

Action Steps to “Unfreezing” Your Organization

The first step in bringing about change in your organization is something researchers call “unfreezing”. This is the process of helping our staff break out of current patterns. The following are some steps you can take to help get the change process started at your organization. Note that they aren’t necessarily in order as adjustment will need to be made for each particular situation and some things happen simultaneously or throughout the entire process.

- 1. Communicate the Need.** A critical role of a leader is to anticipate the need for change and motivate people to make the change early so that the change can be productive and not reactive. People tend to resist change, so it’s important to help your staff see why it is necessary to change by being proactive in communicating with them.
- 2. Forge a Vision.** This may be done by the leadership or by pooling the expertise of your staff. The latter can help in gaining their support for the change.
- 3. Create a Sense of Urgency.** If you have done a good job of identifying needed change before it becomes a crisis, this may be hard for you to do, but it’s vital. Give your staff enough information for them to see that the change really does need to occur and that it needs to be acted on now, rather than down the road.
- 4. Convince people of the appropriateness of the suggested solution.** After you have established the case for a move away from the status quo, you will need to additionally give information to back up why the suggested replacement is going to solve the problem.
- 5. Show Your Staff that They have the Power and Ability to Affect the Change.** Change the mood from one of discouragement in the face of adjusting to something new to empowerment. Inspire them with the vision of what can be and their vital role in the change.
- 6. Organize a Powerful Coalition.** Although your leadership in the change process is invaluable, it can be helpful to organize a coalition to spearhead the change comprised of your staff. They may know more of the ins and outs of the process and will also be able to speak to the other staff as peers.
- 7. Understand Staff Commitment.** It is important for you as a leader to be aware of the commitment levels of your staff because only those who are really committed to your organization will wholeheartedly work towards the proposed change.
- 8. Reaffirm that Leadership is Supportive of the Change.** It should be clear that you support the change. Be consistent with your staff, even if during the adjustment time there are some kinks that need to be worked out. Make sure that raises, promotions, and other forms of affirmation align with your formal stand on the change process.
- 9. Show How the Change Will Personally Benefit Your Staff.** Although ideally your staff should be behind any change that benefits the organization as a whole, it can be very helpful if you can also show how the proposed change will benefit them individually.
- 10. Communicate Values.** This goes back to convincing your staff of the need for change. Let them see how the proposed change relates to your organization’s values—which should be your staff’s values as well.