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Change Leadership

Wednesday, May 23
2:00 PM–3:00 PM (Eastern)
Change Leadership Webinar

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Speaker

Carla Howard
Mentor
The Professional Woman’s Mentor, LLC
Imagine...
The Data
The Great Divide...
The People Side of Change

Change Management

- Manager Support
- Training
- Manage Resistance
- Executive Leadership
- Coaching
- Communication
Executive Actions
Get Involved

Visible & Engaged
Communicate
Cultivate Support
Executive Homework...
Supporting Leaders

Where do you go?

I don’t know.
Prepare Yourself

change →
Repeat Key Messages
Remove Confusion
Coach Your Team

knowledge | training | ability | education | growth |
competence | skills | goals |
advanced training | experience | potential | learning
Be a Liaison
Manage Resistance
Celebrate!
Pay me now... or Pay me later...
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Audience Questions
Q&A: Submit Your Questions

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Thank you
Ditching Digital – Communications that Connect

By

Carla Howard, Avnet, Inc.
The Communication Dilemma

In 2014, Avnet implemented the RedPrairie Work Management System (WMS) at our Distribution Center in Chandler, Arizona. Change management resources were assigned early in the two and a half year project, and change plans were incorporated through implementation and hyper-care. One of the most critical aspects of the change management work was the development of a creative communication strategy. The WMS implementation impacted 600+ employees, with 350 of the most impacted employees working in our distribution center. These employees have little or no access to email, and to complicate the communication challenge further, English is a secondary language for many. Our change management team quickly learned we would need to ditch electronic communications for our largest group, and use innovative ways to ensure employees made a successful transition. Change management was identified early on as vitally important in achieving project objectives, which included no interruption of service to customers and suppliers.

Communication Mistake

Knowing we couldn’t rely on digital communications for the distribution center employees was a double edged sword. While email is the least effective method of communication, it is by far the easiest to deploy. The absence of this option created a void that was much more difficult to fill than we anticipated.

What did we do? The change management team created a monthly newsletter, posted copies to employee bulletin boards, sent electronic copies to leaders for distribution in their areas, and monitored how many people picked up a copy. We thought we’d solved our communication dilemma! When we saw the number of employees who had picked up a newsletter, it was back to the drawing board:

- 1st month – 63
- 2nd month – 23
- 4th month – 22

Clearly our communication strategy was not reaching the 350+ employees whose work was about to change significantly.

Moving away from digital communications was the right approach, however; the newsletter wasn’t effective. Our next step was to spend time talking to people on the floor to find out why they weren’t reading the newsletter, how they preferred to receive information, and equally important, how they didn’t want to requests. Included in many employee pay structures are incentives for meeting quotas for shipping, picking, packing and other elements of the shop floor. Add in the stress of removing key employees from day-to-day work activities to support our project, and you have a picture of the landscape for our primary group impacted by the RedPrairie implementation.

The Workforce

Landscape of the Primary Impacted Group

Think for a moment about the distribution center or warehouse environment in your company. It’s a busy place! At all times of the day you’ll see people picking customer orders, packing material for shipment, loading and unloading trucks, putting away new product, handling returns and damaged goods, and managing mountains of paperwork. Extra work effort is required to expedite product, respond to customer and sales inquiries, and manage the complexities of special handling and custom
receive information. Armed with feedback, it was back to the drawing board to create a comprehensive communication strategy that included multiple delivery channels, and it didn’t include the newsletter we originally thought was the answer to our problem. The number one reason the newsletter didn’t work was that people on the floor were simply too busy to read it! Additionally, taking time to read the newsletter would take them away from their core job. This would have resulted in negative impact on the day’s production numbers, which ultimately impacted their pay. We definitely had to do something different for this unique population.

Fixing our Mistake

Right away the change management team realized it wouldn’t be wise to completely eliminate digital communications. This method worked very well for leaders and the broader organization, so we incorporated email, project updates, and internal news articles on a limited basis.

Other techniques we found effective with our non-digital community included:

Communication Board

The communication board was a 6’ x 5’ bulletin board placed at the end of the busiest hall in our facility. Everyone working on the floor passed it multiple times a day on the way to their work areas, time clocks, ESD (electrostatic-sensitive device) stations, tool checkout, personal lockers, and the lunchroom. The board was updated every Monday, and everyone knew this was the place to learn what they should know for the coming week. Simple eye catching messages in large print were created on a plotter. Messaging was designed so an employee could quickly learn project details as they walked by. Occasionally you would see people reading the content a bit more closely, more often information was consumed within 5 – 10 seconds.

Feedback Boxes

Next to the communication board we placed feedback boxes. Note cards and pens were attached to a beam to make it easy for employees to use. This provided an easy way for distribution employees to ask questions and provide feedback to the project team.
**Count Down**

Neon poster boards and flipchart stands were used to create count down displays which were placed next to the communication board. The time marker started 30 - 45 days prior to significant events. These displays were excellent for increasing awareness on the training launch and go-live schedule. One word of caution if you use this method, be sure to build in a plan for someone to update the count down over the weekend and during holidays if employees are working.

**Table Tents / Café Plastic Cards**

Plastic flip card displays (left below) were placed on all of our lunchroom tables. Each display contained 5 – 8 index card sized messages. Information cards were updated several times a month.

Table tents (right below) highlighted the project name and go live timeframe. These could be found on conference room tables, cafeteria tables and desks of leaders.

**Plastic Locker Sleeves**

Project messages were slipped into sturdy plastic holders and attached to lockers with Velcro tape. Every Monday when the communication board was updated, the previous week’s information was displayed in these locker updates. This served as a reminder for those who saw the board, and was a way to reached people who may have missed the communication board message from the previous week.

We used the same message approach and process near time clocks, over the ESD stations, and at the counter where tools were checked out.

**Hanging Banners**

Vinyl banners measuring 3’ x 5’ were hung throughout the distribution center. The top two below were used to socialize the name of the project and included important go-live messages. The bottom banner was a celebratory banner that was very popular and
served as recognition for the distribution center employees. The section between the red and black band was reserved for signatures from the project team, preprinted signatures of the executive leadership team were in the black band, and the large white area on the right was reserved for all employees to sign under the “We Did It!” heading. The banner hangs in the main walkway as a reminder of the successful RedPrairie system implementation and recognition of the strong support and teamwork from distribution center employees throughout the project.

Leader Talking Points

Each month, talking points were created and distributed to leaders with direct reports impacted by the change. The content focused on project status, next steps, and information leaders needed to share with their direct reports. Due dates were clear, and leaders were instructed to hold small group meetings or one-on-one’s to share project updates. Follow-up meetings were conducted to ensure messages were delivered through conversations. This document was not designed to be posted on a bulletin board or provided in hardcopy format to employees.

Stand-up Banners

Several stand-up banners delivered key messages and dates during the project. The banners we used stand 5’ tall and are 3’ in width. The metal stands are reusable and serve as a communication vehicle for future initiatives. These banners are easy to move, which we did often to attract attention from employees working in different areas of the floor.
Team Talks

Team Talk PowerPoint decks were created monthly for the site leader. He delivered the content and facilitated discussions by area (picking, shipping, put-away, customer service, etc…). Later in the project when the workload was heavy, the leader was equipped with a rolling cart and a projector to deliver the content on the floor via quick stand-up meetings. Although one deck was used for employees in all areas, discussions were tailored specifically to the interests and concerns of each group.

Contests

Several contests were run where employees could win small cash prizes, usually in the $25 - $50 range. Winners were limited to frontline employees (management was excluded), and always included knowing an element of project detail in order to win the contest. Examples of questions the employees had to answer correctly to win the contest included:

- Why are we implementing a new WMS in the distribution center?
- What is the date we will go-live with our new WMS system?
- Name three benefits the new system will bring to your work group?

Wows & Whoas Board

During UAT (user acceptance testing), the Wows and Whoas board proved to be an excellent way to collect feedback from the 40+ people testing the new system. Employees added sticky notes by area (picking, shipping, put-away, customer service, etc…) to the Wows! board when they identified a capability or feature employees in that group would find valuable. Concerns were added to the Whoas board, again by work area. Each morning, our project lead addressed the Whoas with clarification or follow-up on the concerns. Wows were used in internal messaging to help build desire for the new system.
Coach on Call

Our employees on the distribution floor wear blue smocks every day. About a month prior to go-live, we provided red smocks to the 40+ people who would serve as coaches during the transition to the new WMS. The red smocks made it easy for employees to find help, and served as recognition to our “Coaches on Call.”

GoBo

A GoBo projector displayed messages in the the distribution center entry hall. The splash of light can be adjusted to fit the size of available wall space. Our message was about 8’ in diameter. The picture shows a message from senior leaders thanking employees on the floor for a successful implementation. It included a “Thank You” note and signatures of the executive team sponsoring the project. This was displayed the week of go-live and remained in place for three months after implementation. The projector is now used for HR messaging and significant company announcements.

Recognition

When the going gets tough, a little recognition goes a long way. Just prior to our original launch date, go-live was delayed four months. The project team was exhausted and a bit disappointed that the original go-live schedule could not be met. To give the team a boost, every Monday the change management team delivered a “Thank You” gift to all 40+ team members. Most of the “Monday morning treats” cost less than $1 each, the positive impact on morale was priceless!

Each gift included a themed note. Examples include:

- Goldfish crackers – “You are O’FISHally the best project team!”
- Junior Mints – “Thank you for your commitMINT / These are for your enjoyMINT / Because of your involveMINT in the project”
- In late October, we filled Halloween themed bags with candy, stickers, and spider rings – “This project would be SCARY without you!”

Pinterest is a great resource for other ideas you can incorporate into team recognition. It’s easy to forget about thanking the project team when you are in the midst of a grueling schedule. A
little thank you can go a very long way.

Celebrate Success

We commissioned a special celebration cake decorated with an icing image of the signed thank you message from senior leaders. This cake along with dozens of cupcakes were the desert for our end of project celebration. Employees really appreciated this delicious thank you!

Make it Special

Find fun ways to make your celebration special. For the project thank you luncheon, tables were covered in colorful table cloths, plastic champagne flutes were filled with sparkling apple cider, and gift bags containing candy and party favors were given to all 400+ in attendance. Executives served in the food lines and used this opportunity to thank employees for their hard work. When you plan a celebration, don’t forget to include a plan for your night and weekend crews.

Engaging Senior Leaders

Active support of senior leaders is a necessity for project success, especially when the result will bring significant change. The WMS implementation was a two and a half year journey, so we had to build a strong framework to ensure key leaders maintained visibility and delivered effective strategic messages. Coaching leaders and providing what they need to execute their project responsibilities is a key component of leading change. Here are a few ways we made it easy for our executive sponsors to be excellent champions of the project:

- Draft project emails – Specifically, executives should send messages with details linking your project to the organization’s vision. Be sure to involve your corporate communications team anytime messages will come from C-level executives.
- PowerPoint decks – We provided slides
for town halls, executive briefings and any meetings where our executives were scheduled to present.

- **Talking points** – These can be formal, or a few bullets on a 3x5 card. Executives want to know what messages they should deliver, and equally important, what is not ready for primetime. A regular cadence for providing talking points provides just-in-time messages for your leader to deliver.

- **Executive luncheons** – We hosted a quarterly luncheon for our C-level executive sponsor and the front-line managers of the distribution center. It gave managers a chance to get to know the executive, ask questions related to the project (or other topics), and an invited was a form of recognition for managers. Our C-level executive sponsor enjoyed the opportunity to connect with floor leaders, and he left these luncheons with a clear understanding of the suggestions and concerns of floor leaders.

- **Videos** – Several videos were created to share project information. Some featured executives and operations leaders, others featured employees engaged in UAT and project team members.

- **Regular one-on-one meetings** – The change manager served as a coach to the executive sponsor throughout the life of the project. A regular meeting cadence will ensure your leader is current on the project status, issues, and their role in the communication plan.

## Measuring Success

It’s always challenging to collect metrics that demonstrate the value of change management. Our measure of success for this project was based on meeting the project budget and schedule with no reduction in same day ship metrics. Attainment to these goals were as follows:

- **Same-day ship metrics**
  - Week of go-live = missed target by 1.28%
  - Go-live + 3 months = Exceeded high end of target range. Actual attainment of 99%.

- **Employee overtime** was within budget thresholds, with a significant drop three months post go-live as expected.

- **Project Schedule / Go-live** extended four months. Reasons for extension:
  - Additional UAT cycles
  - Time required to address system response time issues

- **Project Budget** = Over budget by 0.072%. Reasons for the overage include:
  - Cost of correcting response time issues
  - Rolling resources over to support related project

In addition to project metrics, industry recognition of the new system was a measure of success. The innovative implementation of the new warehouse management system (WMS) at our distribution center not only helped Avnet better manage its customers’ and suppliers’ supply chain growth, but this successful implementation landed Avnet on the 2015 *Supply & Demand Chain Executive* 100 list for the fourth time.

## Solutions Conclusion

An effective communication strategy is key to project success. The change manager is responsible for creating communication plans that address unique challenges and audiences.
involved in the initiative. All too often we rely on email, corporate announcements, and electronic newsletters to share information. I’m not advocating a boycott of these methods. As noted in this case study, we used these traditional methods to communicate with leaders and the broader corporation on a regular basis. Used appropriately, digital communication is an effective tool. The danger lies in temptation to rely exclusively on this overused and easy to deploy method to share information.

What we once considered our communication challenge turned out to be a big contributor to success for our team. When we ditched digital for our most significantly impacted group, the change management team found fun and creative ways to engage employees, share information with the project team, and support leaders in their role as project sponsors and champions.

A few lessons you can learn from our change management journey include:

- Take time to understand your audiences, how they work and what they need to be successful in their new work environment.
- Learn how each group likes to receive information, and which channels are not effective.
- Use feedback to create plans that works for each unique group and situation.
- Engage early and often with your sponsor, and make it easy for them to be a great champion for your project.
- Ensure multiple feedback loops are included for all impacted groups. Respond to questions, concerns, and suggestions timely.
- Have fun!

A communications plan tailored to your audience will result in higher attainment of project goals, increased employee engagement, and reduced stress levels for your project team and executive sponsors. Now, there is a return on investment that will get the attention of the most frugal project sponsors and teams!
The Executive Sponsor

Checklist
The Executive Sponsor

Get Involved

- Being Visible & Engaged is critical
- Attend key event kick-offs (even if you only give the 10 minute welcome message):
  - Project
  - UAT (User Acceptance Testing)
  - Training Sessions
  - Webinars
- Hold manager luncheons to discuss progress
- Host coffee chats and round tables with impacted groups
- Create opportunities to interact with impacted groups:
  - Roadshows
  - Town Halls
  - Coffee Chats
  - Roundtables
  - Manager Lunches
  - Q&A Sessions
- Use video messaging when in-person participation is not possible
- Allocate resources
- Model the change

Communicate

- Repat often: Employees need to hear messages a minimum of 5 - 7 times
- Formal and Informal messages must be consistent
- Share the vision
- Answer these questions:
  - What is changing?
  - Why are we changing?
  - What’s at risk if we don’t change?
  - What will stay the same?
- Face-to-Face is the most effective method of communication
- Show passion and enthusiasm
- Thank employees who are driving adoption
Cultivate Support

❖ Ask senior leaders to support the effort
❖ Use facts and data to defuse emotional conversations
❖ Ask for (and listen to) managers feedback
❖ Provide support to front-line managers throughout the change
❖ Celebrate Successes

Executive Homework

❖ Ensure that the project team establishes a project name - Everyone needs to refer to the initiative by the same name
❖ Assign a change leader to manage the people side of the change
❖ Ask your change leader to be your coach for:
  ➢ What the project team needs from you
  ➢ Communications - create content & recommend timing
    ■ Communication drafts
    ■ PowerPoint decks
    ■ Talking points on a regular cadence to be shared with people leaders of impacted groups
❖ Schedule a regular meeting cadence with your change leader to discuss:
  ➢ Project communication plan
  ➢ People challenges and resistance management plans
  ➢ Which leaders you need to engage to build a strong support team
  ➢ Training & Ability strategy
❖ Celebrate!!!
  ➢ Say “Thank you”
  ➢ Handwritten Notes
  ➢ Use company reward programs
  ➢ Pinterest ideas for a low budget:
The People Leader

Checklist
The People Leader

Prepare Yourself

❖ Your team will follow your lead - Recognize your concerns and ask questions:
  ➢ How will the change impact my team?
  ➢ What will we need to know to be successful?
  ➢ How will success be measured?
❖ Allocate resources to support the change
❖ Model the change

Repeat Key Messages

❖ Deliver key messages multiple times
  ➢ 1:1’s
  ➢ Team meetings
  ➢ Casual conversations
❖ Cascade Leader Talking Points
❖ Talk about:
  ➢ What is changing & why
  ➢ What is a risk if the change isn’t implemented
  ➢ Why now is the right time for the this change
  ➢ Benefits (organizational & personal)
  ➢ Training & Support plans

Coach Your Team

❖ Ask how employees are feeling about the change, listen for ways you can provide support
❖ Understand how the change impacts direct reports
❖ Share new behaviors and skills required to be successful in the new way of working
❖ Remove barriers that prevent employees from engaging in the change
Be a Liaison

❖ Share with the project team and executive sponsor:
   ➢ How your team is feeling
   ➢ What employees need to be successful
   ➢ Concerns or issues that the project team may not aware of

❖ Share with your direct reports
   ➢ Project progress
   ➢ Clear up misunderstandings about the change
   ➢ Show your support for the project in words and actions

Manage Resistance

❖ Explain;
   ➢ What is changing?
   ➢ Why are we changing?
   ➢ What will remain the same?
   ➢ What is the risk if we don’t change?
   ➢ What are the benefits for the employee?

❖ Listen and understand objections
❖ Answer questions directly
❖ Uncover and resolve barriers
❖ Clearly articulate “What needs to happen”... let employees decide how to make it happen
❖ Provide clear choices and consequences