Applying intelligent change readiness to achieve better change webinar
Question and Answers
Thursday 14 July 2022

Questions	Answers
Surveys	
You've touched on the challenge of surveys. They're a bit like injections... you can only stick them to people a limited number of times before they get annoyed!! Any suggestions on how to position/engage people with surveys?	The answer to this lies partly in demonstrating action on the results. Tell people what they told you and tell them what you have done as a result. People are more likely to stay engaged and keep responding when they see that something happened as a result of previous surveys or engagement. When you see that response rates are reducing, it may be worth taking stock and deciding whether to pause or adapt your approach. (RC). The key for me is making sure there is a feedback loop demonstrating you have taken notice and you have done something, even if it's just acknowledgement for now (DU) People will engage with surveys if they are engaged with the change. If the surveys remain relevant and ask for demonstrably important responses/feedback, and the responses/feedback can be seen to be considered and acted upon, then I believe that people will remain engaged. "Surveys for surveys sake" will, however, quickly turn people off. (IP). I would also aim to shift the emphasis from just the leadership taking the actions to engaging more people in addressing what comes up...this is a great opportunity to encourage ownership and involvement at the lowest possible level (MV)

Do you think a change readiness survey might inadvertently reduce change readiness sometimes? i.e. people are already wary or averse to the change, and filling in a "management survey" might only make that wariness worse? How would you mitigate the chances of that happening?	Being open and transparent can help here. If staff hear senior managers explaining that they understand that change may be difficult and they want to better understand the risks, issues and challenges, this can mitigate the risk described. Don't just send surveys out in a vacuum - communicate first to explain why and how they will help make the change better for everyone. (RC). Having a shared vision for the change is really important so if you make sure the survey is not just sent its presented with why it's being done and what it will drive (DU). If you have successfully engaged people in the change, the right survey shouldn't impact this engagement and may even reinforce it. However, attempting to survey people who are not well engaged, or doing "surveys for surveys sake" (rather than requesting relevant responses/feedback and acting on them), will certainly reduce engagement. (IP) If regular pulse surveys are intended then the key is what happens after the first one. If we listen and then things happen, people are more likely to engage in the readiness process and in the change itself (MV)
Can you gauge change readiness more covertly rather than having people complete a survey?	Surveys should be part of an overall engagement and communication approach to change. You can also gather insights and considerations through working/focus groups or supporting managers to have conversations about change as part of regular meetings. I would ward against doing anything covertly as that will just fuel suspicion and mistrust! Your goal is to work openly, recognising the risks and challenges and agreeing how these can be overcome across the organisation. (RC). Definitely be as open and as transparent as possible, trust is key in forming relationships so avoid doing anything covertly (DU). Surveys are only one tool in the engagement toolbox, as Rebecca says. Anything too covert risks reducing engagement, by undermining trust (IP). I would also add that we're very likely to guess wrongly then all subsequent actions will be based on a wrong assumption (MV)

What level of detail around the change should you include in the survey for staff?	This will depend on how much information you are able to give - how developed is the vision and the plan for change? Create a culture of trust by being as open as possible. Help people by communicating clearly where you don't yet have all of the detail or where you need their input. Otherwise people have a tendency to speculate which can be more damaging. (RC). Depends on how much info you have at the time, do not, not communicate though even if you only know part of the story, by waiting rumour mills will start (DU). A survey should include detail relevant to the topic(s) it addresses. Given the importance of engagement, there is little point in not providing relevant information about the change, unless there are overriding business reasons not to do so. (IP)
For those orgs that really are tired of the surveys - are there other ways to collect the necessary information?	Focus groups, staff dial-ins or supporting managers to have conversations about change can be alternatives to surveys. Critical with these approaches is to find a way to capture and do something about what comes out of those conversations. (RC) Focus groups can work, or comms briefings etc. (DU). As Rebecca and Donna say, focus groups, working groups, briefings, "management by walkabout", etc. can all be used to collect information - all part of the change management toolkit. (IP)
Would you vary the individuals you collect the readiness data from - my experience is that survey-fillers are a self-selecting group?	This might depend on the size of the organisation and the departments that you want to assess change readiness within. Ideally, allowing all staff to opt to respond will give you the most representative data. Alternatively, if you are working with representative samples, being able to target your readiness assessment so that it doesn't always hit the same individuals works well. (RC). You could run it by a rep from each stakeholder group but that would dilute responses (DU). There are pros and cons! It is important to ensure that survey responses are received from a representative range of people or, if not, that the impact on the responses is understood. There are advantages in having responses from the same group, so you can track trends in the responses. Equally fresh perspectives can be useful, especially if the respondents to previous surveys may have represented a limited perspective. (IP)

Typically what is the overhead needed to collect this data? Does the return on the investment improve delivery? If so, can you quantify it?	It's difficult to quantify what you are trying to do is understand where there may be issues with a change and how to smooth the bumps, if you don't do it then you will hit more bumps the time invested in this is invaluable (DU) I agree with Donna - it is difficult to quantify, as each context is different. It is important to ensure there is balance in engagement, with enough to effectively support the change (and maintain engagement) but not so much that it represents an overhead burden and risks "survey fatigue". This should be considered in engagement planning. (IP)
How often do you collect this data and once you have it what do you do with it. How do you target the areas that need improving?	This may be subject to the context, how long you have to deliver the change, how 'controversial' the change is and what will work best in terms of capacity to manage the change readiness assessment and be able to respond to the results. It would be better to plan fewer assessments that you can deliver properly rather than lots of assessments that you are unable to act upon. In terms of targeting the areas that need improvement, remember to prioritise. You could look for key themes that come up across multiple departments, quick wins and/or consider which interventions will actually have greatest impact to enable the change outcomes to be delivered effectively (RC) For me, this needs to be kept under review. It is important to have an initial engagement plan, but be willing to tweak the approach (including how often you seek responses/feedback) as the change proceeds. It is important to be seen to consider the responses/feedback, and provide a response, and to use it to influence the change where appropriate. The responses/feedback will enable focus on the areas which need changing, and you could go back to respondents with specific questions, a focus group on specific topics, etc. (IP)

Initiating Change	
By initiating the change readiness assessment, aren't you effectively starting the change and firing the starting pistol for anxiety and other ill-prepared for consequences within the organisation?	Change readiness should be planned into the overall change programme schedule to start when there is sufficient clarity of vision, impacts and key messages to share with people. Surfacing anxiety - and what is driving it - are benefits of good change readiness as with this insight you are able to adapt your plans to overcome and mitigate some of the anxieties people may be feeling. (RC) I agree. CRA must be part of the wider plan for the change, including effective comms and engagement. (IP)
In reference to being aligned as mentioned, would you ensure the resource profile (SMEs) are clearly identified on their roles & responsibilities at the change assessment stage, to manage the change effectively and efficiently?	Yes - it is critical that people understand their own roles and responsibilities in relation to the change, be that supporting the implementation of the change, being prepared to change and being willing to adopt the change. (RC)
Might it make sense to do a Change Readiness Assessment of the Leadership Team first - to make sure they have a clear vision?	I think is a good idea, it will also help with seeing the level of change maturity for the organisation (DU) This makes some sense, and is certainly part of the wider picture. There is a risk that, while the Leadership Team think they are aligned, they actually have different priorities, expectations, etc. for the change which could be surfaced by a CRA. This would help ensure leadership alignment behind the change, reducing the risk that any lack of alignment impacts wider engagement as the change proceeds. (IP)
If you had a very negative response to the initial change assessment, would you go through a round of further communication to try an change that overall mindset in the organisation before re-evaluating and then commencing the change?	I think you would want to find out the root cause and then relaunch (DU) Absolutely! There is little point in proceeding if the initial response indicates a lack of engagement with the change. (IP)

Do you think maybe organisations don't act on change readiness feedback because the horse has already bolted i.e. they have already decided to progress with a change, in a certain way?'	Its more about how the change is perceived and how can that be smoothed rather than whether the change is going ahead or not, this may point to better communication needed about the benefits of the change to certain groups (DU) This question chimes with the quote from Kotter early in the webinar - "*Failure to establish change readiness accounts for around 50% of all unsuccessful large-scale organisational changes* ". Failure to act on a CRA is highly likely to impact engagement. If the people on whom you are dependent to deliver the change are not engaged, then the change is likely to fail. (IP)
Change readiness, brings to my mind a release GO/ NO Go gate with various items that must be completed before the release is ready to go. This is very different to the questions this meeting is talking about. Can we intermingle the technical readiness with the Change readiness to save time and effort? Obviously, such data is collected traditionally at time prior to release into the live environment. Hence may not be possible?	This is different, you are taking about a go live readiness assessment. The change readiness assessment is measuring the temperature and appetite for the change at various points across the stakeholders to identify where focus is needed to make the change as successful as possible. (DU) Agree with Donna's comment - two separate issues. (IP)
Fatigue, Apathy, Resistance	
Is it fair to assume that if we engage staff to assess their feelings towards the change, those who don't respond, are suffering from change fatigue and if high enough consider pausing?	Not necessarily - they might feel that they don't have capacity or, of previous engagement hasn't been acted upon, they might not see the point of responding. In this scenario, I would seek to build trust and openness by creating space for conversations to understand why they haven't responded and to explain the benefits of doing so (RC) Not responding may be due to change fatigue, but also due to a whole host of other reasons - Rebecca mentions some. If response rates are low, it is important to understand why, including whether alternative ways of engaging people (focus groups, workshops, etc.) may be more appropriate to the current context. (IP)

How do you manage/ prioritise multiple concurrent change programmes to ensure that employees aren't overloaded or simply don't have the bandwidth to accommodate this?	This is a great question and has to start with good leadership. If you recognise that multiple change programmes are causing overload - and a good change readiness assessment should give you the data you need to evidence this - I would recommend that senior leaders establish priorities and/or think about how to put more support into the system. Those responsible for individual change programmes could also come together to make sure that the various plans are truly integrated and that there is a single source of understanding about what will change when, the interdependencies and impacts management. (RC) This is certainly a leadership and strategy issue, and is one of the key factors which risks change fatigue. Multiple, overlapping change programmes, with an apparent or actual lack of coordination, will almost certainly impact engagement. This can be especially challenging when change is initiated at different levels of an organisation - i.e. global and local change running in parallel. There are parallels with running programmes and portfolios of projects ... (IP)
Could there be something generational? Perhaps people feel undervalued when change is introduced, as if what they've been doing, apparently well for years, no longer counts?	Feeling undervalued could be a very normal human response depending on the type of change being implemented, especially anything involving role restructures or cuts. If it is possible to help people understand the changes and their new place in them, that is very important. Apathy, resistance and fatigue are topics we intend to explore at a future webinar (RC). A good question, which comes down largely to effective stakeholder management. It is important to understand the demographic of the people who are involved in, and impacted by the change. Pitching the engagement in ways that are relevant either to the whole stakeholder community, or address the specific perspectives of parts of the stakeholder community, is key to successful engagement. (IP)

How do you cope with change apathy? I work in a large defence company which rolls out changes across the organisation almost constantly, impacting process and toolsets.	Another great question! Do you understand the root cause(s) of the apathy? Is it caused by the burnout that can be created when change is being well implemented, e.g. are people having to put in extra work to 'fix' the processes and toolsets because the change hasn't fully delivered? Or is it because they aren't supported effectively thought the changes, with training or even clear communications and support from managers? Or is it because key messages about the vision and/or meaning of the change is being lost or confused? Apathy, resistance and fatigue are topics we intend to explore at a future webinar (RC). See above on leadership and strategy - effective coordination of multiple change programmes is key. (IP)
Stakeholder Engagement	
Could an effective means of 'building readiness for change' be to gain more effective staff engagement in designing the change?	Absolutely! I am all for this, although recognise this takes time and means extra capacity is needed to do this work. Good change management allows the detail - or even the vision - to be influenced by staff and stakeholders. There is no worse change than one that will never work in reality because of a set of constraints or risks that the change team didn't anticipate. Equally, more effective staff engagement can help motivate people and help them better buy in to what is happening, because they feel they have been able to influence and contribute. (RC)
Do you feel engagement is easier to achieve when being contracted externally to a business to deliver the change, or managing the change from a change role already within the company?	My personal view is that each will have its own advantages and risks. The big challenge back I would make is that every role in the company is, in some way, a change role. Where the workforce think change is being done to them by someone elsewhere, that is a recipe for poor outcomes. Change has to be everyone's responsibility (and in the past I have built it into individual objectives for each member of a very large operational unit). (RC) Pros and cons, as Rebecca says! Change which is managed/delivered externally can risk being seen as something being "done to" rather than "done with" the company, by people who don't really understand the context and challenges. It can work either if the leadership are able to demonstrate complete faith in, and alignment with the external change agents, if they are seen as being able to do something that the organisation can't, etc. (IP)

Do you think 'capability' is the appropriate term? To me it infers a judgement of staff ability which I don't like. Perhaps "proposal suitability for staff" would put more of the judgement upon the plan than the people and would be more inclusive.	It is important to find a language that works for the people involved in and affected by the change programme. Capability tends to be universally-used, but if your own workforce respond well to different language, the key thing is that everyone understands what is being described (RC) An interesting question, as language can be very emotive. In this context, capability is intended to refer to whether the organisation has the ability to deliver the change in its "toolkit". However, if there is a risk that it could be misinterpreted as critical of the people involved in delivering the change (or impacted by it), then the terminology could be tweaked accordingly. (IP)
Do many organisations include change readiness assessments as part of their processes / procedures at the beginning / throughout an organisational change to track that people are aware / onboard with the reasons behind changes?	That would be ideal - a continuity of change readiness assessment over time to continually gather insights and target interventions as a result (RC) Some do, but many don't - as evidenced by the quotes and statistics presented early in the webinar! Our mission includes trying to demonstrate the benefits of the effective use of CRA, at the start of and during change programmes, to increase the success of change programmes. (IP)
Other	
Terminology Q: Change Vs Transformation?	I think these are interchangeable. But many change projects may be needed to deliver an overall transformation programme (RC) I feel that these terms are used inconsistently, and are often interchangeable. However, for me, a transformation programme is generally more strategic than a change programme. (IP)

Where it hasn't gone so well and how you have overcome?	It is hard to be specific, due to commercial sensitivities. However, an example I have experienced of a change programme which initially looked good, but developed increasing issues as it proceeded, was impacted by the failure to engage effectively with all functions in the organisation which were impacted by the change. The directly impacted functions were very effectively engaged throughout the process, but the supporting functions were expected to "go with the flow", but failed to do so because they weren't effectively engaged in the change process. An example of a more successful change I experienced was down to the way key members of the leadership team engaged with people across the organisation. They were very authentic and could be seen to be putting significant emphasis on engagement and acting on responses/feedback. Statements such as "*I may not agree with every aspect of this initiative, but am supportive of the overall aims and believe that it is in all our best interests* " and "*I personally am negatively impacted by this change, but support it because I believe that it is in the best interests of the organisation* " may not be universally popular with the senior leadership, but go a long way in successfully engaging those upon whom the success of the change is dependent. (IP)
Change management generally would be more available in larger organisations above 250 staff and certain industries/sectors?	It can be used effectively in any organisation of any size or sector, for any type of change. I think there are scaling issues to consider when working with larger organisations (RC) The approach effectively scales with the size of an organisation. The principles and approach apply regardless of the size of the organisation undertaking the change. (IP)
Where do you think a Change Readiness role should sit / comms come from to the wider org? I've often seen it sit alongside HR but that often then only riles up the wider organisation.	In my experience, the placement of the role is less important than the attributes of the jobholder. Ideally this person (or team) should have high emotional intelligence, be clear communicators, willing to and actively putting themselves in opportunities to listen and converse with staff and stakeholders about the change, what might make it better, what are people worried about and then willing and able to act on that (RC) A great answer Rebecca ☺ For me, the role needs to sit where it can generate/support the greatest engagement and alignment with the change across the organisation. (IP)

Why do organisations implement change without change management?	Probably due to resources and willingness to invest. The challenge could be in making the case for that investment and being able to articulate the benefits outweighing the cost (RC) Often because it is seen as a cost rather than a benefit - in other words, the case for investment in change management has not been made effectively. Lack of awareness of change management among leadership may also be a factor. (IP)
At what point in implementing the change is it the best time to carry out a change readiness assessment?	Ideally a continuity of change readiness assessment over time to continually gather insights and target interventions as a result (RC) Before commencing the change, and then at regular intervals during the implementation of the change (i.e. major milestones during the change programme). (IP)
Do you think that organisations might sometimes be too quick to select a large scale change without fully considering other options, perhaps in order for leaders to 'make their mark' or due to overestimation of the likelihood of the change being a success?	I have certainly observed new leaders wanting to make their mark and therefore undo or restart a change programme already 'in flight'. This can be a real cause of fatigue and frustration with staff. In either case, leaders should always invest sufficient time to have a really clear sense of why change, what change and how - creating that persuasive vision of the future that staff can buy into and want to support. Where a new leader arrives and wants to change direction, they will need to communicate why they believe that new direction is essential in a way that staff will engage with. (RC) There is certainly a risk that some leaders, especially if new in post, want to "make their mark" by implementing significant change. This can be a source of lack of engagement in the change, as it risks people quickly seeing it as "change for change's sake" and the leader concerned struggles to get buy-in. Effective CRA should help identify and address this. (IP)