2 Reasons and Stakeholders

“Leaders can only successfully encourage change if they can convincingly say: We can’t go on like this, and here’s why.”

Key factors
- People will not align with bad aims, nor engage with a plan based on obviously flawed or unethical reasoning
- This is the time to set out where we are, where we need to be, and why. How the change will happen comes later.
- By involving people, commitment and understanding builds and they tell you the things you didn’t know.

Incorporating specialist advice
Make sure that you build in the specialist advice that you have received in stage 1 so that all key requirements are considered and met right from the beginning.

Connect with the collective intelligence
Tapping the collective intelligence of the organisation is a key part of modern change management. You may not be connected to the front line activity; talk to people who are, and who are likely to be most affected by the change you are considering.

Choosing a path requires detailed consideration of various options, including doing nothing. Various tools exist to help formulate and think through different options, but the aim here is to present a compelling rationale or business case to your stakeholders. To do this you need to understand who your stakeholders are, and what their perspectives are on the potential change.

Stakeholders
A stakeholder is anyone with a legitimate interest in your activity, whether they be students, staff, management, funders, the local community or anyone else. Stakeholders have different roles, and have different degrees of influence, in your change process. It can be helpful to analyse which stakeholders are particularly influential as enablers or blockers of change, and be particularly careful about how you involve them.

Stakeholder analysis
- List everyone who has an interest in what you’re proposing to change
- For each one, assess their level of interest in your proposed change (i.e. how likely are they to be affected or have an opinion about it)
- Assess how influential they are; do they have the power to enable or prevent the change?
- If you don’t know, make a plan to find out: who do you need to talk to?
- Position the stakeholders on the following grid
Use your analysis to select stakeholders for involvement in the planning process, including scenario planning for various possible futures.

Considerable judgement is involved in deciding how to involve particular individuals. For some, a quiet word or a meeting over coffee will be enough to start the process, for others making a presentation to a department meeting or calling together a group will be better.

Template for rationale/business case

Your aim in this stage is to collaboratively construct a case for change that is understood and accepted by key stakeholders.

Use this template to focus your discussions around the key factors of:

- Reasons
- Options
- Benefits expected
- Risks
- Costs
- Timescale
- Outcome/goal

If people affected by the change have been involved in constructing this business case, they are more likely to understand the reasoning and to act as champions or at least not act as obstacles to the change process.

Change imposed from above or outside

How can you ask people to support a change you don’t believe in yourself? As a leader, it is important that you remain positive and act as an advocate for the change, while acknowledging and recognizing the concerns of the people affected. You should not convey your personal negativity, but take your concerns to more senior managers privately. This may be difficult but is an important organizational learning loop.