Assessing Organizational Readiness for Change

Transition Readiness Assessment

1. Was there a fairly widespread sense that the change was necessary? Was the change solving a real problem, or did people think that it was happening for some other reason? Nothing is harder to stomach than losses and uncertainty that you believe “didn’t have to happen.”

2. Did most people accept that whatever change was taking place represented a valid and effective response to the underlying problem? A “bad idea” is going to produce a transition that is particularly hard to manage.

3. Did the proposed change polarize the workforce in any way that made the transition more disruptive than it would otherwise have been?

4. Was the level of trust in the organization’s leadership adequate? There are always minor issues on this score, but when the level of trust is low, the leaders have a very hard time bringing the people along with them.

5. Did the organization provide people with adequate training for the new situations and roles that it thrust them into? An organization that doesn’t do that is likely to find people holding back and resisting the new beginning that will make the transition work as intended.

6. Did the organization tend to blame people if they made mistakes in a new situation? If it does, people are going to wait for others to make the first move as they start to emerge from the neutral zone, and the organization will stay in transition longer than it needs to.

7. Was the change part of a widely understood strategy that was designed to move the organization in a direction that fit with a fairly clear vision of the future?

8. Were the endings that were implicit in the change talked about publicly? Did people know what it was time to let go of — and why?

9. Did the organization’s history work in its favor during the transition, or were there old scars and unresolved issues that surfaced and made people uncertain and mistrustful?

10. Was the change explained to those who were going to be affected by it in as much detail as was possible?
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11. Were there people within the organization who had expertise in the handling of change and transition? Was their assistance available to others in the organization who needed it?

12. Was a clear set of responsibilities established for seeing that the human side of the change went well (the transition)? Did the people with those responsibilities have the resources to get their task done?

13. Did the leaders of the change understand that the transitions would necessarily take considerably longer to complete than the changes? Did the timetable for the project reflect that understanding?

14. Did the organization set up some way to monitor the state of the transition? This would not necessarily be a Transition Monitoring Team, but something more than the everyday reporting relationships in the organization.

15. Did the culture of the organization validate the idea of helping employees deal with the problems they encountered, or were they pretty much on their own?