INTENZ

Guide:
The leader's guide to a successful change process

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Change processes – get everyone onboard

Change processes in companies can be a tough job. Humans are creatures of habit, and new ways of doing things can form a barrier that ends up affecting culture, execution power and bottom line negatively.

Therefore, strategies and plans are typically made to ensure that the implementation of the new IT system, the reorganization of production or a completely different transformation process will go smoothly. Often, one question is underestimated or simply forgotten: How do we get everyone onboard?

A change process where employees do not actively contribute is not likely to succeed. The project may reach its finish line, but it is likely to take significantly longer time than planned, and probably some employees will look elsewhere for a job along the way.

Resistance is not just resistance

One of the biggest pitfalls in a change process is to underestimate and misinterpret the resistance crated by change itself. Because resistance is not just resistance, and therefore there is no quick fix in the form of one specific management style or effort that can get the change process back on track.

In this guide, we look at how you as a leader can plan and execute a successful change process that both ensures that you reach the goal and increases the probability of everybody staying onboard during the process.

Before - under - after
the phases of the change process

Before we introduce you to the model we use in change processes, we have a disclaimer:

Even though the model is divided into squares it's crucial to remember that only few things in life are static.

A change process is obviously a process, and processes are dynamic. In other words, it is utopic to think that you can start in the left corner and work your way through the model square by square and reach a predetermined finish line without making a turn or twenty along the way. People are people, and plans are plans. And both people and plans tend to change and develop with time.

The three phases shown below are developed and inspired by the German American psychologist Kurt Lewin, who was one of the first to work with a three-phase model of change: Unfreeze, Change and Freeze.

In Intenz, we have further developed the model and named the phases Unlock, Change and Relock.

Unlock	Change	Relock
Situation The organization is locked in existing methods, habits and patterns Unwillingness to change Complacency – Good enough-attitude Lack of sense of urgency	**Situation** The organization understand the change Patterns and habits are hard to break Discomfort with new methods. Prefers old methods. Uncertain about own position	**Situation** Changes are implemented but fragile The organization is predominantly pro the new situation, but old patterns do still exist
Goal – Unlock To create understanding of the changes To create desire to change To create a sense of urgency for the change To unlock locked methods, habits and patterns	**Goal – Change** Taking the first step Maintaining the initiated change Creating happiness about the change Creating a high momentum	**Goal - Relock** To relock new methods, actions and behavior To maintain sense of urgency To maintain the excitement about the new ways
Methods – Unlocking Inspire and challenge Tell WHY, WHY, WHY Involvement – especially managers Setting vision and demanding objectives Demanding new results Present evidence Planning concrete efforts	**Methods – Change** What, why, how dialogue Boiling the frog! Incremental unnoticed changes Make the first step easy Managers keep focus Close follow-up on goals and progress Training and development Make use of change agents Restructuring Celebrate successes and praise changes	**Methods – Relock** Burn bridges – ensure there is no way back Show again and again that the change is real Build the change into the systems, salary, rewards, etc. Align rewards with desired behavior Maintain education and training Close leadership follow-up Continued involvement and commitment from top management

#1

Unlock
- find the key

In the unlock phase, the starting point is that the organization is locked into the methods, habits and patterns that rules at the time. There can be a general insecurity about change, and there may also be a lack of recognition or understanding of the need for change at all.

Or in other words, there is a lack of Sense of Urgency - too few feel too little in relation to changing the situation.

The aim is therefore:
- to create an understanding of (the need for) change
- to create a desire for change
- to create sense of urgency for change
- to "unlock" the locked-in methods, habits, and patterns

How to create new behavior?
What we are really talking about is: how do we create new behavior? In Intenz, we work with a Head-Heart-Hand approach where Hand is the desired behavior that leads to the desired results, Heart is attitudes and emotions that will support the desired behavior, and Head is the knowledge, experience and information that enables individuals to perform the desired behavior.

In the unlock phase, we work with Head and Heart; before you can relate to reality, you need to know the facts and you must understand and accept the situation. Thus, it is difficult - and de facto impossible - to understand and recognize the need for change if you don't know the brutal facts.

Let's take an example
Company X has a mantra that says: "We need to work customer oriented". It sounds noble, but maybe there are far too many processes that have made the company rigid and bureaucratic, and far too many things happening without focus on the customer's needs. So, while every employee spends time and energy optimizing internal processes - which seen in isolation may easily make sense - no one considers that the customer feels no effect of all these efforts.

Therefore, there is a need for a change where internal processes and focus areas are adjusted, dumped, or turned upside down. Otherwise, the company will probably face challenges in retaining their customers.

Face the brutal facts
The above does not only have to be a challenge in relation to external customers. If you imagine an IT department in a larger company, the problem may be the same: Too much focus on their own processes can leave the rest of the organization with the experience of not being able to get the essential IT support, which at the end of the day is crucial to deliver value to customers. So, overall, the organization may end up having the opposite of customer-oriented behavior.

In this situation, you as a leader need to change the habits - and in some cases seriously shake the tree. Something must happen, and people need to realize that.

It is essential to bear in mind that when you embark on the unlock phase, you create activity. But you can't be sure of the nature of the activity you create.

#1

Some employees will be surprised and perhaps even insecure, and that's natural. After all, we are tinkering with the habits that form the framework of everyday life.

Either way, we must keep one crucial detail in mind: To ensure a sustainable change process and subsequent anchoring, it is important to verbalize that the goal is to achieve something - not to avoid something. That this change will lead to something positive rather than away from something negative. This way of thinking and communicating form the e basis of creating a positive process of change with a lasting effect.

Hey - do you have a dating profile?

One of the most decisive factors that typically has a negative influence on a change process is lack of sense of urgency. Why do we even have to change anything? What is the problem, and wouldn't it be much easier just to carry on the same way as always?

This does not necessarily mean that the organization actively oppose to the project. In many cases, people simply have not understood or cannot feel the need for something new to happen. In relation to the task ahead, you can say that they are unconsciously incompetent.

Let's try to draw a parallel to a relationship: Do you really give your partner enough attention? When everyday life is going on and dishes, laundry and parent-teacher meetings take up time, it can be difficult to see beyond the family-agenda. But maybe that changes if you find out that your wife has a dating profile?

Sometimes you must make it very clear that something must be done, and a clear understanding of the goal is just as important. When you light the fire, you must be sure there is a common vision for the employees to buy into. The aim is to create a community - the focus must not be the individual's struggle for survival, but the community's fight for a better future.

The mission - or goal - must be ambitious. It would be a waste of effort to initiate a change process that simply leads to a mediocre result, and furthermore employees must be able to motivate themselves to achieve something that they can actually imagine and that they believe in. And the goal must be worth the effort, so to speak.

Process over results

Speaking of results and efforts, remember that it's basically not about the bottom line. Or, it always is in the end, but it is the road to the result that is important, because that is what the process of change is all about. If you are "just" going to sell more, you can turn on a wide range of parameters - pricing, marketing, etc. - but if you want to create a change that changes something fundamental in the business, you must look at the change process as the primary thing and view the results as a spin-off.

It is therefore important to maintain the focus on the goal during the process - then the goal of the business will probably be achieved.

Actual results for real people

If the process train is going in a certain direction, someone must take responsibility for laying the rails for the actual efforts. Actual is a difficult word to use about an approaching process where many details are still unknown, but the essence is that you as a leader must communicate what the change process will imply for the employees - for example at department level.

Returning to the example of the increased customer focus: What will it imply for Marketing? And what about Sales - and the IT department? For some, the changes will turn everything upside down, while others will not really be affected.

Be open about these things – in many cases it will create calm in large parts of the organization, and it will save you the time spent reassuring a lot of employees who will not be affected anyway.

#1

Facts are facts

Facts are your friend. When you as a leader are going to communicate a change, you must build your argumentation on facts. Facts that explain and legitimize change, and facts that convince sceptics of the need for action.

In many cases, the resistance in an organization is based on lack of knowledge. If a process in the production site has worked well for many years, it may be hard to understand why this process now must be done in a different way. But remember that there will almost always be difference in the knowledge and understanding of the management team compared to the employees, who have no prerequisite for having this knowledge.

There is a big difference between having a gut feeling telling you that customers are starting to change behavior and having a market research and massive data to support the feeling. So, if you want people to sail in the same direction, be sure to tell them where the oars are and what direction you are headed.

Adjust and talk openly about reward systems

Typically, one of the big hurdles in a change process is the reward structures you have established. If you want to change the culture around the sales organization so that Sales and Marketing work better together with more, better, and warmer leads, there may be a serious problem in the way the sales reps are paid.

If a sales rep is rewarded for a great solo effort, nothing will urge him or her to let colleagues from Marketing into that loop. In the management team you may already have plans for a new incentive model, but when you announce it, prepare for a reaction from the sales reps revealing a lack of motivation for contributing to the change process – intuitively, it does not make sense to them. So be explicit about the new structures and avoid having to fight with a group of employees who act in a way they find obvious.

#2

Change
- kick-start the change train

Once the preparation in the Unlock phase is done, next step is "simply" to implement the change. You may find out that is there is nothing "simple" about creating change.

We admit, the Change phase is a hugely simplistic way of showing how to implement change. That's the way it is with models - but let's try to dig a bit deeper and look into how to approach the Change phase in practice.

Let's assume that the Unlock phase is on track. Your organization agrees that the change process is a good idea, and now it must be launched.

Let's say that your objective is to go from being your customers supplier into being a partner who they can ask for advice. But how do you do that? It will require a lot of footwork all the way from marketing through the sellers' dialogue to delivery, documentation, quality assurance and follow-up. And it will require new and more time-consuming structures, systems, and habits.

The employees have bought into all that. They can see the point and they are motivated to work in a new way. But it's also obvious to you that they need to see it work - that the supertanker is slowly but surely changing course - otherwise they will lose courage and quickly fall back into familiar patterns.

Patterns working as brake pads blocking the front wheel of a bike and preventing the process from moving on.

The head, heart and hands must be connected

Where the Unlock phase circled round Head and Heart (knowledge, facts, experience, attitudes, and emotions), it is now the Hand element - the behavior - that is in play. Therefore, we now have to link the rational basis with practical execution. The key is to combine the motivation created in the Unlock phase with a simple - yes, hands-on - approach to actually doing what needs to be done.

Simple is a slightly dangerous word to use because few things are basically simple (which is also why we need thorough preparation before things happen), but let's try to exemplify it with a fitness analogy.

Let's pretend that we're dealing with a heavily overweight man who weighs 200 kilos and must lose 100 kilos. In the Unlock phase, the fitness instructor work on explaining to the man why it is vital that he loses weight. This part follows the plan; the facts are so clear that the man experiences a strong, burning desire to lose weight. In short, he either loses weight or dies, so the motivation is there. But how should he do it in practice?

In theory, the fitness instructor has various tools: for example, he can ask the man to fast 3 days a week and only eat celery and drink water for the remaining 4 days. He can make a running program where the man runs 15 kilometers every day from day 1, as well as a fine box where the overweight man pays an amount if he does not lose x kilos per week.

#2

Set realistic milestones

These initiatives may work, but most likely they won't. Although facts - death waiting at the end of the next bowl of ice cream - are obvious, the barrier to change is too big, and the overweight man, all other things being equal, never reaches the goal of his change process. It is therefore important to set intermediate goals that are genuinely achievable. Even the most burning Why dies if the How is too difficult, unmanageable, or complicated.

Instead, the fitness instructor should make a plan based on how the man can be motivated to working his way towards his milestones and eventually cross the finish line. And just as it is unrealistic to turn a 200-kilo man into a fit marathon runner in a year, it may also be unrealistic to expect an organization to change an extremely poor NPS score into a top score in a very short period.

Things take time, so everyone must have peace of mind and believe that things are moving in the right direction. In this process, it is crucial that leaders as well as employees not only look at the dashboard. The focus must be shifted from result level to behavior level, and then zoom in on the "must see-behavior" which over time ensures the right level of the NPS score (or weight).

Bring joy to change

As we have mentioned several times, a well prepared and well executed process is essential for the success of change.

A good community between employees is one of the things that can bring development into a better flow. When the model talks about creating joy in change, it is meant quite literally. How can you ensure that employees have a feeling of being in the same boat and that there is always someone you can ask for advice if something becomes too unmanageable or complex?

In a low-practical way, you can consider arranging professional / social evening meetings with Q&A pizza or experience-sharing meetings, where

employees can share positive as well as negative experiences with the change process - preferably without leaders attending, so the word is free. The possibilities are many; what matters is that you as leaders show that you are aware of the fact that a change process involves a lot of emotions, that employees are allowed to "let out steam", just as you must have an actual opportunity to seek help to clear things that for some reason are difficult to overcome or understand.

Change Agents - fight the battles in the right forum

Harvard professor John Kotter has developed an 8-step model for change, where we have already talked a bit about step 1, namely creating Sense of Urgency. One of the other steps is about change teams and agents. As mentioned, it is a prerequisite for a successful change process that there is real support from the employees, who are the ones to bring change to reality.

To ensure a bottom-up dynamics, it is crucial that you as a leader get the right people on-board in the process. This applies, for example, to super-users, but there is also an element of being strategic in the selection, as it can be of enormous value to get the most leading employees – or those with the strongest opposition on to your team - that is, employees who have a certain status in the community and who may not initially be among those who are most excited about the prospect of change.

This group is important because they affect the dynamics when the leaders are not present. Therefore, it can be quite crucial to keep this group of employees close to the process and, moreover, listen sincerely to their objections - the battles you take behind the scenes, you may hope to avoid in the open where you cannot fully control them.

All this points in one direction: that you maintain a collective focus in the organization ensuring that you don't lose momentum due to conflicts and complaining.

#2

Make room for successes

Celebrating success in a workplace comes in many forms and shapes depending on the people and the habits. How do you feel about awards like Manager of the Month, a cinema ticket for the sales rep with the highest monthly closing fee, or perhaps a Happiness Manager who fires a confetti tube into the open office landscape every time a milestone is reached? Or "just" the well-known cake when there's something to celebrate?

Different preferences - the important thing is that you find a way to make successes visible without landing in a "circus". Our claim is that the effect of many of these celebrations tend to fade over time.

However, one of the things we do know works is when those who have experienced success in something share their story. Talk about the successes and let those who have done/achieved/moved something put the process into words. Success breeds success, so consider forgetting the cake and the plate on the wall and instead let the good employees inspire colleagues. And then you can have the cake afterwards.

/ N T E N Z

#3

Relock
- change must
take roots

Acknowledging the need for change, preparing the process and, finally, executing on it is not a walk in the park. On the contrary, the work is far from finished yet.

As mentioned earlier, the power of habit is strong, and although both head and hand have approved of the change process, it is not a given that the heart is in. What if things don't just run smoothly, and the new processes and the new reality seem   tiresome compared to what used to be?

In the Relock phase, it is all about ensuring that "new" ends up being "normal". Or to compare it to a vinyl record: in the Unlock phase, the pickup must be taken out of the old groove, in the Change phase it must be moved across the plate, and in Relock it must be placed in the new cut, where it will stay (until at some point a new change is needed).

Your job as a leader is to ensure that the organization acquires new habits, and that the visible behavior is not just an expression of the boss watching and following up. New behavior based solely on cognitive attention is a step in the right direction, but it is not enough - it cannot carry an ongoing change. In the long run, behavior should be rooted in culture, and not be intentional or attention related. The behavior needs to be internalized.

Burn the bridges - but look over your shoulder first

One of the methods to prevent people from falling back into the old habits is to eliminate the option. Let us return briefly to the overweight man: if the fitness instructor buys new, smart clothes and throws out the old sweatsuit, the overweight man has both an incentive to be able to squeeze into the new pants and at the same time no opportunity to get back into the old ones.

However, it is crucial to ensure that both structures and competences are completely in place before you throw out the old trousers - or the old economy- or CRM-system. If you burn the bridge before people have a real chance of navigating in the new reality, there's an overriding risk that you're going to have to deal with a huge performance dive.

The results must align with the objectives

As mentioned in the Change phase, you can (and should) highlight the results you achieve. And by results, we mean the intermediate goals supporting the narrative that you are on the right track. If the goal is to reach a given score on a parameter that measures customer satisfaction, and you reach 50%, be sure to say it out loud. It indicates to all these people who every day must try to do something different than they used to, that it's worth the effort. That there's a point to the madness. Again, it is the process towards the 100% that will ensure you getting there.

#3

Stay in charge

As a leader, you know better than anyone that there are enough tasks to address. And that's why it can be tempting to delegate as much as possible - including the responsibility of following the change process all the way.

But allow us to raise a flag: the main risk of a flat tire in the change process lies in the transition between the Change and Relock phases. It is easy to believe (or unconsciously decide to interpret) that the new habits have been internalized. The idea is captivating and allow us to get on with running and developing business and increase our earnings.

However, it is crucial that you as a leader maintain the foot on the gas pedal and that you keep the critical sense. Which engine is driving the current behavior? Is it actually a honeymoon phase multiplied by the attention given to the project by the management team? Or are these changes rooted in a real change in behavior built on the right and solid foundation?

Release the accelerator slowly, step out slowly of the backup structures you have created and revisit the process until you are sure that the change has taken roots.

Complex process
- simple principles

Change processes are here to stay. They are troublesome, time-consuming, and often in the way, but they must be implemented when companies need to not only develop but survive.

Such processes tend to become slightly academic (just the word "process" gives many people shortness of breath and causes irritation), and at Intenz we acknowledge that we contribute to this feeling when we include a tool and find inspiration and knowledge in authors such as Kurt Lewin and John Kotter.

But our goal is really the opposite: using some well-worked thoughts and a relatively simple model, we want to demonstrate that good preparation and respect for the needs of employees to be involved in the change process brings you far. It is our wish that you don't fall into the trap of wrongly putting every kind of resistance into the same box, because then you will find it difficult to succeed as a leader in a change process.

We hope this guide will help your process well on the way.