be careful not to get stuck in old ways.

"In short, we looked for people who were curious, deeply passionate about the cannabis space, whether the social responsibility aspect or the cannabis product, and individuals who were nimble, flexible and digital thinkers in an ever-changing environment."



**"Recognize that there's always a difference between important and urgent. Change must have organizational resources attached to it, and you need to know the project timelines so you don't waste resources."**

**—Jaiveer Singh Pahwa, CPHR**

## LEADERSHIP BUY-IN IS KEY

For any change initiative to be effective, leadership support is vital as employees notice what leadership says, does and supports.

"Success is inextricably linked with the effectiveness of your leadership

and their understanding of their critical role in change," Hodgins said, adding that leaders are one of the most critical factors in the success of any change initiative, because of their important role in terms of what they express, model and reinforce.

"I've seen situations where leaders weren't going to show up the way they needed to, like planning their vacation for go-live date. Employees need to know leaders will be on the ground to support the change, will be first in line for training, have their backs and understand the importance of the change."

Malhi agreed. "You need to bring the executive team, C-suite and board into the loop and get their buy-in," she said. "Talk about the return on investment, make sure what you're working on is actually aligned with the organization's vision and that it's what employees need."

She also found it useful to "compare what we were trying to accomplish and wanted to change with our competition with similar revenue, head count and industry. We took that information to the employees as well, sharing it at townhall meetings and in the CEO's monthly communication."

## BUILD A TEAM

While the scope of change initiatives varies widely, successful implementation requires a team that encompasses more than leadership and human resources.

"Change management has always been partnered with HR and communications, not trying to duplicate their abilities but to use the talent that already knows their role in the organization," Hodgins said. "Leverage the talent that already exists. If a change will impact union issues, draw in the employee relations team to leverage their experience and talent to work through it."

Pahwa echoed that advice. "Look at your organization's resources, what you have in hand. Recognize that there's always a difference between important and urgent. Change must have organizational resources attached to it, and you need to know the project timelines so you don't waste resources."

FHA's changes required co-operation between leadership, communications, people strategies, clinical hiring managers and the employees who were asked for testimonials. "We created a dummy testimonial to show them, so they could see what we were trying to do."

Informal team members can also play an important role.

"The one thing that I realized made a huge difference was tapping the power of hidden influencers," Malhi said.

"For example, there was a gentleman on the IT team who was respected, a long-time employee who was sort of like Yoda for everyone. I connected with him first and got his buy-in and talked about what we were trying to achieve and how we were going to do it. We leaned on him quite a bit to create momentum, vision and get people online.

"We did the same with every department. It doesn't even have to be someone from within that team; if it's someone within operations, let's say, that IT has been working closely with for years, people respect and have faith in that person. It's really recognizing who these people are and leaning on them as much as you can."

Change can be challenging, so don't be afraid to ask for help. "Most HR leaders understand that change is complex and will get advice and counsel on how to put together a change plan, particularly if it's a large people-centric change with large cultural impact," Hodgins said.

"Sometimes you need to augment your expertise, and bring in resources and capacity to ensure the change is successful. But don't put outsiders in charge, because you know your organization. Listen to your own instincts and trust your understanding of your organization."

## PLAN TO COMMUNICATE

Successful change relies on ample communication to mitigate natural fear of change and any misinformation that might be floating around, as well as to create employee buy-in.

"It needs to be a two-way process," Malhi said. "Get creative about how you're sharing information. I'm a



**"Sharing information at all levels of the organization led to a positive culture. By decentralizing management, we enabled employees to feel more comfortable and to develop strong relationships with team members as well as customers."**

**—Jasdeep Dhaliwal, CPHR**

huge advocate of transparent communication, I believe in its power. Tell employees, 'These are our challenges,' and they'll step up to the challenge and help the company work through them. You need to have difficult conversations, regardless of what the topic is."

Dhaliwal agreed that communication is key. "Sharing information at all levels of the organization led to a positive culture. By decentralizing management, we enabled employees to feel more comfortable and to develop strong relationships with team members as well as customers."

It needs to extend beyond practical, organizational information, she added.

"Employee recognition, showing people that they mattered, and recognizing employee performance or team achievements – by understanding the importance of showing employees that they were appreciated, we created a culture of employee recognition, through gestures as small as a card and employee personalized emails. This went a long way in creating employee loyalty and team engagement."

Continuous communication throughout the change can ensure success, in Malhi's experience.

"You have to go back to those influencers and do a pulse check with them to make sure – what is the feedback you're getting that people might not be comfortable sharing with our team or the executive? That kept us on our toes and kept us revisiting our progress," Malhi said.

"Measure the impact and what you're able to accomplish. Never get comfortable with the status quo. Make sure

changes are still relevant and tweak or edit your plan if needed."

## NOT FOR THE FAINT OF HEART

"By default, people are scared of change, nobody wants to take the first step even if they know change needs to happen," Malhi said. "If you recognize a gap and feel it needs to change, be bold. HR departments play defence most of the time, but for change management, we need to take the lead, go on offense and fight for it.

"There have been moments in my career when I brought things forward once, twice, three times and nobody paid attention, and then six weeks down the line, what I was trying to highlight happened. You need to be bold and confident, and take a stand if you believe in what you're trying to accomplish."

Leading change management takes a lot of courage, Hodgins added. "It can be very difficult to be in a position of having to articulate where something may not be going the way a leader wants, or that you have an issue that you might need to stop and address when there's tremendous pressure to move the project forward.

"Be willing to have an unpopular view; accept that you won't always be popular. You have to be ready to speak truth to power when others may not want to hear it.

"Great leaders give you the space to speak your truth." ■

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*Nancy Painter is an award-winning writer and editor from Surrey, B.C., and a member of the Canadian Freelance Guild.*

# NEIL COOMBS, CPHR

## DIRECTOR OF HR, FONEMED & PARTNER, HIGHER TALENT

**FAVOURITE YEAR? WHY?**

2022 has been great professionally and I'm excited to get back to some normalcy. I have missed being able to travel with my family outside the province, our last trip was 2018.

**PERSONAL MOTTO?**

I don't really have a motto. But I've always believed in the value of gratitude and treating people with respect.

**GREATEST INDULGENCE?**

I am a big hockey fan and cursed with a love of the Maple Leafs! I rarely miss a TV game and love to see games in person on occasion.

**WHO WOULD PLAY YOU IN A MOVIE?**

My 12-year-old once told me I looked like Ryan Reynolds! I'd love someone funny like Will Ferrell or Jason Sudeikis to play me too.

**WHO INSPIRES YOU?**

I am constantly inspired by the success of the entrepreneurs and HR professionals around me. I've been fortunate to learn from some really passionate business leaders.

**HOW DO YOU SPEND SPARE TIME?**

In winter, I am an active volunteer with my local minor hockey association as President and as a coach with my son's U11 team. In summer, I look forward to annual family salmon-fishing trips on the west coast of NL.

**ONE THING YOU LEARNED OVER YOUR CAREER?**

People appreciate honesty, they'll be more open to communicate with someone who is respectful and truthful with them.



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### CONCLUSION

The evidence-based practices our review identifies are not meant to be strict recipes. Instead, they are a framework to guide your organization's thinking and decision making regarding how to organize *your change*. These practices are key ingredients in effective change. Yet each ingredient may take different forms in your organization. Trying out recipes in your kitchen means tasting and testing to achieve the desired result. More than following a recipe blindly, we encourage you and your change to work to increase your understanding of these evidence-based change processes and how they work in your own setting. ■

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### SOURCE:

1. Stouten, J., Rousseau, D. M., & De Cremer, D. (2018). Successful organizational change: Integrating the management practice and scholarly literatures. *Academy of Management Annals*, 12(2), 752-788. <https://www.cebmna.org/wp-content/uploads/Stouten-et-al-2018.pdf>

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