

Seven principles for effective change management

Sustaining stakeholder
commitment in higher education





The higher education community is under significant pressure to change—in all sorts of ways. Various change initiatives include efforts to become more operationally efficient and effective, improve student outcomes, increase access to higher education, control costs, recruit and retain top faculty and researchers, and more.

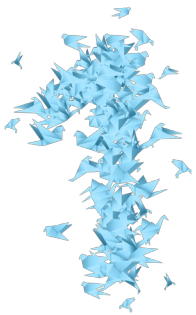
Effective transformation in these areas requires an enterprise-wide approach that seeks to improve and enhance organizational models, operating processes, technology, leadership, and talent models.

In many cases, the institution's resources are focused solely on the project itself. That means little attention is often paid to driving stakeholder commitment—the need to bring influential people, as well as individuals who will be impacted by the change, on the journey.

The primary goal of stakeholder commitment (or “change management” as it’s commonly referred to in consultant-speak) is to facilitate and sustain the enthusiastic acceptance and adoption of new strategies, technologies, and processes. But far too often, change management is given short shrift. The unfortunate result: sub-optimal outcomes.

Seven change management principles

What can colleges and universities do to be able to deliver more desirable outcomes? Take these seven change management principles to heart:



Start with the end in mind.¹ Successful change initiatives typically begin with leaders, who should be in alignment before the project is launched. To gain this alignment, all major stakeholders who will be affected by the change—and who can influence the changes being implemented—should be brought together.

This includes people who may oppose the changes. So it's important to seek out individuals at all levels of the university who have criticized current processes and called out for new ones. Engage these stakeholders from the start, recruit key individuals as champions, and enable them to recruit and create more champions in turn.

Knowing what leadership wants to achieve—and having a clear vision of how much better things will be if the contemplated initiative is successful—is key to effective alignment and core project communications. But the people on the front lines shouldn't be overlooked. After all, they're the ones who will likely need to actually implement the change. When employees are included at the early stages, helping to shape the solution, they're more likely to adopt that solution.²



Understand the institution's culture. It's critical that leaders take time to understand the institution's existing culture before embarking on a change initiative. Any undertaking that doesn't align with, act on, or uphold the institution's values will likely encounter resistance.

That's why leaders of change management initiatives should go to great lengths to visibly reinforce the culture and model the desired behaviors. They should also understand how they fit with the culture, using that awareness to drive positive change. And they should connect with employees' hearts and minds, aligning to a common purpose.

This may require seeking out individuals in the larger virtual higher education ecosystem with direct knowledge of the institution in question, such as former deans, provosts, or administrators. Take the time to do this vital research.



Communicate, communicate, communicate. Different people consume information in different ways. While email may be sufficient for some, others immediately delete an email before even opening the message. Some consume information posted on intranet sites, which others only visit to do their time and expenses. Some prefer the experience of hearing information from leaders and colleagues, but others invent all kinds of creative ways to avoid staff meetings. And some have grown to appreciate receiving information through digital devices and social media, while others feel overwhelmed by all the apps fighting for their attention.

Know the media that work best for your audience. It's likely that the same information needs to be communicated in various ways—through numerous vehicles and with substantial opportunities for multidirectional dialogue—to create the critical mass of knowledge needed to make the message matter.



Walk a mile in the shoes of those whose roles will change. The employee experience should be treated the same way as the customer experience. Therefore, it's important to understand every step of the change journey for faculty, staff, and administrators and how it could affect their day-to-day work.

Every organization—and every change management initiative—is unique. But these seven principles apply across the board, and they can improve an institution's odds of realizing the envisioned benefits.

Create win-wins and align incentives.³

Find ways for the university, departments, and individuals to benefit from the envisioned changes. One university, for example, brought together the heads of central administrative units, where line authority was strong and not affected by academic governance, to develop its first shared service center. The comptroller's office, payroll, human resources, facilities, procurement, and internal audit, which have their own internal administrative units, designed a shared service center to meet all the units' needs.

Staff in all these offices routinely worked with many departments across the university. Therefore, they were able to share successes—such as personnel savings and process efficiencies—with their colleagues. Managed contagion followed.

Embrace relentless incrementalism to help achieve radical change.⁴ Starting with a bold goal in mind and taking small steps relentlessly can build organizational capital in the same way that compounding annual investment returns can build wealth.



You won't get what you don't measure.

That's why it's critical to ensure that leadership is aligned on the project's vision and change management success criteria from the start. In addition, it's important to create mechanisms for objectively measuring and monitoring success. The resulting data and insights can then be used to continuously calibrate the change management plan to the reality on the ground.

How Deloitte can help

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Our services and solutions include:

- **ChangeScout**, an organizational change management application that helps manage stakeholder relationships, align change impacts, plan interventions, and more.
- **ConnectMe™**, a solution that helps simplify the workplace experience and increase HR effectiveness by connecting faculty, staff and administrators to what matters most through a personalized destination, delivered where and when they need it.
- **CulturePath™**, a comprehensive diagnostic solution that helps organizations drive precise and targeted cultural change.
- **EngagePath™**, a cloud-based solution that uses real-time insights and tools to help organizations measure and transform employee engagement.

Contact

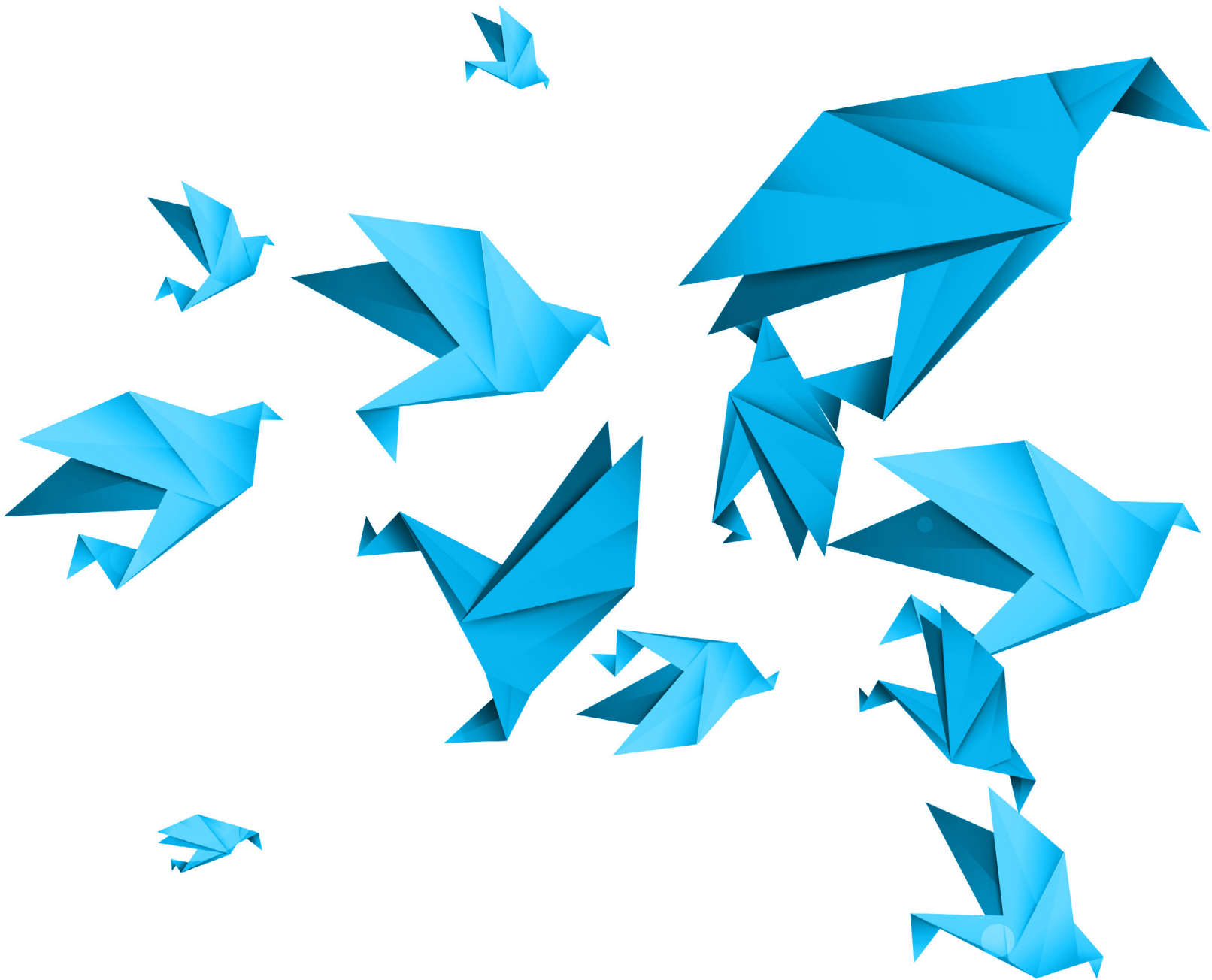
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Endnotes

1. A nod to "Begin with the end in mind," which is step two in Stephen R. Covey's book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*.
2. For more information, see *The Organizational Challenge: IT and Revolution in Higher Education* by John Curry.
3. This is a modification of Covey's "Think Win-Win," the fourth habit in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.
4. See *The Organizational Challenge* by John R. Curry and Susan Mehringer, as well as further elaboration by Debra E. Meyerson in "Radical Change, the Quiet Way," which appeared in the October 2001 issue of *Harvard Business Review*.





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