

Great examples of change management

Shell's experience

In 2004 Shell was facing an oil reserves crisis that strongly influenced its share price. The situation was even worse by the sudden departure of the oil group's chairman, Sir Philip Watts. The new group chairman, Jeroen van der Veer, believed that in order to survive, the corporation need to change its structure and processes.

A series of global, standardised processes were identified. These, if introduced, would impact more than 80 Shell operating units. While the changes were vital to survival, they proved unpopular in the short term as some countries stood to lose market share.

For a change programme of this scale to be successful, everyone had to adhere to the new systems and processes. The leadership of Shell Downstream-One, as the transformation was known, needed unflinching determination and to focus on gaining adoption from everyone involved.

Those leading the change had to ensure that the major players in all their markets knew what was required and why. They needed to be aligned with the change requirement. The main message of the change team was that standard processes across all countries and regions that benefited Shell globally trumped local, individual needs. That meant everything from common invoicing and finance systems to bigger more centralised distribution networks.

The team of experts – made up of senior leaders, in-house subject matter experts, implementation consultants and external change experts – who delivered the change programme were crucial in this phase. They'd been picked because they had both technical understanding and could provide change leadership. They both modelled and drove the new behaviours needed for the change to succeed. They briefed the people who would be impacted by the change; risks and potential problem areas were discussed and mitigated – before any real change was even delivered.

In all major change programmes, there's always the danger that change management gets delegated; leaders distance themselves from the challenge of implementing the priorities they once championed. That can cause the initiatives to fail. In Shell's case, however, the change leadership started and finished with Jeroen van der Veer, who never drew back from emphasising how important full implementation of Downstream-One would be.

Shell is in a significantly healthier position than when the transformation started, and by that measure the programme has been deemed a success.

Ooredoo experience

In 2005, its state-owned (Qatar) telecom company Qtel, led by chairman Sheikh Abdullah Bin Mohammed Bin Saud Al Thani, and CEO Dr Nasser Mohammed Marafih, embarked on an ambitious acquisition spree; by 2012, Qtel owned 17 telecoms operators in the Muslim world and had become the world's fastest growing telecoms operator by revenue.

In 2012 Qtel began to shift its strategy away from growth through acquisition towards growth through integration. Sheik Abdullah and Dr Nasser decided to pull all their diverse telecoms brands into one mega-brand, Ooredoo. This would give them the

opportunity to focus on what they actually wanted their international telecom company to deliver – transformational change in the telecoms sector.

The change management teams set out to identify what they wanted their brand to stand for. They defined a series of unique branding propositions that would, ultimately, give them standout recognition. They wanted to offer the Muslim world greater freedom of communication and choice and, in particular, they wanted to be seen as helping rural communities and women gain a voice.

In February 2013 the new global brand Ooredoo was launched from a standing start in a matter of weeks in Qatar, with the iconic footballer Lionel Messi introduced by Sheik Abdullah as the global brand ambassador. It was a stunning success, gaining market share within weeks. With a customer base of more than 95 million people in 17 countries, Ooredoo rapidly became a leading international brand.



Alignment, clarity of purpose and a ruthless focus on implementation showed the world what Qatar and Qataris can do.

British Airways experience

In 1981, British Airways brought on board a new chairperson. When this chairperson started, he noticed that the company was very inefficient and was wasting a lot of valuable resources. To make the organization more profitable, this chairperson decided to restructure the entire organization. He believed that the best way to do this was through a change methodology management plan.

Systematically, British Airways began reducing its workforce. But, before this was done, through his change management leadership, the chairman gave the company the reasons for the restructuring and privatization of the company in order to prepare them for the upcoming change. Through leadership and communication, he directed his company through a difficult time that could have been disastrous without effective change management resistance communication.