Key Ideas for Leading and Managing Successful Organizational Change

Leading and managing change is a necessary competency for success as a leader. Technology, workforce, and cultural changes are presently at a rate that surpasses what we have seen historically. There is only one choice – change or risk going out of business.

- Today's leaders need to be technologically savvy, able to communicate to and manage a more diverse workforce, and operate in US and international business cultures that are ever more diverse. As if this wasn't enough, leaders often need to identify, introduce, and implement changes into their work and business units.

- It is important for leaders to choose wisely when introducing change, avoiding the desire to reinvent or improve too many things at one time and overtaxing the ability of yourself and your employees to manage the change effort along with daily job activities.

- Leaders need to help employees to understand the reasons for change, taking time to clarify the direction in which the organization needs to move to continue to be successful. Don't make it complicated or numerical; make it descriptive and easy to understand.

- Be clear about goals and what needs to be achieved, but be receptive to changing the way things are done in order to achieve the goals. Ask for help, solicit ideas, with an emphasis on the team owning the process and the end result.

- Managing organizational change requires that the work systems are aligned to support the change. This further requires that you focus on the behaviors that are required from your employees to execute the change. In order to foster those behaviors, you will need to make sure that the work environment is designed to promote and reinforce the new behaviors.

- Put together a leadership team to guide, support, and be champions of change teams. Select people who are natural leaders within their department, not necessarily those in formal positions, but those who have the interpersonal skills to engage and motivate others. Support individuals who are ready to step up and champion change, and facilitate their role as a change agent.

- Work to identify achievable yet important short-term results that can be celebrated as milestones along the path of change.

- Sustained organizational change requires constant communication, education, and buy-in at all levels. Employees must be engaged in the process and organizational leaders must spend extra time talking with, and listening to, employees about the change process.

- Employees want to feel pride in their jobs and the work they do. Their greatest fear during a time of change is that they might not be able to perform at the same level once new processes or systems are introduced. As a result, they require considerable reassurance that training and a reasonable learning time will be provided.

- Successful leaders are teachers and they encourage all employees to be continually learning. Ask your employees to challenge their thinking on reoccurring problems and business challenges and look for fresh perspectives and innovative approaches. Hold brainstorming sessions on issues.