



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA  
*Achieving International Excellence*

Human Resources

# Leading Organisational Change at UWA



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# Change Management at UWA

Change is a normal part of any workplace. In fact, it is a healthy part of organisational growth and reformation but any complex change process requires an informed, structured approach to ensure all facets are identified and suitably addressed. The issues associated with organisational change can span many different aspects of the business and may require creative solutions which influence the whole work community.

During times of change it is particularly important to think about how people experience changes in their workplace. Significant change can be a stressful experience for those involved if it is not handled carefully. In some cases the adjustments may relate to improvements in daily operations or realignment of activities to achieve strategic goals. In other circumstances, the changes may be more substantial, possibly requiring significant operational changes within the workplace.

The University of Western Australia aims to recruit, develop and retain the highest quality staff and provide them with the opportunity to fully contribute to the ongoing development of the University. Change demonstrates how people interact differently and the need for effective leadership in dynamic, evolving settings is critical to successful work community development. This booklet provides assistance for leading, identifying and addressing issues which may arise, communicating with stakeholders and ensuring change outcomes are successful.

## Why change?

Various influences can necessitate changes to a work area. The need for change can be driven by various external factors such as Government legislation, public policy, financial matters, technological change, strategic reviews or changes in student numbers. Strategically, the University strives toward responsive, efficient and effective management, ensuring it is competitively positioned as an internationally recognised research intensive university. Such a goal requires regular review and redesign of systems, processes and priorities across the organisation. Increasing pressure on the University to manage its resources more efficiently can also impact on work areas with respect to costing and rationalising their activities. The outcomes of business reviews or the introduction of new technology may also identify necessary changes to academic or business practices.

## Challenges in change management

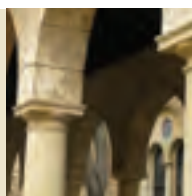
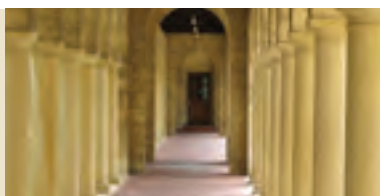
Change management is not necessarily simple or easy to map. Some business changes require complex decisions across a number of areas to be undertaken in tandem and implementing subsequent change management strategies can be a lengthy process. The time taken from start until completion can vary depending on factors such as the size of the work area and the extent of change to be undertaken. The direction may alter as the plan for change develops and the process may take longer than initially anticipated.

When confronted with possible workplace change, staff may exhibit a range of emotional responses. Some people may feel threatened, anxious or marginalised in the process – particularly if resources are being reviewed or rationalised. Other business changes may flow freely and without concern, particularly when staff associate with the change and see benefit to themselves. It is important to recognise, address and approach both positive and negative reactions appropriately. Change management can be damaging to a work community and potentially undermine trust and reduce employee engagement with the resultant changes unless managed well. The University provides resources for handling organisational change and to assist Heads/managers in addressing difficulties.

## Supporting change

### Organisational Change Guidelines

The University provides guidelines for implementing organisational change (link available on p.14). These guidelines provide assistance on how organisational change should proceed and outline the steps required to meet the University's obligations to consult with staff and the relevant Unions regarding organisational change proposals.



### **Change Management Assistance**

Various UWA divisions also provide support and guidance in change management. Employee Relations & Management Services (ERMS), Organisational and Staff Development Services (OSDS) and Policy and Planning within Human Resources can contribute significantly to change management processes. Other areas which may play a part in developing change strategies include Financial Services (financial matters and accounting/funding systems) and the Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (curriculum review and redesign).

### **Employee Relations and Management Services (ERMS)**

ERMS handles the formal change management process. It is essential that Heads/managers contact ERMS prior to undertaking organisational change. ERMS provides assistance and guidance, ensuring compliance with policies, procedures and staff agreements and can help with:

- Staffing and structural decisions;
- Change management requirements;
- Reclassification of positions;
- Staff retention; and
- Redundancies, redeployment and voluntary severances.

The Consultation on Organisational Change provisions in the staff agreements require consultation with Unions when changes are proposed. ERMS staff will co-ordinate communication with the relevant Unions and will attend organisational change meetings as required under the University's Organisational Change Guidelines.

Union members are entitled to seek the advice or assistance from the relevant Union at any stage of the change management process. ERMS provides advice and assistance to both management and staff throughout the process and a Career Mobility Officer is available to provide career advice. ERMS also facilitates the assessment and processing of position descriptions.

### **Organisational and Staff Development Services (OSDS)**

It is suggested that OSDS is contacted when it appears organisational change is required. OSDS can provide guidance, training and support to Heads/managers prior to initiating the formal change management process. OSDS provides assistance with:

- Facilitating planning, review or change management days;
- Community engagement/recognition of the issues;
- Coaching/leadership or team development; and
- Models from colleagues.

### **Financial Services**

When change is driven by financial constraints, experience shows that enabling staff to understand the problem is beneficial to the Business Unit. The Faculty Accountant can assist and more specialised support is available from Financial Services, such as:

- Analysis and system setup; and
- Models and templates.

### **Workforce Planning**

Workforce Planning is the planned strategic process of linking business directions with planning for resources, growth strategies, together with planned activities including succession planning, work design and staff development. Located in Human Resources, Policy and Planning can:

- Provide the tools for Heads/managers to determine the supply and demand of critical capabilities;
- Analyse information and coach managers in its application;
- Facilitate the strategic discussion on labour requirements;
- Work with Heads/managers to determine the impact – oversupply or undersupply of labour;
- Assess the need to improve or develop HR programs to meet labour supply; and
- Advise Heads/managers of cost effective options to deliver and evaluate programs.

### **Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (CATL)**

CATL can assist in changes where:

- Facilitation of curricula reviews and redesign; and/or
- Guidance in teaching performance indicators is required.

### **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**

Change affects staff in a variety of ways. For some, change will be desirable and a welcome challenge. For others, it can be a concern. EAP is a confidential service that staff may use to obtain personal support for coping with change. Also provided through EAP is the Managers Hotline Service, which provides same day telephone consultation for Heads/managers or supervisors in dealing with difficult staff issues. All staff in a supervisory role can access the Managers Hotline Service. Details are provided on p.14 of this booklet.

# Leading Successful Change: An Overview of the Process

Organisational change is not always straightforward or formulaic. Each work area will experience the process differently and each stage may require the production of additional documents or the re-evaluation of strategies. Once the organisational change process is accepted and confirmed, more work will be required to implement the changes. Effective change is best achieved by harnessing the energies and diverse knowledge of staff in the work area to ensure the best ideas are generated and implemented. Fundamental to successful change is good communication and allowing involvement of staff who are likely to be affected.

The following guide provides a step by step break down of the UWA Organisational Guidelines, with further advice on how to conduct the planning and implementation at each stage (a flowchart which summarises the UWA Organisational Change Guidelines can be found on page 14). The following guide applies Kotter's (2006) model of change management, which is a long-established and highly valued model that has been applied in many different organisations. The model offers useful guidance on the various steps to be followed in successfully managing a shift in your work community's practice or structures. As each context may require a slightly different approach, these principles are provided for guidance only and it is recommended that ERMS and OSDS be contacted early to explore how they can assist in leading successful change.

## Phase 1: Review and Preparation

STEP	UWA GUIDELINES	PRACTICAL GUIDE
1	Work area <b>identifies</b> organisational change may be required. Work area <b>discusses</b> with all employees and asks for their thoughts.	<b>Establish the need for change</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the need for change</li> <li>Develop the case and evidence</li> </ul>
2	Work area determines if organisational change will have significant effects on employees. Work area <b>documents</b> likely significant effects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consult with ERMS/ OSDS on change strategy</li> </ul> <b>Establish the leadership team</b>
3	Work area <b>documents</b> nature of proposed change including reasons why and likely significant effects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify critical people</li> <li>Agree roles</li> <li>Clarify areas of concern</li> <li>OSDS assistance for change team building</li> <li>Establish the new vision</li> </ul>

## Step 1

The work area identifies that organisational change may be required. Such a decision can be influenced by numerous factors, such as budgetary issues, decrease/increase in student demand, technology advancement, reviews or changes to service requirements. Work areas should consider the University and Faculty/Business Unit OPPs (Operational Priority Plans) and strategic plans. All areas of the Business Unit should be considered to undergo change, which may include determining alternative sources of revenue, increasing research income, different methods of service delivery and other relevant issues.

ERMS should be contacted, even if the work area has not decided whether change is necessary. Formal organisational change may not be required and ERMS can assist in determining the best strategy for addressing any issues occurring within the workplace.

Once consulting with ERMS and determining if organisational change is required, all staff within the work area will need to be informed and offered the opportunity to provide input, even if they will not be directly affected by the changes. Providing open and honest communication and keeping staff informed will assist in gathering support for changes and prevent the spread of misinformation.

After the initial meeting to explain the need for organisational change it is advisable to follow up in writing with a letter, memo or email to all staff and consider placing the communiqué on staff noticeboards. The drivers for organisational change can be provided, and what is hoped will be achieved. It is important to clearly explain the steps in the process and identify the next step. Details of who to contact from the work area and ERMS should be provided. Also consider staff who are on leave and keep them informed.

## Review the need for change

The need for change may stem from external influences or from pressures generated within the University. It is better to address concerns early rather than wait until few options remain. Identify the issues which will need to be addressed and communicated to staff, such as changes to staffing structures or work area functions. This information will assist ERMS to provide advice and direction and help the work area in preparing communications.

## Consult with ERMS/OSDS on your change strategy

It is recommended that ERMS and OSDS are contacted early in the process. ERMS is an important source of support and will provide guidance through the necessary steps and the consultation and communication process.

ERMS should be contacted prior to speaking with staff about structural change. Consultation with the relevant Union/s must be conducted through ERMS and should be done as early as practicable after the decision to restructure has been made. To facilitate consultation, Heads of Schools/sections need to provide the following information to ERMS:

- The reason for making the change;
- The aim of the proposed change;
- The extent and nature of the change proposed;
- A time-frame for the change;
- Measures that have been taken to avert or mitigate adverse effects of the proposed change; and
- Measures that will be taken to avert or mitigate adverse effects of the proposed change.

Once a clear case for change is established the information should be shared with staff to encourage their engagement and contributions. OSDS can assist in planning presentations and facilitate any major planning/strategy sessions. The use of trained facilitators ensures a positive outcome from the session/s and allows the leader to fully participate in the consultation. OSDS also host case studies to encourage the sharing of knowledge and provide referrals to peers.

## Steps 2 & 3

After determining the change required, the work area will need to identify and document the likely significant effects on employees (see the Organisational Change Guidelines on the HR website for a definition of significant effects). Establishing a basis for change may require considerable analysis and documentation, which will assist in providing a solid case for undergoing organisational change. To persuade people of the need for change, there needs to be a clear and cogent case highlighting the critical issues to be addressed.



## Develop the case and evidence

The following questions offer useful prompts to consider in building the case:

- Why is the status quo undesirable/untenable?
- What will happen if we stay the same?
- What are the drivers for change?
- What benefits might be derived from changing?
- Who is likely to be affected? How?
- What are the main outcomes that need to be achieved?

Consider all options, particularly where it is clear there are some negative consequences. Think about what can be done to mitigate the effect and any strategies to obtain income from other sources. For example, can expenditure on non-essential items or issues mitigate the need for change?

## Identify people critical to your success

Draw together the people who need to be part of the change leadership team and provide the full picture of the circumstances for change. These contributors will play an important part in promoting the need for change and engaging others in the process. Maintain regular communications with the team and consider what each person can contribute in terms of skills and abilities. Take careful note of their questions and concerns, identify any further issues and analyse and incorporate these into the case.

## Establish the new vision

Envision the future and what the work community could look like following the change strategy. How do the potential changes reflect the University's direction and vision? Put the vision in simple words, share it, promote it and ensure everyone sees the same picture.

## Phase 2: Change Strategy and Implementation

STEP	UWA GUIDELINES	PRACTICAL GUIDE
4	Work area holds a <b>FIRST</b> formal meeting with employees likely to be affected. No definite decision is made at this stage. This meeting is an opportunity for employees to listen and participate in the change process. Employees will be given adequate time to consider and respond to the proposal.	<b>Engage the community</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a sense of urgency</li> <li>Establish communication channels</li> <li>Undertake wide consultation (OSDS facilitation available).</li> <li>Encourage innovation</li> </ul>
5	Work area holds a <b>SECOND</b> meeting with employees likely to be affected to hear their comments, concerns and recommendations on the proposal. Work area advises employees that they will consider their feedback and provide a definite answer shortly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarify emerging issues</li> <li>Confirm the way forward</li> <li>Remove barriers</li> <li>Empower people to act</li> </ul> <b>Is structural change required? If yes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify potential structural issues</li> </ul>
6	Work area revises their initial change proposal, keeping in mind employees' feedback. Work area makes a <b>definite decision</b> whether organisational change will be implemented or not.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact ERMS to discuss options and strategies</li> <li>Identify potential UWA leaders who have experienced similar challenges</li> </ul>
7	Once a definite decision is made a <b>THIRD</b> meeting must be held with employees to inform them of the decision. If the decision is to implement organisational change employees must be issued with written documents outlining the extent, reasons and timeframe for change.	

## Step 4

As a result of Steps 1-3, where it is determined organisational change needs to be proceeded with, it is necessary to commence the formal organisational change process required under the Staff Agreements.

Communication is important when introducing and undertaking organisational change and providing honest and timely information will assist employees to understand the proposed change. The first formal meeting in the organisational change process should be with staff who will be directly affected. Staff should be informed how the organisational change will affect their work area. The meeting should be followed by a letter summarising the discussion and staff encouraged to provide feedback in a way they are comfortable, which could be by personal conversation letter or email. A feedback sheet may be provided to help prompt responses.

### Establish a sense of urgency

In order to engage staff in the need for change, it should be clear the change is based on a critical need to address problems. Financial or productivity concerns may be driving the need for change. In these cases, ensure the evidence is clearly outlined, the consequences of not changing are well scoped, and the criticality of moving forward is firmly outlined and understood. Openness and transparency in presenting the issues will greatly facilitate the strong engagement of staff.

### Establish communication channels

It is important to maintain the momentum for change. Harness the persuasive skills of the leadership team. These staff are critical role models who need to actively support the change and progress the agreed strategies. Meet regularly with your leadership team and provide constant updates to all staff. For significant organisational change, consider setting up a website and keep a current account of progress – particularly if many different project teams have been established but remember the most effective way to communicate is face to face.



## Step 5

The second meeting provides a chance for employees who will be directly affected by the changes to discuss their concerns and comments. After sufficient time to review the proposal, the affected staff should have the opportunity to share their comments, concerns and recommendations on the proposal. The Head/manager needs to take note of all input and then advise that the feedback will be carefully considered and a final strategy will be advised shortly. Issues raised within the meeting can be documented and either addressed during the meeting or provided as a question and answer information sheet once the meeting has concluded along with a summary letter or memo.

### Undertake wide consultation

Wide consultation through the first and second meeting ensures the best outcomes can be achieved. The ultimate solution may differ from those initially envisaged by the leadership team. Possible solutions are enriched by the collective insights of many people and change is more likely to be embraced if staff are provided with the opportunity to be involved. These discussions may be challenging as various perspectives are explained. An experienced OSDS (or external) facilitator may be available to assist with your planning and management of large consultations with the aim of making the experience a positive one for all involved.

### Encourage innovation

While reviewing and critiquing existing organisational practice, encourage innovative thought and ideas and identify whether there are any new opportunities to be explored. Observe the initiatives and strategies other institutions or Business Units have implemented, whilst considering other related bottlenecks or problems which could also be addressed.

### Clarify emerging issues

As the input from various stakeholders is collected, you will see key themes emerging. Prepare a short summary of the issues and ideas that are raised and circulate these to the work area. You may also wish to hold a further meeting to discuss these perspectives. It is important to allow staff the opportunity to think about, debate and contribute to the ongoing development of the plan. Complex change may require several revisions before the optimal strategy is determined.

### Identify potential structural issues

While you will have already discussed the broader change process with ERMS, as your change strategy becomes more consolidated, you will need to work in close partnership with them to discuss any likely changes such as a restructure or alterations to people's employment conditions or duties.



## Steps 6 & 7

After consulting with staff on the proposed changes, the work area should make a decision on the final changes. The input of staff should be considered and the initial change proposal may be revised in light of the discussions held with staff. However, the work area may also decide the original proposal for change should be maintained. The final decision should be documented, including a plan for communicating the decision to staff. Any change decided should be signed off by the Dean or Executive Director for the Business Unit. For major, institutional-wide change, the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor or Executive are required to approve the change.

A final meeting is then held to communicate the decisions and outcomes of the organisational change to staff. The work area will need to advise affected staff the nature of the changes and explain what the changes are and how these will be implemented. Information needs to be accurate, timely and contain few surprises. Both good and bad news needs to be communicated. The information should also be provided in the form of a letter/memo to all staff so they have a written record of the changes. Individual staff will also need to be formally advised if the change has significant effect on them. The discussion and the nature of the effect should be documented.

### Confirm the way forward

Once the agreed change strategy is confirmed and documented, it should be presented to all staff within the work area. Timelines and more specific outcomes can be provided, along with the responsibilities and delegations for particular project components. Identify and allocate the necessary resources, including a coordinator who can liaise with the various stakeholders and ensure you have considered ongoing communication, key milestones, and review and evaluation points along the way. It can also be useful to envision the future and remember to affirm the benefits to be generated from the change strategy.

### Remove barriers

It is likely that unforeseen barriers will be uncovered as staff look closely at established systems and traditions. Barriers might relate to structures or systems, the skills people possess, or the attitudes and responses of particular individuals. Remove any blockage to good practice, as these can greatly impede progress.

### Empower people to act

Complex change relies on the involvement and contributions of numerous staff. Delegating leadership of different project components to individuals ensures they have ownership of the process and the capacity to undertake the changes. These leaders should be encouraged to be innovative and courageous in developing the new processes. They will also need the necessary resources and authority to act. When components of the change are delegated to a range of staff it is crucial to have regular meetings to ensure the plan is being achieved.



## Phase 3: Embedding Change

STEP	UWA GUIDELINES	PRACTICAL GUIDE
8	The work area must <b>explain</b> to employees the outcome of the organisational change.	<p><b>Implementing the change process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify milestones and progress points</li> <li>• Work with early adopters and share outcomes</li> <li>• Maintain communication channels</li> <li>• Continue consultation and regular review</li> <li>• Initiate staff training and support (if required)</li> <li>• Monitor progress and quality of outcomes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Achieve quick wins</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify quick wins</li> <li>• Acknowledge change contributors</li> <li>• Celebrate with stakeholders</li> </ul> <p><b>Monitor change outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the change strategy</li> <li>• Adjust plans as required</li> <li>• Monitor staff well being</li> <li>• Evaluate the outcomes of the change process</li> <li>• Identify further refinements to be undertaken</li> <li>• Evaluate the change process and any lessons learnt.</li> </ul>

## Step 8

Once the third meeting is held, staff will need to be informed how they will be affected individually by the changes. Staff may experience changes to their role, which may result in reclassification, retraining, redeployment or redundancy. The information provided should be clear and concise to prevent staff from fearing or resisting the change. Staff may have issues to discuss about their role and ERMS can provide support in addressing any concerns.

### Identify milestones and progress points

When planning the organisational change strategy, a number of milestones and progress points can be identified, which are particular stages where measurable improvements or changes can be identified, and which enable progression to the next stage. These assist in keeping the process on track, building cohesion across the change team and also providing an opportunity to review the success of the plans.

### Work with early adopters and share outcomes

In most change settings there will be energetic, committed individuals who are keen to contribute to the new ideas and plans. They will be willing to trial new processes and to share their experiences with others. Identify suitable people and encourage their engagement with the implementation. Monitor how staff are progressing and encourage them to share their insights. Their enthusiasm and energy are important sources of motivation for others and can make a big difference within the work community.

### Maintain communication channels

With many different groups or individuals contributing to the change implementation, it is important to develop a range of communication channels. A dedicated website, regular email updates, staff forums and personal conversations with key staff all contribute to successful change.

### Continue consultation and regular review

While the initial stage of consultation may be over, the implementation phase requires the ongoing process of consultation and review. Encourage discussions and keep an open door policy so individuals can share any concerns.

### Initiate staff training and support

New systems and processes may result in staff being reassigned to new roles or work settings or requiring new skills. It is important to provide them with support so that they can operate successfully in these new work contexts. A Commencing PDR might assist those undertaking new responsibilities and newly formed workgroups might benefit from team building activities. Also consider coaching, mentoring or additional development for some of the staff in the work area. OSDS may be able to facilitate workshops for the work community or discuss avenues for support within and beyond the university.

### Monitor progress and quality of outcomes

Quality outcomes are a high priority and it is important to map and promote progress. Undertake regular reviews of the progress and monitor and address any issues which emerge during the implementation. Adapt the plan if needed so that impediments are addressed and encourage feedback so suitable responses to issues can be made. Remember to celebrate when a major milestone has been reached.

### Identify quick wins

During major change it is important to keep people buoyed up. There will be some quick wins which show the value of changing. They confirm the change strategy is on track and also affirm the benefits that will accrue. Promote the outcomes and celebrate the achievements of staff who have worked on implementing and establishing new processes. A change website, emails or meetings can be useful forums

for acknowledging what has been achieved. When choosing a win to celebrate, make sure it is relevant and valuable to the stakeholders and something which has generated benefits.

### Review the change strategy and adjust your plans as required

Change leadership requires agility. As the plan unfolds, monitor it carefully. Is it working? Are there changes which could improve results? Are there people who are finding it hard to sustain their role in the process? Is the schedule on target or does it need adjusting, or additional resources/training provided to particular groups? You might find it necessary to pilot some of the innovations rather than fully implementing initially.

### Monitor staff well being

Keep an eye on your staff. Be empathetic to the challenges they experience and maintain ongoing dialogue and support. Listen for issues which emerge and be prepared to shift resources if required. You may also find it necessary to slow the pace of implementation if staff are showing major signs of strain. Remember that the ultimate element to ensure successful change is a supportive culture which encourages shared values, assumptions and beliefs.

### Evaluate the outcomes of the change process

Maintain your support for those who are supporting the new vision. Encourage regular reviews of the new processes to ensure they have been effective in achieving the intended outcomes. Most importantly, share and affirm the successes that are evident. Acknowledge those who have contributed and discuss how these changes have influenced the overall performance of your work community.

### Identify further refinements to be undertaken

As your work area refines its systems and processes, further issues requiring review and redevelopment may emerge. Systems, structures and policies need to mesh, and some may be less compatible with the desired transformation. It is important to continue encouraging ongoing improvement. PDR discussions can also be a strong vehicle for encouraging ongoing commitment and can be used as a tool for staff buy in through development and setting goals for the next 12 months.

### Evaluate your experience of the change process and any lessons learnt

Don't forget to review the overall experience of the change process. What have you learnt? What would you do differently next time? Is there feedback you would offer the supporting staff who have assisted you? Are there stories you could/ should share with your peers? OSDS will be pleased to assist in sharing these experiences with other colleagues to help them lead change successfully too.

# Communicating Organisational Change

When communicating organisational change to staff, there are several factors which assist in achieving effective internal communications. In building a communication strategy, consider who needs to be kept informed and the information they require. While some information can be conveyed via a website or email, it is important to provide a personal interface and to enable discussion on important issues. Other tips for communicating with staff include:

- **Maintain a consistent message**

Ensure all staff have a similar understanding of what is planned and that the actions taken match the message being disseminated.

- **Practice two way communication**

Whilst providing information to staff is important, staff also need the opportunity to provide their comments and have them listened to and considered.

- **Face to face communication**

Deliver new information to staff personally rather than through written communication, particularly if the information could be interpreted as bad news. Any face to face communications can be followed up in writing as a letter, email or noticeboard memo. Remember, the majority of communication is through body language and voice tone and only 7% is through words.

- **Share the responsibility for communication**

Providing information specific to an area should be the responsibility of the Head/manager. Big picture information can be provided by the Dean/Executive Director, Head of Division or Business Unit Manager.

- **Provide both the good and the bad news**

It is important to keep staff informed of all possible changes. Specifics, such as changes to duties, level or subsequent contract terms, can be communicated to staff individually. Honest communication can assist in promoting staff unity when addressing the change. Informing staff of 'bad' news can assist in staff feeling more confident to report problems, issues and possible solutions to management. If only half the information is reported, suspicion and rumours can result.

- **Understand what your staff want to know**

Communication will be more effective if staff are provided with what they need to know, rather than only what you want to tell them.

- **Find a communication style to suit your area**

If staff in your area do not have access to computers or lack computer literacy, email will not be effective. If it is difficult to gather all staff in one place, email or intranet might be more effective. Consider the message you need to convey and the medium you are using.

Sensitive information regarding possible redeployment or redundancy should be communicated in private conversation to individual employees before other staff are informed. Smaller meetings can be effective for specific groups within the work area and a staff meeting can be followed up with a letter or email.

Good communication can promote openness and support for the implementation of new ideas, systems or strategic directions. Poor communication can have a negative impact upon productivity and staff morale and lead to uncertainty, anxiety, and resistance to change. Following a consultative approach provides a number of benefits, including;

- enabling effective participation in the process and increasing staff commitment;
- ensuring everyone receives the same message and a shared vision;
- ensuring problems are identified and dealt with;
- providing an opportunity to sell the benefits of change;
- facilitating two way communication and increasing the possibility of a smooth transition;
- allowing for the introduction of change with a minimum of disruption;
- providing an opportunity to inform/educate staff and reduce the stress related to change; and
- helping to avert potential morale issues.

When speaking with staff about the proposed changes, consider how they perceive the issues. They will be keen to know how the changes will affect them and their work. They may have particular issues to be addressed, or may resist change because they are unsure of its value. Raise as many issues as possible so that they can be addressed openly.

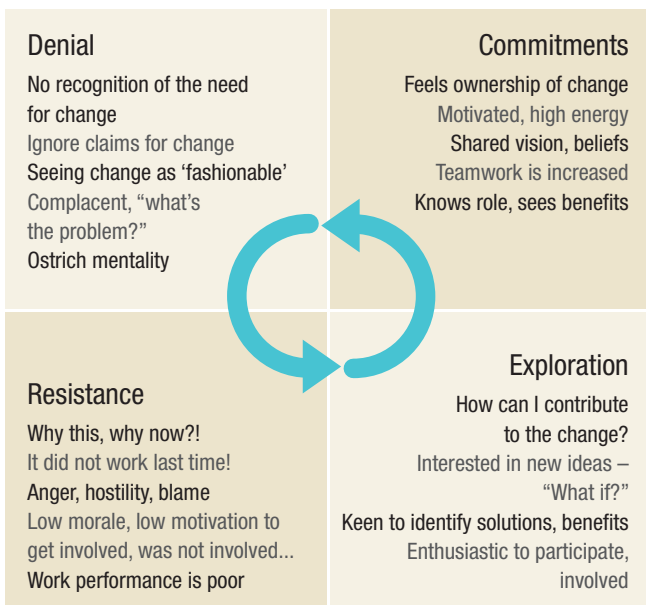
## Handling Difficulties

One of the most difficult aspects of implementing a major change in the workplace is managing the reactions of staff to the change. The following are useful questions to consider when planning how to communicate and manage the change:

1. What will you tell people when you explain why you're implementing the change? Why is the change necessary or desirable?
2. How will you "sell the change"? What are the pros and cons? What's in it for the University, your School/section or individual staff?
3. What will other staff's concerns be? How will you deal with them?
4. What will stay the same for staff? i.e. What will not be affected by the change?
5. How will you encourage involvement, ideas, feedback?

Even when good and fair processes are followed, staff will have a variety of reactions; some will welcome the change; some will find it hard to adapt to and others may actively oppose the change. Figure 1 below describes the psychological process that a person typically experiences when faced with a major change.

**Figure 1: The Change Cycle**



*Reference: From Orme, G. & Geron, S., 2002, Emotional Intelligence in Changing Times, Competency and Emotional Intelligence, vol. 9, no. 2, p. 24*

It is important to recognise that major change will often initially meet with some resistance as people experience shock. Staff may look for people to blame and will want to hear many details. During this time of reaction, do not act defensively. Put the case clearly and provide the evidence that has been collected. Allow people time to think and digest, and then be available for further discussion. Maintain an ongoing connection with your stakeholders and encourage communication, which will reduce the level of hearsay, rumour and misinformation that can prevail. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available for staff should they experience difficulty during the change process.



# Examples of Organisational Change

## Getting it right

The following is a synopsis of a restructure that has taken place within the University.

After a review of a work area's needs, management identified that the current structure was not supporting the work area's goals which included providing a "seamless" service and an increased customer focus. The current structure included four positions that had very distinct duties with no overlap. There was no provision within the structure for succession planning or leave relief. The structure was also very stratified.

Management decided to address the problems arising from the existing structure. A proposal was presented to the existing staff for their comments and suggestions. Management felt that as the current staff were aware of the goals and problems facing the work area, their knowledge and expertise "on the ground" would be invaluable to the process.

The Head/manager of the work area then brought the proposal to ERMS, who provided information about the restructure to the relevant Union. Position descriptions and the process for moving staff from the old to the new structure were then addressed. Through discussions with management and staff, and with advice from ERMS, the position descriptions were finalised. When an appropriate process was determined for moving staff to the new structure, the plan was communicated to the relevant Union. The only issue raised by the Union in relation to the overall proposal was the de-classification of one of the positions. However, through further discussions between ERMS and the Union the matter was resolved.

The new positions descriptions went to the Classification Review Committee and advertising was quarantined in the first instance to the School/section.

The positive outcomes from this restructure can be measured at the School/section and personal levels. The organisational structure is flatter than it was prior to the restructure and the salary liability has been reduced while no positions were lost. Staff were required to be multi-skilled with a resultant increase in classification, which provided the seamless service that was required and the leave relief dilemma was also addressed. Higher duties opportunities could now be distributed more equitably among the staff.

## What can happen if you don't get it right?

The following case highlights the need to ensure the consultation and change management process is right the first time: **Liz Harding Betts v Seven Network (Operations) Limited** – Australian Industrial Relations Commission (SDP Williams) – Print PR923661 – 17 October 2002. Failure to warn, discuss or consult with an employee resulted in a finding that the employee's retrenchment amounted to an unfair dismissal. Consequently the employee was awarded

damages and (in addition to the redundancy payment already received), the Commissioner pointed out that the requirement in the relevant enterprise agreement to consult in relation to impending redundancies was not satisfied by perfunctory advice on what was about to happen. Consultation was providing the individual, or other relevant persons, with a bona fide opportunity to influence the decision-maker. The reason the employer did not consult with the employee was that the workplace was a pressure cooker environment and the employer felt such discussions would cause unrest and concern amongst other staff.

The Commissioner found that the employer's explanations did not provide an excuse for the deliberate disregard of its obligations either under the enterprise agreement or generally as an employer to treat its employees with some degree of respect.

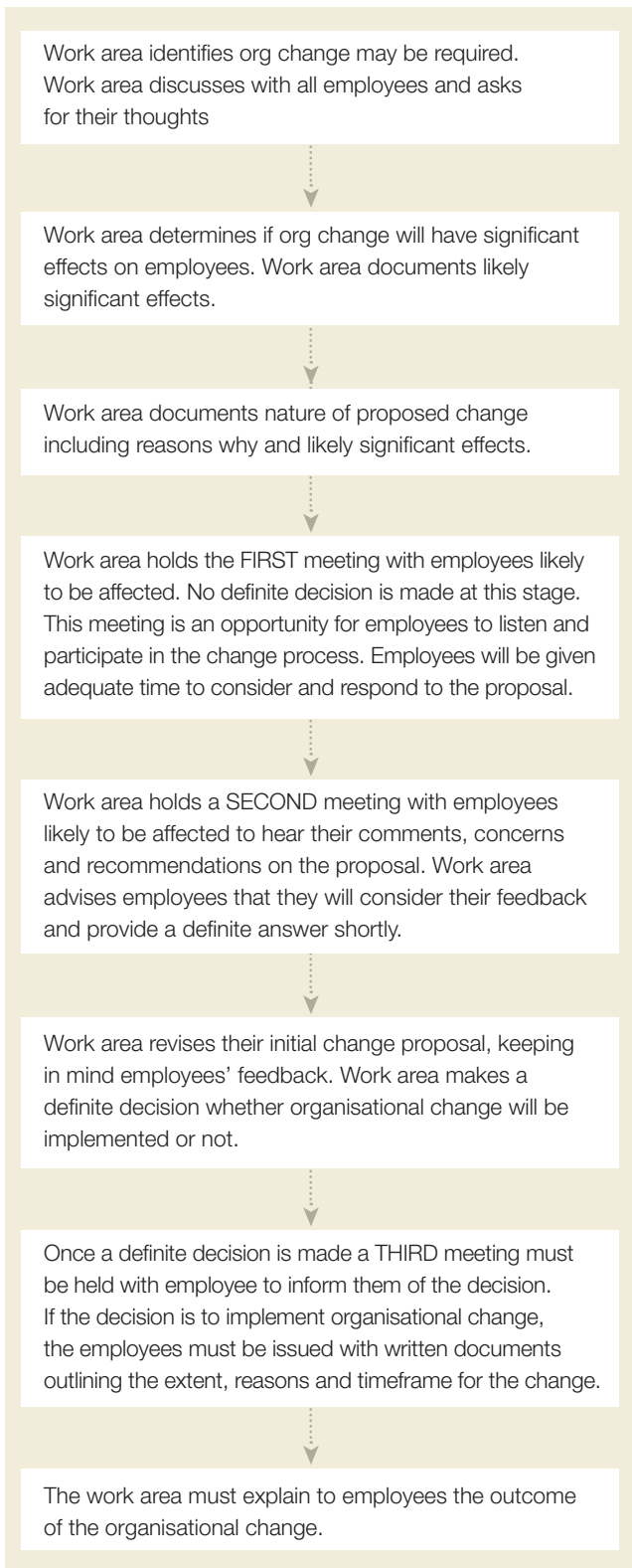
The Commissioner adopted the following statement of Commissioner Smith in the *Community and Public Sector Union v Vodafone Network Pty Ltd*:

Consultation is not perfunctory advice on what is about to happen. This is common misconception (sic). Consultation is providing the individual, or other relevant persons, with a bona fide opportunity to influence the decision maker.

Consultation is not joint decision-making or even a negative or frustrating barrier to the prerogative of management to make decisions. Consultation allows the decision making process to be informed, particularly as it may effect the employment prospects of individuals. The opportunity to seek to avoid or mitigate the effects of a termination cannot be underestimated by those who wield power over those and their families who will be the subject of the exercise of that power.

An employer's offer to consult with a Union about measures to prevent or minimise the number of employees dismissed through redundancy was found by the Federal Commission not to be a real or meaningful offer because it was made the day before an irrevocable decision to dismiss the employees was taken. Where there is a statutory obligation to give a Union the opportunity to consult about dismissals, the opportunity must be genuine and conducted in a meaningful way. However, the consultation process is not required necessarily to change the employer's decision since the requirement is for consultation and not co-determination. (*Australian Industrial Law, Newsletter 3 1999.*)

# The UWA Organisational Change Flowchart



## Contacts

### Employee Relations & Management Services

[www.hr.uwa.edu.au/hr/hr\\_contacts#erms](http://www.hr.uwa.edu.au/hr/hr_contacts#erms)

### Organisational and Staff Development Services

[www.hr.uwa.edu.au/hr/hr\\_contacts#OSDS](http://www.hr.uwa.edu.au/hr/hr_contacts#OSDS)

### Financial Services

[www.finserv.uwa.edu.au](http://www.finserv.uwa.edu.au)

### Workforce Planning

[www.hr.uwa.edu.au/hr/publications/workforceplanning](http://www.hr.uwa.edu.au/hr/publications/workforceplanning)

### Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (CATL)

[www.catl.uwa.edu.au](http://www.catl.uwa.edu.au)

### Equity & Diversity

[www.hr.uwa.edu.au/hr/hr\\_contacts#Equity](http://www.hr.uwa.edu.au/hr/hr_contacts#Equity)

### Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

All employees of the University of WA are provided with six free visits for themselves or relatives.

[www.safety.uwa.edu.au/policies/eap](http://www.safety.uwa.edu.au/policies/eap)

The two providers who offer the program for the University are:

### PPC Worldwide

Level 16, 251 Adelaide Terrace, Perth WA 6000

Phone: 1300 361 008 (24 hours)

[www.au.ppcworldwide.com](http://www.au.ppcworldwide.com)

### UWA Counselling and Psychological Services

Student Services, 2nd Floor, South Wing, Guild Building

Phone: 6488 2423 (office hours)

[www.counselling.uwa.edu.au](http://www.counselling.uwa.edu.au)

## References

### Organisational Change Guidelines

[www.hr.uwa.edu.au/hr/publications/organisational\\_change\\_guidelines](http://www.hr.uwa.edu.au/hr/publications/organisational_change_guidelines)

### Consultation on Organisational Change – Policy document

[www.hr.uwa.edu.au/policy/toc/appointment\\_and\\_employment/change\\_redundancy\\_separation](http://www.hr.uwa.edu.au/policy/toc/appointment_and_employment/change_redundancy_separation)

### Classification Review Committee Policy and Procedures - Schedule “C” of General Staff Agreement

[www.hr.uwa.edu.au/agreements/general/general\\_staff\\_agreement/schedules/schedule\\_c\\_classification\\_review\\_and\\_classification\\_review\\_committee\\_policy\\_and\\_procedures](http://www.hr.uwa.edu.au/agreements/general/general_staff_agreement/schedules/schedule_c_classification_review_and_classification_review_committee_policy_and_procedures)

### UWA Staff Agreements

[www.hr.uwa.edu.au/agreements/academic/academic\\_staff\\_agreement](http://www.hr.uwa.edu.au/agreements/academic/academic_staff_agreement)

[www.hr.uwa.edu.au/agreements/general/general\\_staff\\_agreement](http://www.hr.uwa.edu.au/agreements/general/general_staff_agreement)

### Advertising & Selection Policies

[www.hr.uwa.edu.au/policy/toc/recruitment\\_and\\_selection/advertising](http://www.hr.uwa.edu.au/policy/toc/recruitment_and_selection/advertising)

# Conclusion

Your time as a UWA leader is likely to require several change initiatives. With the right support and careful forward planning, the process can be smooth, well-managed and highly successful.

## Summary

- Seek advice from ERMS and OSDS before taking any action or making plans.
- Provide your staff with a clear rationale for the need to change.
- Encourage staff involvement in the decision-making process. Set up systems to ensure participation and engage in strong consultation.
- Confirm discussions/consultation outcomes in written form.
- ERMS and OSDS are happy to assist, but for complex change, you may also find consultants to be money well spent. They can assist with career transition, financial advice, HR advice and mentoring of you and your leadership team.
- Be aware of and recognise the emotional impact that the change management process can cause and manage these aspects constructively.
- Inform staff what you are doing and where you are going with the process.
- Deal directly and quickly with the rumour mill.
- Having staff relatively satisfied at the end of the process is highly important.
- Regularly check with staff that they understand the change process, any new roles and that redesigned workloads are manageable.
- Allow opportunities for staff to “de-brief”. If you have redesigned the work setting or duties, consider reviewing new structures about six months after implementation to identify any adjustments required.





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REVISED MARCH 2010  
CRICOS Provider Code: 00126G