



Leading Through Change

10 Strategies for Keeping Your Team Engaged During Times of Change

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Like most leaders today, the demands of your job probably require you to multi-task at a level never experienced before. The old adage, *do more with less* has in many organizations, been replaced with *do whatever it takes and then some*. To be sure, the constantly accelerating pace of change is at an all-time high in nearly every organization. Not surprisingly, conventional thinking across industries concludes that it's not going to slow anytime soon. Despite this workplace reality and its related challenges, leaders at all levels must ensure a consistently high level of employee engagement during times of change. It is within this context that the following leadership strategies are presented.

1. **Do your best to stay positive.** As a leader and role model, you set the tone for your team and in many ways, your organization too. Everything you do *or* don't do impacts employee engagement at some level.

2. **Communicate clearly and frequently.** Absent clarity from you and your leadership colleagues, your employees may just feed the rumor mill. At the very least, they will be less likely to understand their role in the change equation. Key questions that nearly all employees need answers to during organizational change include, *What's happening*, *Why is it happening* and *How do we need to respond*.
3. **Stay connected to your team.** Despite having to juggle more priorities than ever before, your team still needs you to be there for them. Schedule 20 to 30 minutes of Leadership By Walking Around (LBWA) time on your calendar every week to let your team know that you're there for them and that you care about how they're doing.

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4. **Limit the amount of closed door time.** Although you may need uninterrupted time more frequently than before, the negative perception that closed doors create can add to the stress level of your team while also adding fodder to the rumor mill.
5. **Help employees access development resources.** Every employee goes through the change process in their own way and in their own time. As such, some employees need more help than others. Whether it's training, EAP or some other internal resource, offer support to those employees who struggle with organizational change.
6. **Hold periodic "how are you / we" doing discussions with staff.** Despite the fact that everyone is multi-tasking at a very high level, you still need to take the time to assess how your team is making their way through the change process. These periodic discussions can also help to define barriers that you need to remove for your team.
7. **Learn to be okay with not having all of the answers.** Because of the wide range of factors driving change in today's workplace, uncertainty at one level or another can be expected. Part of being an authentic leader is acknowledging that at times, you don't have all the answers. Accept this as both okay and quite normal.
8. **Challenge employees to find the upside of change.** Although it's often easy to focus on the negative impact of change, the truth is that in most cases, change offers opportunities to increase the value and impact of everyone's role. Reminding your team that they have found solutions in the past and that you believe in them can go a long way in helping them to discover the silver lining.
9. **Hold everyone accountable for team success.** Without exception, the success of any change initiative requires that everyone does their part. Aligning talent capacity with interest, needs and motivation often allows each team member to understand their contribution to team and organizational success.
10. **Celebrate even small successes along the way.** Every member of your team, regardless of where they are in the change process enjoys the sweet taste of success. Acknowledging efforts and impact is a powerful mechanism for building motivation and momentum toward desired outcomes.

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About David A. O'Brien

David is President of CT based WorkChoice Solutions, a trusted provider of leadership and team effectiveness consulting services that was founded in 2000. He works with a wide range of corporate and nonprofit clients to help bring about sustainable improvements in organizational effectiveness. He is also an in-demand keynote speaker on the topic of leadership excellence. His first book, *The Navigator's Handbook, 101 Leadership Lessons for Work & Life* is available on-line and in bookstores nationwide. Additionally, his many articles have appeared in a variety of local, regional and national publications. To learn more, please visit WorkChoice Solutions on line at www.workchoicesolutions.com or contact him directly at 860.242.1070.

