

## Changing Your Organization

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Many an expert on organizational change has noted that change most often happens in organizations because there is a sense of urgency. For Public Broadcasters, that urgency is front and foremost for a host of reasons. From the switch to digital delivery systems, aggressive competition for ears and eyeballs, to the ever-increasing social issues facing Americans today; stations are in the throes of figuring out how to do more, often with less.

Some might call it the perfect storm; local stations pondering the important question; how can we be an essential public media service for our communities who seem to need us even more? And what do we, as an organization need to change internally to succeed?

For National Center for Media Engagement, the answer is evidenced in our value statements:

- Community Engagement Efforts are services that connect stations to their communities and are catalysts to increase learning, awareness, and impact both nationally and locally
- Community Engagement by stations affirms & fortifies public broadcasting's role as an essential community institution
- Community Engagement and Program Outreach are vital to the future of public media

To succeed, or at least come close to truly having impact, requires many stations to make some changes internally. For some it may take slight culture shifts; directing more attention and focus on community and less on content creation. For others, it may require significant changes in day-to-day activities; a reshaping of what is done and what is not done.

For these stations, it's important to see that full-blown change doesn't take place over night. Plotting a course with a clear vision is imperative. John Kotter, Konosuke Matsushita Professor of Leadership, Emeritus at the Harvard Business School and author of *Leading Change* outlines an eight stage process to bring about any major changes with organizations. Clearly speaking to the importance of slow progress involving multiple players within a station, Kotter purports that although not easy, if done right it truly can transform the entire organization. The eight stages go something like this:

### **Establishing a sense of urgency**

For most stations, the urgency is there, it's deciding which crisis or opportunity is the right one to address in your community.

### **Creating the guiding coalition:**

Looking across the station, who would make the commitment to figuring it out and support the effort long-term, seeking a mix of people from upper and middle management, along with station staff from all departments. Titles should not be the guiding factor in who is involved.

### **Developing a vision and strategy**

What place do you want to have in your community – as one of the most trusted institutions of our time? Having conversation with people in the community about what they think and together creating a vision to build a stronger foundation is part and parcel to your success. Figuring out how the wider community can inform this is key to having you move forward.

### **Communicating the change vision**

One might think this is the easiest part, but this is far from declaring from on high a new vision statement. The word constant comes to mind and on many fronts. This step is about spreading ownership and understanding throughout the station.

### **Empowering Broad-based action**

Sadly enough, this is where organizations can get really stuck because this stage requires risk taking: trying something new, encouraging people to think differently, cross-department collaborations and dealing with obstacles that present themselves or are issues that have never been addressed before.

### **Generating short-term wins**

Recognizing efforts, planning small victories of change that will give those involved a sense of accomplishment and spread the idea that, with group effort from multiple levels of the station, it really can work.

### **Consolidating gains and producing more change**

Kotter asserts that this stage is a time to use your increased credibility to change more systems and policies that no longer fit the transformational vision. With enough buy-in, it reinvigorates the process with new projects and themes that will resonate in your communities.

### **Anchoring new approaches in the culture**

At this point, you have answered that over-riding question about your place in community, with community involvement, and are charting your course for future endeavors throughout the station, reflecting your community.

In many ways, how we public broadcasters are looking at the work that we do day-in and day-out reflects the changing demands of organizations in general. Where at one time we created structures that allowed for orderliness and clarity, today it is messy, requiring flexibility and nimbleness not traditionally associated with our system. Today, to have the impact we truly want to have requires careful listening with no agenda but an open mind to partners, community members and individuals often referred to as “the underserved.” The urgency that so many stations feel can propel us into a new way of connecting locally, a deeper and more sustainable business proposition that places community first. Models like Kotters’ eight steps can help you think about how to get started.