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How to Jumpstart Your Change Program With These 5 Quick Wins

by Rachelle Stoll

Did you get the green light on an enterprise-wide change management (ECM) program?

Congratulations! This milestone signifies your company's willingness to adopt a structured, consistent approach to managing change. As with all new initiatives, unexpected challenges may arise and disrupt the momentum you've worked hard to gain. So, how do you sustain the energy the project needs to avoid being just another failed initiative?

At Greencastle, we capitalize on early momentum and excitement with the **"quick-win,"** a term we affectionately dub the Swiss Army Knife of implementation. Quick wins are relatively small, achievable goals that can be swiftly implemented to produce tangible results in a short amount of time. When this kind of value is delivered at the beginning of an initiative, they'll generate the confidence and enthusiasm from stakeholders to grow your initiative. Below are five quick-wins to get you started.

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1 Meet the organization where it's at.

Regardless of whether you're a sponsor, change manager, or member of the project team, it is vital to examine and manage your own personal expectations. You can't expect a successful implementation of a robust, highly-integrated change management program if your company isn't ready.

The first step is to assess the company's existing capacity for change and tailor your strategy accordingly. Focus on examining your company's organizational attributes in terms of how well it handles change, both culturally and structurally. All change initiatives require you to analyze the size and scope of the change.

To quantify this, ask the following questions:

How many people or work centers will your ECM program impact?

Will your program cause any role changes or restructuring in other parts of the business? What is the organization's track record with similar initiatives?

Have the changes initiated by similar programs been sustained long-term?

Were previous changes well-received by employees?

Meeting an organization where it's at doesn't mean you cannot set a high bar for your initiative. It means that you must trust your process, prepare for the long game, and utilize a structured approach from the beginning.

2 Make it easy to say ‘yes’.

There are two ways to increase your program’s accessibility to potential stakeholders. First, take an assertive, people-centered approach to every project and process that is impacted. Second, simplify your program's structure by aggressively eliminating unnecessary elements.

“When employees are happy, they are your very best ambassadors.”

—— James Sinegal

Successful change programs seek to solve the end-user's problems. Creating detailed user personas, conducting interviews, and collecting survey data across a wide range of work centers are all excellent ways to generate insight into employee pain points. Utilizing these tactics early on in your program will help to identify potential barriers to change within your organization. This knowledge will enable you define your mission, simplify your program and streamline your processes.

Next, eliminate the unnecessary. A simplified and efficient change program will generate greater buy-in because its processes are more intuitive and less cumbersome. Begin by asking yourself, "Does this add value?" When you truly understand employee pain points and behaviors, eliminating everything in your strategy that isn't necessary starts to make more sense. You free up more time and energy to advocate for your program, coach employees, and build rapport with your stakeholders.

3 Engage your change champions.

There is a critical difference between the people you have to follow, and the people you **want** to follow.

Organizational change champions are the latter. Regardless of rank or formal authority, they play a key role in creating and maintaining an initiative's momentum. A change champion has a number of key traits which include:

A network of strong professional relationships.

A high level of professional competence.

Significant emotional intelligence with the soft skills to inspire action.

Change champions can be found across many levels of an organization. Seek to build a coalition of influencers who understand the value of your change initiative and will be visible and active sponsors of your change program.

Your champions may not always exist within the senior management ranks. Executives in large companies are often juggling large-scale priorities and might be unfamiliar with the everyday grind of employees. Likewise, don't assume you'll only find your biggest influencers amongst mid-level management either. The Peter Principle suggests that managers will only rise to their level of incompetence. While a track record of operational excellence, efficiency, and productivity may precede someone, these characteristics are those of a good manager. Conversely, the ability to inspire others, to embrace change and create a compelling vision are attributes of a leader.

Your next change champion may be the rising underdog who is not afraid of experimentation, failure, and pushing boundaries. Conversely, you might also find a champion in a seasoned employee with decades of experience at the company. They have seen the ebbs and flows of many initiatives over the years and have the kind of 'backdoor insight' that comes only with time and experience. Leverage these potential champions to help you articulate a vision of the future state, garner trust and credibility amongst impacted groups, and project the energy that will inspire others to act.

4 Tell a great story.

Marketers adhere to the "Rule of 7" principle when communicating new products or services. Research suggests that it takes an average of seven exposures to a message before a consumer acts. Don't be afraid to sound like a broken record when it comes to pitching your ECM program. So, if you're not tired of hearing yourself say the same thing over and over, keep talking.

A good story appeals to its audience in a fundamentally human way, through sound logic and emotional appeal.

First, you must know your audience. Do you know their preferences and behaviors? Do you know their reason for waking up each day? The key to connecting with your audience is to engage by addressing what's fundamentally important to them and using relatable language that is meaningful to their situation.

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Second, be sure to identify a problem your audience has. The concept of change and its potential to disrupt the status quo is highly applicable to many situations. Change creates chaos and this problem can be solved by effective change management processes.

Next, describe how your change program will bring order to chaos by guiding your audience towards a solution. Creating a narrative that establishes your change program as a guide puts them in control of both the problem and its solution. Your change story will also have more impact when you take calculated steps to differentiate your program from undesirable alternatives.

Finally, practice telling your story. Rehearsing in front of others and becoming intimate with your change story will only make it better. The goal is to create a versatile, baseline narrative that can be easily tailored to your audience.

5 Keep humans at the heart of it.

Making people the focal point of your strategy will never steer you wrong and will provide the type of momentum you need to build a lasting program. When people are at the core of all your initiatives, the company will reap the rewards of greater employee innovation, creativity, and business agility.

At Greencastle we have always prioritized people over process.
This principle has migrated with us from the military and has helped us to enable long-term success for clients who are seeking to enable effective change within their organizations.

As veterans, we know that change is inevitable, but chaos is optional. We take a structured, scalable approach that aligns with our client's culture and is tailored to their specific business goals. Our experienced change management consultants are ready to assist you in jumpstarting your change program.

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Greencastle Associates Consulting is a 100% veteran-owned and operated implementation consulting firm that tackles critical projects with a unique, military-precision approach. Founded by veterans in 1997, Greencastle provides metric-driven results to businesses looking to maximize growth. We are experts in change management, process improvement and project management. Using Implementation Management as the foundational approach to every project—we help our clients meet and exceed their definition of success. Our team is mission-focused, adaptable, and ready to get stuff done—all while saving you time and driving operational efficiencies.