



UNIVERSITY
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CHANGE MANAGEMENT: ADAPTING TO ORGANISATIONAL SHIFTS

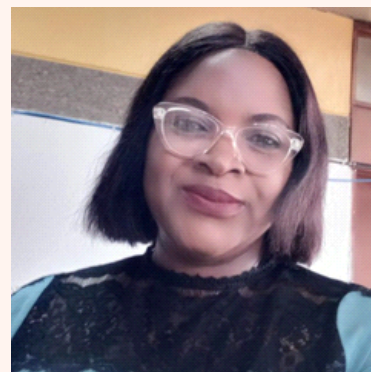
INTRODUCTION

Our previous newsletter focused on **Handling Criticism and Constructive Feedback** as essential skills for personal and professional growth. The ability to receive feedback with maturity, reflect objectively, and apply it for improvement supports trust, collaboration, and readiness for greater responsibility. On this basis, the current edition shifts its focus to **Change Management**. Feedback often reveals the need for change, whether in processes, roles, or mindsets. An administrator who can process criticism constructively is better prepared to embrace change with openness, lead others through transitions with confidence, and maintain stability amid uncertainty.

This progression from managing feedback to managing change reflects the core of effective, adaptive leadership, turning insight into action and ensuring that the institution remains responsive and resilient.

Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher, observed, "The only constant in life is change." In today's dynamic environment, organisations must evolve to remain relevant. The University of Lagos exemplifies this, embracing change as a vital component of progress.

From leadership transitions and policy reforms to technological advancements, the ability to manage change determines whether an organisation thrives or falters. Change management is not merely reactive; it is a strategic approach to sustainable growth. Lewin's (1951) Unfreeze–Change–Refreeze



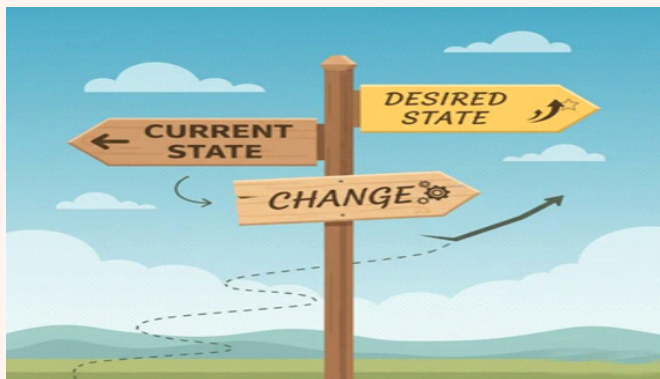
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model underscores that successful transformation requires preparation, execution, and consolidation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Change management guides individuals and organisations from their current state to a desired future. In higher education, it ensures that reforms are strategic, inclusive, and sustainable.

At the University of Lagos, initiatives such as digitising administrative systems, automating Senate and administrative processes, and integrating e-learning platforms demonstrate effective change management. These reforms have improved efficiency, transparency, and service delivery.



As Kotter (1996) warned, failure to manage transition risks stagnation. Effective change management boosts resilience, morale, innovation, and competitiveness in an evolving academic landscape.



PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Kenneth Blanchard (2007) noted in his book, *The Heart of a Leader: Insights on the Art of Influence*, “People support what they help to create.” Successful organisational change depends on key principles:

Clear Vision and Communication

Every effort must begin with a clear purpose and consistent messaging. Ambiguity fuels resistance.

Inclusive Participation

Stakeholders should be involved from planning to implementation. Participation builds trust and ownership.

Leadership Commitment

Strong leadership provides direction and credibility. Leaders must model the change they advocate.

Capacity Building

Organisations strengthen institutional capacity through continuous staff training, enabling adaptation to new systems.

Continuous Feedback

Alignment with institutional priorities should be maintained through regular monitoring and adjustment.

These principles align with Prosci's ADKAR model (Hiatt, 2006), which highlights Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement as essential stages in managing individual and organisational change.



CHALLENGES AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM

Every change process encounters obstacles, especially within academic environments rooted in tradition. Common challenges include:

Resistance to Change

Fear of the unknown and loss of control fuel resistance. Transparent communication and empathy help to ease anxiety and clarify benefits.

Resource Constraints

Limited funding or technical capacity may slow progress. Strategic prioritisation and partnerships help to optimise resources and sustain momentum.

Cultural Inertia

Deep-rooted practices may conflict with innovation. Gradual cultural alignment through incentives and recognition fosters acceptance.

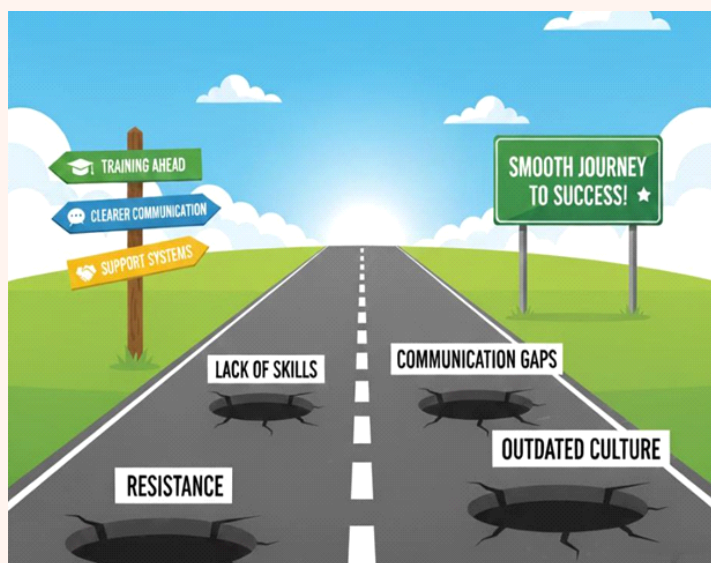
Communication Gaps

Poor information flow leads to misunderstanding. Frequent, honest, and multidirectional communication through briefings and workshops prevents confusion.

Change Fatigue

Rapid reforms can overwhelm staff. Phased implementation of change helps to maintain energy and focus.

The key to overcoming these challenges lies in proactive planning, stakeholder engagement, and cultivating a shared sense of purpose.



THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS IN MANAGING CHANGE

Administrators are the stabilising force during institutional change. At the University of Lagos, the Office of the Registrar coordinates reforms, ensures policy compliance, and maintains stability.

Administrators act as change champions, translating vision into action, communicating expectations, and supporting staff. Their roles include strategic planning, mediating concerns, motivating teams, and monitoring outcomes.

As Bridges (2009) emphasised, administrators must understand both the external process of change and the internal psychological transitions people experience. Their leadership ensures that institutional values endure even as systems evolve.

BUILDING A CULTURE OF ADAPTABILITY

Sustainable change requires adaptability as a core institutional value. This means fostering innovation, continuous learning, and flexible mindsets.

At the University of Lagos, initiatives such as automated records, electronic workflows, and digital literacy training reflect this commitment. When staff view change as an opportunity, the institution becomes agile and future-ready.

Leaders can reinforce adaptability by recognising innovation, rewarding initiative, and promoting open communication. As Schein (2010) observed, cultivating adaptability transforms change from a temporary event into a continuous way of life.



CONCLUSION

Charles Darwin wisely noted, “It is not the strongest that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.” Change is inevitable; progress through change is intentional. Effective change management blends vision with structure, strategy with empathy, and innovation with tradition. By fostering communication, leadership, participation, and adaptability, institutions can turn challenges into opportunities. The University of Lagos stands as a testament to strategic transformation, proving that, with foresight and collaboration, change leads to enduring success.