Introducing and Monitoring Organizational Change

Any problem-solving or improvement process, such as Optimizing Performance and Quality (OPQ), involves change. To make improvements on any level (system/organization/team/ individual) requires change. But change doesn't necessarily lead to improvement unless the organization is ready to change.

Early in the OPQ process it is a good idea to assess the organization's readiness to change so that you can address the factors that affect readiness to change and better facilitate organizational change throughout the process, particularly during implementation of any interventions that stakeholders have prioritized. The following are key steps for introducing changes in the workplace. These steps are integrated into the OPQ process.

1. *Obtain management buy-in and support*

Organizational leaders and managers must be committed to taking forward the improvement process and supporting it. Possible sensitivities and potential barriers should be acknowledged up front, and efforts made to work around them or overcome them. Leaders and managers should communicate their vision and commitment to others in the organization.

2. *Form a stakeholder group*

Identify key stakeholders who will be affected by the outcome of the improvement process and those that are affected by the performance of the organization. Bring these key stakeholders together into a leadership group to advise and oversee the process. Ownership is often best created by involving people in the process in meaningful ways.

3. *Assess readiness for change*

Because change can be difficult, organizations need to have a certain degree of readiness to engage in self-assessment of current performance. This table outlines certain factors and their influence on how ready an organization might be to take on the process of performance improvement.

Factors that can affect readiness to change Adapted from MEASURE Evaluation

You MUST have:	These are MIXED blessings:
• Acceptance of the process by organization's leaders • A champion • Adequate internal resources to do a self-assessment (time/staff) • Compelling reason for conducting assessment and change process	• Other simultaneous organizational changes, some you cannot control • Organization with a history of change • Past experience with self-assessment and change processes, positive or negative
It's NICE to have:	These can be major BARRIERS:
• Leaders with credibility • Clear vision in organization of where it wants to go • Additional financial resources for assessment and change process • Effective internal and external communication mechanisms	• Past failures with self-assessment and change processes • Superficial motives • Low levels of skills and capabilities • Negative incentives for conducting self-assessment and change process

If the organization on the whole is not ready, perhaps the OPQ process can concentrate on one or two specific less controversial aspects of its performance as a place to start. It is essential to connect the OPQ process to the achievement of established organizational goals to help legitimize the process.

4. *Clarify intended outcomes*
When implementing an improvement process, it is critical that everyone understand what the team is trying to achieve. The intended outcomes should be aligned with overall goals and strategy of the organization, and should be easy to understand and inspiring. They should be related to things that employees value and so will work toward achieving.

5. *Identify and monitor barriers and enablers of change*
No initiative involving change goes completely according to plan. People react in unexpected ways, expected resources may not be available, or the external environment may shift. It is useful to anticipate and then monitor possible barriers and enablers so that decisions and adjustments can be made to maintain the momentum of the process.

6. *Communicate about the process and how changes affect employees*
Regularly reinforce core messages about the process, its intended outcomes and alignment with organizational goals, and progress on achievements using multiple channels—meetings, informal conversations, written messages, etc. Solicit and incorporate employee input and feedback so that communication is two-way. Recognize and reward employee contributions toward achieving organizational goals.