Thursday June 23, 2022

Event Synopsis | Federal Change Leaders Panel

Objective

Share best practices, lessons learned, and approaches for working across organizational boundaries, leading change through barriers of limited resources, policy/process restrictions, and stakeholder resistance, as well as driving results that can be measured and used to show outcomes.

Panelists

1. **Sandy Scarbrough**, Chief of Strategic Planning and Business Transformation at National Institute of Health (NIH)
2. **A'ndrea Jones**, Portfolio Manager of the Innovation Lab at Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
3. **Laura Szakmary**, Program Manager at General Services Administration (GSA)
4. **Tracy Koolick**, Director of Change Management & Communications at Department of Commerce (DOC)

Panelist Takeaways

NIH's Sandy Scarbrough, Chief of Strategic Planning and Business Transformation	
Ensure good sponsorship of the change	Leadership must actively and visibly endorse and support the change effort. The *Change Professional* can help coach and outfit the sponsor with a leadership engagement strategy, meaning they must role model, meet with other leaders and communicate, communicate, communicate.
Identify and engage stakeholders early and often	Provide awareness of the change and impacts to them up front and provide updates and include them in the design of the future state when they are directly impacted.
Remember that clarity is kind and effective across the board	Roles, responsibilities, goals, what behaviors need to change, expectations of stakeholders. All this needs to be clear or you leave room for confusion, rumors, misunderstanding.
HUD's A'ndrea Jones, Portfolio Manager of the Innovation Lab	
Before you start rolling out change, develop stakeholder allies	Kind of a user-centered design model. This will serve you well at every step on the change when support is needed. Even in our virtual/ hybrid environment people feel like that matter. This will help overcome resistance and others may speak up for you when you are not in the room.
Publicly acknowledge any changes that was made because of feedback	This will help to create allies. Have the leaders of the change acknowledge it also to show good will toward the people affected by the change. This may start to foster buy in, acceptance of change and innovation.

Prioritize user and customer experience	Pay attention to ease of use, service and user design that effects the experience of those effected by the change.
GSA's Laura Szakmary, Program Manager	
Communicate strategically and realistically	It is not always about sharing the most information. Don't speculate on unrealistic timelines or goals. Communicate what you have when you have it but let the information speak for itself.
Do what you can!	OCM is a growing field, and your leadership may not have/want to devote a lot of resources to a full OCM strategic plan. Pick up templates and change strategies where you can, do proofs of concept, show leadership how OCM tactics contributed to the final outcomes.
Ask employees to help solve problems, and don't ignore their input!	Time and time again I see employees be asked to be part of the problem-solving taskforce for a new change, only for their input to be ignored and leadership to do what they wanted in the first place. It's impossible to take all suggestions but the biggest way to ostracize employees before a change is to ignore tangible efforts they have done to improve the change process.
DOC's Tracy Koolick, Director of Change Management & Communications	
Begin with empathy	No matter how logical the change, it will represent a threat and uncertainty to many (probably most) of the people who will have to transition. Keep this in mind and use it as a lens for all communications and interactions will your stakeholders.
Plan but stay agile	Have a plan/roadmap of activities and communications but stay open to tweaking or altering based on feedback from your stakeholders. Allowing your participants to tell you how best they will receive your message or what they need to complete the transition will ensure their buy in and ultimately your success.
Establish a continuous feedback mechanism	Even after the transition is complete, even after the 'hyper-care' period has ended and the change is declared a success, you need to keep listening. We don't know what we don't know. As time goes on and adoption peaks, unidentified gaps and nuances will present themselves and need to be addressed. Staying 'in touch' somehow with your stakeholders and getting a periodic temperature check allows you to address or mitigate those issues and has the added benefit of creating trust and good faith in your ability to successfully manage the next change when it comes down the path!