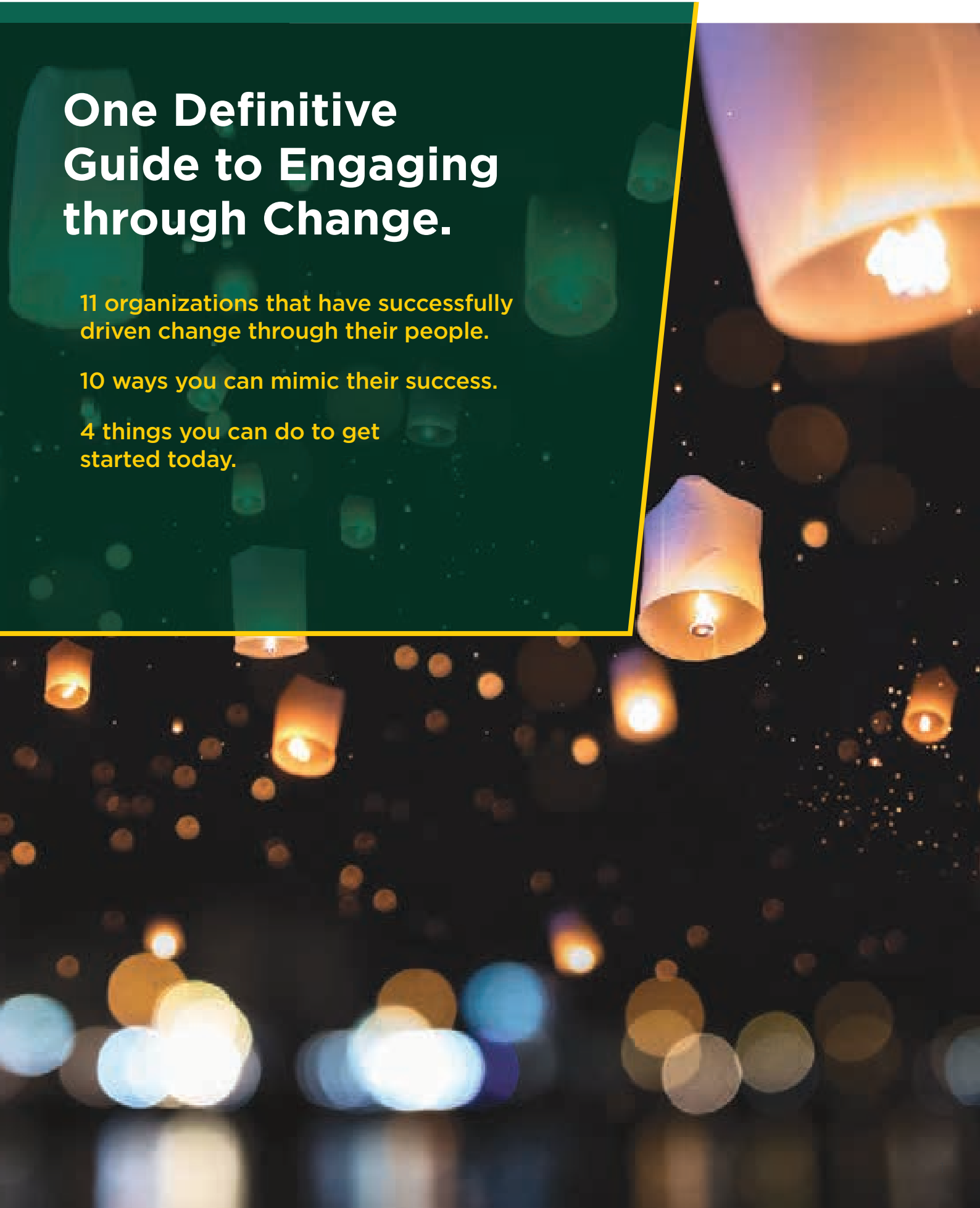


One Definitive Guide to Engaging through Change.

11 organizations that have successfully driven change through their people.

10 ways you can mimic their success.

4 things you can do to get started today.



There's never been a better time to be an HR or engagement professional.

In today's frenetic business world, most organizations are either going through a change or about to embark on one. And even if yours isn't one of them, it will be—sooner or later.

You're in a unique position to help. If you can create the environment to engage and enable your people, your organization will be nimble, adaptable, and ready for change before it even happens. And you'll be able to show why engagement is crucial to business success.

But while change makes engagement more important, it can also make it more difficult to achieve and maintain. Change puts a strain on the exchange relationship: Your organization will most likely expect more from employees, such as doing more with less and working in new ways. And your employees will expect more in return, such as visionary leadership and an answer to the question "What's in it for me?"

These influences can make it harder to engage your people and then keep them engaged. Which means you need to be more focused and intentional about how you build and measure your engagement program.

This report will help you.

To compile it, we asked CEOs and engagement leaders from 11 global organizations to share their practical advice and real-life experiences of engaging through change. And we combined their stories with everything we know from our research and our work with clients—as well as what we've learned from living and breathing change as Korn Ferry.

The result is your guide to driving, managing, and measuring change. Let us know what you think. And if you'd like us to help you engage and enable your people, get in touch.

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Contributors

We'd like to thank the following people for sharing their experiences of engaging people through change.

The company	The people	The change challenge
AstraZeneca	Lisa Naylor , Senior Director, Talent Development	To roll out a new strategy and culture that would turn this pharmaceutical giant from a commercial organization into a science-driven one.
BASF Australia and New Zealand	Ross Pilling , Chairman and Managing Director Eike Croucher , Head of Corporate Affairs David Hawkins , Head of Corporate Functions and Transformation	To transform the operating model and culture of this chemical company so it could continue to grow in tough market conditions.
Dixons Carphone	Karen Rooney , HR Director Matt Hussein , Communication-Channels Manager Kirrie Kendall , Head of Internal Communications	To integrate people, places, and processes after the electronics retailer Dixons merged with the mobile-phone expert Carphone Warehouse.
Menarini Asia-Pacific	Christopher Tay , Chief Administrative Officer	To move the pharmaceutical company from being a services-based organization to a brands-based one—and expand into Asia—after a change in ownership.
Metinvest	Natalia Strelkova , HR Director	To keep the business going (and keep people engaged) at this group of steel and mining companies during armed confrontation in Ukraine.
National Bank of Fujairah (NBF)	Abdulla Aleter , Head of HR	To engage and enable employees so they could better deal with the challenging conditions facing the financial services sector after the Great Recession.
Nord Anglia Education	Nicky Duggan Redfern , Group HR Director	To integrate 10 new international schools into Nord Anglia Education's fast-paced and challenging culture and work environment—tailoring the transition for each one.
Rexam	Mehmet Kocum , Organization Effectiveness Manager	To engage employees at a major beverage-can maker through a long and unsettling acquisition process.
Telenor	Trine Ronningen , Global Specialist, Organization and Culture	To carry out a strategy change that focused this multinational telecom company on digital connectivity and being a partner in its customers' lives.
Virgin Australia	John Borghetti , Chief Executive Officer	To implement a new CEO's strategy by turning a struggling low-cost airline into a successful full-service one.
Vodafone New Zealand	Antony Welton , HR Director	To put the focus firmly back on the customer when employee engagement dropped a year after the telecom company bought TelstraClear.



Engaging through Change

Just 15 years ago, change was something that disturbed long periods of calm.

Now you can drop into any organization, in any sector, anywhere in the world, and chances are you'd find some kind of change underway.

This could be a major change, such as a merger or acquisition, a new CEO, or a period of rapid growth. It could be a response to the disruptive power of digitization, the complexity of globalization, or increasingly demanding customers. Or it could be the constant change that's part of simply staying afloat in today's dynamic business environment—let alone getting ahead.

None of this is going away anytime soon. But wherever you work, whatever your change, and whenever it happens, one thing will always apply: Organizations don't drive change. People do.

So while your CEO can announce a total turnaround in strategy, or your company's shareholders can approve an acquisition, no change will succeed without the help and buy-in of your people.

Which means your role is only going to become more important.

STOP!

Before you turn the page, ask yourself these questions.

They'll help you to understand where you are now and plan for what you need to do next.

- Q:** Has your organization been through a change before? If so, what did you learn (from your failures as well as your successes) that you can apply this time?
- Q:** What's the burning platform for the change? Does it excite and engage you? And are you ready to be a sponsor for it?
- Q:** Have you identified a core group of people you can bring together as a team to live, breathe, and drive the change?
- Q:** What are you and your team going to stop doing so you can focus your energies on the change? And what are your must-win battles?

3 reasons to read this report

If you're an engagement or HR professional, *Engaging through Change* will:

- 1** Help you to **predict how your people might react to change**—then adjust your engagement approach, including how you gather and use employee feedback, to tackle those issues.
- 2** Show you **10 key ways** to engage and enable as many of your people as you can.
- 3** Give you **four steps you can take today** to start driving engagement in your organization—whether your change starts today, next quarter, or next year.

How to Make an Impact in the Change Process

As an engagement or HR professional, you're in a unique position to help make your change program a success. But what exactly is your role during the process?

To really make an impact, you need to be:

- **bold:** to challenge at the top
- **aware:** to observe how change is affecting the people driving it
- **collaborative:** to work effectively with the teams who can help make change happen

Here's how to do it.

Be bold

Your CEO drives the change. But you're the one who best understands what engages and enables the people in your organization. So if you aren't currently part of the change conversation, you should be.

Your role is to help articulate the top team's vision, challenge their thinking, and coach them to lead by example. Otherwise, your employees will soon lose trust.

But being bold isn't just about managing upward. It's also about tackling the difficult things quickly and making tough decisions that may affect engagement but are still the right thing to do. And it's about recognizing when you have to just drive off the cliff and start the change (what BASF Australia and New Zealand calls "that *Thelma and Louise* moment").

"As an HR professional, don't be afraid to make yourself heard. Be bold, confident, and fight for what you believe in. That's how you'll influence a situation."

Natalia Strelkova, HR Director, Metinvest



Be aware

When you're part of a team that's driving or managing a change, it's easy to forget that you're all going through it too. Use what you observe to help test and adapt your engagement approach. Try out new engagement ideas on your team before you roll them out more widely. Sit down with your team at key points during the change to get a sense of how the whole organization is feeling. And look at how the people in your immediate circle are reacting to the change. How can you use that to tailor your engagement approach to different groups?

“ We all tend to look to HR and leaders for answers, forgetting that those people are also debating what the new organization means for them, their role, and career.”

Kirrie Kendall, Head of Internal Communications, Dixons Carphone

Be collaborative

Start by building a core team that lives and breathes the change. As it set out to transform its operating model and culture, BASF Australia and New Zealand got a small group together to challenge the status quo and set the framework for success.

You'll then need to work closely with your top team, as well as with internal communications, the wider HR team, and key partners within the business. And don't forget to talk to marketing: trying to change behavior is part of their mind-set, so we're increasingly seeing these teams put their hands up too. Make sure that everyone who wants to get involved is on board with the change and understands their role in making it happen.

“ Our comms team has a business partnering model, so their relationships with other parts of the business are very well established—and they get involved early. This means we can really help to lead and influence the communications, particularly around change.”

Karen Rooney, HR Director, Dixons Carphone

**Making It
Happen**





No two changes are the same. And many factors influence whether they succeed or fail.

But we know from the 11 organizations we spoke to for this report—and from our work with clients—that these 10 dos and don'ts will help you engage and enable your people. Which will make your change more likely to succeed.

You'll find more detail on all 10, as well as practical steps to take for each, over the following pages. For a quick guide, see **4 Ways to Get Started Today** on page 32.

“You don't transform a company through its structures, systems, and processes alone; you do it through people—all of whom go through their own personal transition.”

Trine Ronningen, Global Specialist, Organization and Culture, Telenor

Do:

- 1 Engage before the change.
- 2 Be crystal-clear in your communications.
- 3 Set your leaders up for success.
- 4 Support and equip your managers.
- 5 Involve your people.

Don't:

- 1 Treat change like a one-off event.
- 2 Think all your people will react in the same way.
- 3 Assume engagement's all down to you.
- 4 Expect to take everyone with you.
- 5 Stop—become change-agile instead.

DO:

1 - Engage before the change.

“Don’t wait for change to happen. Develop good employee engagement levels beforehand. It’ll mean your people are better placed to weather the storm.”

Natalia Strelkova, HR director,
Metinvest

- **Work out your “why”—from the top.**

For any change to succeed, your senior leaders need to buy into what your organization’s trying to do first—otherwise it won’t pass down the chain. So get those people together to help them to understand and shape the “why.”

Senior leaders also need to act as role models. Sometimes, that means showing that change starts at the top. We helped BASF Australia and New Zealand create a new leadership team, which Eike says “set the scene about where we’re going and how we’re going to get there.” The company then got the 50-strong extended leadership team together. “It helped them to understand what they were accountable for and empowered them to cascade the new way of working down the organization,” says Ross.

- **Establish a core team of people who will run the change program.**

Brainstorm with your executive team who should be on this team. Ideally, it should include your key internal stakeholders as well as role models and change champions from across the business. It’s also important to include influencers who could potentially block the change. And of course, it’s important that it include you! So if this team already exists but you aren’t a member, make sure you become one now.



- **Build trust in your employee-engagement survey.**

If your people know that giving feedback brings results, they'll be more likely to see the value of surveys during change. And you'll get insights you can build into your change program, as well as a benchmark to measure against. So start surveying your people before your change happens. Telenor has been running its global engagement survey for seven years, and Trine says that people have "got used to treating it as the mechanism for telling us what they think of what's going on in the company."

- **Use the results to get your people into a good place.**

Your people will cope better if engagement's already high when the change hits. So make sure you have an effective action-planning process in place, and that people see visible changes in response to their feedback. Thanks to the actions Metinvest took after it began running annual surveys—such as making managers less directive and changing its incentive system—engagement rose steadily. So when military operations started two years later, employees were ready to weather the storm. And engagement went up, not down.

- **Give your people time to prepare.**

Getting ahead of the change can help limit the impact on engagement. When news broke that its biggest competitor was going to buy the company, Rexam moved quickly to develop new engagement objectives and a plan for delivering them. The outputs included a "Working through Change" toolkit, along with career-development and career-transition workshops.

To get your own people ready for change, make sure you have a communication plan in place well in advance, and run team sessions or workshops so people can think about the change before it happens. It'll help to build energy and excitement for what's ahead.

- **Be clear about who you are and what you expect from people.**

The team at Nord Anglia Education had a clear idea of what was required to help integrate their 10 new schools: entrepreneurial, agile, and resilient people who could both roll their sleeves up and be strategic. Understanding the culture of the organization, and what it expected of its employees, made it far easier to ensure that the right people were in the right seats on the bus—and enabled high performance from the start.

To do this in your organization, start by defining with your executive team the behaviors needed to deliver the change. Meet with key stakeholders, such as heads of business units and HR colleagues, to create competency models for key roles throughout the organization. Then work out how you'll communicate those behaviors: what they are, how your organization will measure them, and what they look like in practice—including how to spot them in interviews.

DO:

2 - Be crystal-clear in your communications.

“The first thing we’ll do is build our change story—so people understand why we’re doing this, why it’s needed, and what it means at the end of the day for each and every one of them.”

Trine Ronningen, Global Specialist,
Organization and Culture, Telenor

- **Commit to communicating and measuring more.**

During a change, the future can look a lot cloudier and more uncertain than before—which can make employees clamor for information.

If managers and leaders don’t have all the answers, or are wary of saying the wrong thing, the vacuum that results will soon fill with rumor and speculation. So, at the start of your change, commit to working with your leaders and internal communications team to create and measure frequent, clear, and consistent communications.

Start by determining with the core change team what the key milestones are that you’re going to communicate—those important points that indicate progress in the direction of change. Create a detailed communication plan that allows enough time to prepare the messages, get managers on board, and communicate to employees. Do this for each milestone. Then use your employee survey and pulse surveys to check that the message is getting through at all levels and to gather success stories. If you spot gaps, revisit the plan with the core team.

Finally, give managers easy tools for gathering feedback at team meetings and sending it back to you.

- **Tell a compelling story...**

Our contributors were unanimous about the importance of communicating the “why”—a clear and compelling vision of the future. It’s vital for engaging employees and forms the heart of your overall change story. It becomes even more important when the change has negative effects for your employees.



First, you'll need to make sure the core team understands and supports the "why" in detail. To do this, run a story workshop with your leaders. Ask everyone to explain the reason for the change in one sentence, then have someone ask "Why?" at least five times. It's easy for people to agree and align with a single statement, but when you start to delve into the detail using the five "why" questions, you'll be able to spot inconsistencies and misalignment.

But "why?" is just one question you'll need to answer. Employees also need to know what the change is, how you want them to behave differently, and what's in it for them. Share what you're going to keep as well as what you're going to change, or people could feel you're condemning all the hard work they've done over the years.

- **...and make sure everyone sticks to it.**

Everyone who talks about the change—whether that's a frontline manager, a press officer, or a hiring manager—needs to tell the same story. Brainstorm how you'll do this through multiple channels (films, town halls, leaders' briefings), multiple times, and in multiple ways. Dixons Carphone gave briefing packs to its leaders to make sure messages about the merger didn't become corrupted as they moved down the chain. "These were a massive help in building on our story," says Kirrie. "But they also helped our leaders to go through the change themselves."

Back up this story by incorporating the behaviors and values of your change into your performance-management systems. Use role models and recognize the right behaviors.

- **Be honest, transparent, and authentic.**

The bigger the impact of the change, the more important it is that you be straight with your people. From the very beginning, BASF Australia and New Zealand was very open about the fact that transforming its operating model and culture would mean significant organizational changes. And the team provided a timeline (which they stuck to), so people knew when they'd hear more.

This honest approach builds trust. If you can also be authentic and make your story relevant to people's lives, your communications will pack an extra punch. To do this, put yourself in the position of a number of different people within the organization (across different functions and job levels) and explain the "why" from their perspective and that of their customers. How might the change affect them in the short and long run? (You can role-play this with your team if it's easier.) Then use what you've learned to tailor your communications for key groups.

Dixons Carphone used its people's shared passion for technology to tell its change story in a meaningful and engaging way. At AstraZeneca, leaders use real, relevant language instead of "corporate speak." And Nicky from Nord Anglia Education cautions against using language that sounds like you're dictating. Developing and applying a checklist of change-communication principles will help colleagues strike the right tone.

- **Use your channels for two-way communications.**

Your communication channels can be a valuable extra source of feedback. Start by sitting down with your communications team to list all the channels you currently have available—both formal and informal. If you're an international company, speak to people on the ground to find out what works best in their markets. And make use of channels that already exist rather than swamping people in new ones when they might already be feeling overwhelmed by the change.

Use the feedback you gather to flex your communication approach to suit different groups and situations. When its customer-service team expressed concerns about how they'd adapt to the new operating model, BASF Australia and New Zealand listened to them, then explained why the new way of working would be better. "Acting quickly, and being flexible with our communications plan, was key," says Ross.

DO:

3 - Set your leaders up for success.

“It’s like when the attendants go through the safety instructions on a flight and they tell you to put the mask on yourself before you help others. To lead change, you need to help yourself before you help others. Because if you’re not able to help yourself, you won’t be a good leader for anyone else.”

Trine Ronningen, Global Specialist,
Organization and Culture, Telenor

▪ **Coach and develop your leaders.**

Leaders have the most influence on how teams experience and adapt to change. But recent Korn Ferry research shows that on average, half of first-level, midlevel, and high-potential leaders aren’t actively driving strategic change.

To tackle this, start by understanding the skills, experiences, and traits that lead to great performance, and assess your leaders against them. Check that your current leadership-development strategy includes all levels of leaders and reflects the change you’re going through. Then look into using specialist leadership-development and coaching programs to help your leaders build the necessary skills, and develop the right mind-set, to lead through change. When AstraZeneca wanted to move from a commercial to a science-driven organization, for example, we worked with its change team and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to create a bespoke leadership-development program.

If budget is an issue, put together a business case for developing your leaders, using examples from other companies that have seen a significant return on their investment. (If you’d like to see or discuss a case study, get in touch.)

▪ **Tap into their personal “why.”**

Lisa from AstraZeneca believes that “success happens when you connect with people, their purpose, and what they care about.” So a key focus of the company’s leadership-development program was getting participants to think about what Lisa calls their “leadership purpose”: who they are as leaders, what inspires them, and what they’re best at. When you know what people’s distinctive strengths are, you can work with them to bring those out.



To help develop this sense of purpose, hold small sessions with groups of leaders. Ask them to talk about why the change is good for the company, why it's good for the customer, and why it's good for them. But rather than spoon-feed them messages, get them to come up with the words themselves. This will help them to be more authentic when they talk to their own teams about the change.

■ **Match actions to words.**

John from Virgin Australia says that until you deliver on what you say, people won't believe you. That's why when he first started as CEO, he invited everyone in the organization to call or write to him—and answered the emails personally.

Meanwhile, a takeover bid gave AstraZeneca's CEO an unexpected opportunity to reinforce the change: "Everything we'd been saying internally about science and patients became a significant part of our defense strategy," recalls Lisa. At NBF, where the goal was to make employees more effective in the wake of the Great Recession, the leadership team built its motto—"People Excellence"—into the company's vision and mission. And then it put that motto into practice by introducing an annual 360-degree feedback process for more than 100 senior managers.

Practicing what you preach can be hard when leaders are also responsible for short-term financial performance, though. Start by assessing the extent to which your employees think their leaders currently "walk the talk." You could do this by looking at the data from your last survey (if relevant) or by holding focus groups with a cross section of employees. Once you understand the status quo, you can help leaders behave in a way that reflects the change.

■ **Find ways to inject new thinking and encourage fresh ideas.**

Sometimes, organizations and leaders are afraid to change as much as they need to—even when the new ways of working are full of promise. (Lisa from AstraZeneca calls this the "knowing-doing gap.")

To overcome this, try to inject some fresh thinking. That can mean getting an external perspective, such as when AstraZeneca took its top 150 leaders to Harvard University to work with an executive coaching team. It can mean making sure your leadership pipeline contains people from varied backgrounds and with different experiences. And it can mean giving leaders the freedom to take intelligent risks—and crediting them when things go wrong or don't bear immediate fruit, as long as the intention was right.

■ **Help all leaders to take responsibility.**

A brilliant new CEO can inspire and engage. But there's also a risk that people can look to that person to single-handedly save the company.

AstraZeneca overcame this by challenging its leaders to understand their role in developing the idea of an enterprise mind-set (the ability to think for the whole while balancing the needs of a unit or division). "The message to leaders," says Lisa, "was, 'We're not going to give you a template, we're not going to tell you exactly what to say to people; you have to know yourself.'"

"We could see that, when a leader was fully on board and proactive, the team would join in too and become fully engaged. And in a few cases, we saw the opposite."

Eike Croucher, Head of Corporate Affairs,
BASF Australia and New Zealand

DO:

4 - Support and equip your managers.

“In many instances, employees leave companies because of their managers. So if managers recognize the pivotal role they play in keeping employees motivated and engaged, a big part of our job is done.”

Christopher Tay, Chief Administrative Officer, Menarini Asia-Pacific

- **Recognize that managers go through change too.**

When change happens, employees turn to the people they trust the most—their line managers—to help them make sense of it all.

If those managers are onside, they'll reinforce your messages and act as advocates and coaches. But if they aren't, they could do the opposite. So include strategies for reaching this crucial group in your engagement plan. Rexam designed its “Working through Change” toolkit with line managers and employees in mind. And Menarini Asia-Pacific gets its top managers together once a year to make sure they're on board and know how to bring their teams with them.

- **Engage them and enable them to engage their teams.**

However change-ready they are, your managers still need the tools, skills, and ideas to engage their teams.

Training can help. When Vodafone New Zealand needed to put its focus back on the customer, it ran a leadership-development program for frontline managers called “Leading in the Vodafone Way,” which covered topics like how to choose your own engagement and mind-set. Dixons Carphone put its HR business partners through “Resilience through Change” workshops, so they could in turn coach line managers who were facing particular scenarios. And NBF trained line managers in how to better handle the performance-management process—focusing on transparent, two-way communication and an increased understanding of the performance ratings.

You can also help your managers to have better face-to-face conversations with their teams through coaching workshops. Managers don't always have the answers during change, so teaching them to have the right conversations and to problem-solve with their teams can be valuable. During the armed conflict and crisis in Ukraine, Metinvest trained 345 managers in how to control their own stress so they could do the same for their people. “Only the immediate manager who communicates with employees in confidence can reassure them and manage anxiety,” says Natalia.

DO:

5 - Involve your people.

“If you can make people feel empowered, important, or informed, the information dissemination will be much quicker.”

John Borghetti, CEO, Virgin Australia

- **Keep your key talent close.**

Change can make the future look less certain, which gives your competitors a great opportunity to try to snatch your best people. So make sure you know who your high performers and high potentials are (a talent-review process will identify them for you). Then think about proactively engaging them—especially new joiners, who may have signed up to work for a very different organization from the one it's about to become.

Metinvest dealt with this by keeping its annual talent-pool assessments running throughout the developments in Ukraine. But you can also do it by making sure that managers speak to these groups regularly and head off any concerns with positive messages about what the future could hold. Another option is put high potentials into “hothouses”—small teams that work on specific change initiatives, outside of normal rules and processes. These both engage the participants and help propel your organization forward.

- **Make use of your cynics as well as your allies.**

Many of our contributors built networks of people, such as change champions and employee forums, to act as advocates for the change around the business. But if you can win your cynics over, they can be an equally powerful force.

As well as choosing change champions, BASF Australia and New Zealand identified people who could potentially be cynical and block the change, and then invited them to take roles in the work streams. “It proved to be a really powerful way of engaging them,” says Ross. To identify who those people might be in your organization, start by making a list of people who have resisted change in the past, are in roles that are most under threat, and have been in their roles in the longest. Then ask key people in the business for their ideas.

- **Capture the power of your key influencers.**

Every organization has people with more influence than others: people who can help you achieve your goals—faster.

When Virgin Australia was implementing the strategy of its new CEO, these groups were salespeople and customer-facing employees. But it could be anyone, at any level of the organization. Speak to your leaders, your colleagues in internal communications and HR, and other key colleagues to build a picture of who these people are. Then make a point of briefing them on the change so they can spread the word for you. And invite your “traction managers”—the ones you really need to get on board to make the change happen—to a workshop to help challenge and add to the change story. They’ll come out understanding the need for change and what they need to do to drive it.

- **Look at the bigger picture.**

Look for opportunities to involve the wider organization in shaping the change. Soon after acquiring Invida, Menarini put all its employees through a one-day change-intervention program to learn more about the heritage of both companies, explain what had changed, and get everyone behind the new aspiration. AstraZeneca ran a 72-hour online “culture jam” to discuss its new values. And as part of its bid to make its employees more effective, NBF involves everyone in generating and implementing actions following each engagement survey. “We believe that our employees are a key source of innovative ideas and solutions,” says Abdulla.

“ We identified employees who could have a really positive impact and made them ambassadors for the change. We also identified people who could potentially be cynical and block the change, and invited them to take roles in the work streams. It proved to be a really powerful way of engaging them.”

Ross Pilling, Chairman and Managing Director, BASF Australia and New Zealand

DON'T:

1 - Treat change like a one-off event.

“An organization going through change is like an elastic band; if you let the tension go, it'll spring back to where it started.”

David Hawkins, Head of Corporate Functions and Transformation, BASF Australia and New Zealand

- **Keep everyone focused on the end goal.**

Bringing about major change can take years, not weeks or months.

For several of our contributors, keeping a future focus was the key to keeping people engaged and motivated throughout. BASF Australia and New Zealand kept referring back to the vision: “We knew it had to be a constant reference point in our communication,” says David. NBF kept using a wide variety of formal and informal communication channels to reinforce the overall vision and goals. And AstraZeneca recognized that old habits die hard, so the team needed to keep leaders focused on the end goal: developing an enterprise mind-set.

Think about other ways you could create a sense of the future—by creating recognition programs that reward new behaviors, for example. Or by carrying out strategic activities that show you're looking ahead, such as workforce planning.

- **Be flexible and adapt your approach.**

Building in “stop and reflect” meetings with key colleagues at regular intervals will help you to keep track of the change and flex your approach if you need to. Over the two years that Lisa's team worked with leaders, they adjusted the leadership-development program constantly, in line with the business and what it meant to be a leader at AstraZeneca on that day.

You can also do as Rexam did and plan how you'll keep people interested by bringing in different tools and programs over the course of your change. (Mehmet even offered three types of survey and let each business area choose the one that suited them best.) And look for opportunities to show people, through small gestures, that you understand what they're going through—and that you're there to help. NBF introduced an employee well-being program, for example, open to all employees and their family members.



■ Think carefully about what you stop doing.

During a change, it's important that you stop doing some things, or your people will burn out. But stop the wrong things and you could do more harm than good. As Natalia from Metinvest says, "Take time to really consider the potential impact of canceling initiatives—especially ones around strategic people planning, such as talent programs. These strongly influence people's faith in the future. They need islands of stability in the midst of change."

First, sit down with your leadership or change team to agree what you, as an organization, are going to stop doing. Use employee feedback from your past surveys and other channels to identify what engages people most in your organization—and make sure you keep those initiatives going.

Then work with communications to help leaders understand how this stop/start approach applies to their teams. Make it clear that for every new thing they ask people to do, they take at least one other thing away. And don't forget to go through this process with your own team too.

■ Look outward, not inward.

We know that people are motivated and energized when they feel they're providing a service to their customers. So consider what you could do to keep this top of mind for your employees. Look back at your last three internal communications about the change—did they mention the impact on the customer? If not, how could you build that angle into your future communications?

At Vodafone New Zealand, the scale of the change (the recent acquisition of TelstraClear), along with head-count reductions and a difficult market, had made people very internally focused. So the team ran a program called "Proud 2..." to get people looking outward, at the opportunity. "'Proud 2...' said that to be a company we're proud of, we needed to deliver for the customer," says Antony. "So it became a rallying cry to the organization."

NBF created an external focus by carrying out an annual customer-satisfaction survey. "We believe there's a strong correlation between our increasing levels of employee engagement and increasing levels of customer satisfaction," says Abdulla. "Employees who feel fully committed to the organization they work for do more than is expected of them—they go the extra mile for their customers."

Meanwhile, for AstraZeneca, part of moving to a science-driven strategy was creating a more customer-centric culture. So they brought that strategy to life by sharing patient stories and letters with employees.

See our report *Connecting the Dots* for practical advice on how to join up the customer experience with the employee one.

DON'T:

2 - Think all your people will react in the same way.

“There’s no such thing as one-size-fits-all engagement. And because we’ll all go through our own personal transition, we’ll need different kinds of support from our leaders and the business throughout the journey.”

Trine Ronningen, Global Specialist,
Organization and Culture, Telenor

- **Equip leaders to personalize the change.**

Everyone responds to change differently. Your role is to provide your leaders with “the tools and support to understand and address where people are on the change curve, and what they need, at all times,” say Trine from Telenor, which carried out a major strategy change. But first you’ll need to help them make the transition themselves.

You can do this through formal training: AstraZeneca spent nearly two years helping 700 top managers understand who they are as leaders. This makes leaders more attuned to what engages others, so they can tailor their approach to suit.

Or, like Dixons Carphone, you can hold workshops for senior leaders that cover how to know where people are on the change curve and how to get them through the cycle. And you can change the working environment so it’s easier for leaders to get to know what engages their people—for example, by making your offices open-plan.

- **Take a “pick and mix” approach to communication.**

While you can’t develop tailored communications for everyone in your organization, you can segment your communications to suit the needs of various groups.

As a first step, brainstorm with your team the different groups that might be affected at different points on the change journey. Next, work with the relevant colleagues from communications and the business to create a communication calendar. Mark the key milestones during the change and flag the groups they affect. Then decide which channel would best suit which message, for which group.

- **Think in terms of teams and functions too.**

How people respond will also depend on the role they perform and how much the change will affect their part of the business.

Again, leaders play a key role in personalizing the change story for their teams. You and your internal communications colleagues can help by supplying key messages for team briefings and being careful not to push out celebratory stories about one part of the business when another is going through a difficult time.

“Not every idea works for every team. The key is determining which idea is worthwhile doing with which target group and when.”

Christopher Tay, Chief Administrative
Officer, Menarini Asia-Pacific

DON'T:

3 - Assume engagement's all down to you.

“As an HR leader, you're accountable for creating the program that drives engagement. But it's down to every individual and their leader to make it happen.”

Antony Welton, HR Director,
Vodafone New Zealand

- **Help people to engage themselves.**

As an HR or engagement professional, you may feel that you're solely responsible for engagement levels in your organization during change. But ultimately, it's down to each individual to decide how they react (with help from their managers, of course—we've talked about that under **Support and equip your managers**).

You can help your people engage themselves through dedicated resources and training: Rexam's "Working through Change" toolkit consisted of four modules, each looking at a different element of how employees could manage their own engagement during the acquisition process. Try making resilience workbooks available to anyone affected by the change. And consider ways that you can encourage people to take responsibility for their own engagement, for example, by rewording some questions in your survey. At Vodafone, Antony plans to make these more personal and less about "What has Vodafone done to engage you?"

- **Avoid common assumptions.**

For Rexam's Mehmet, the results of the employee-engagement survey were a wake-up call: the areas that the acquisition would heavily affect had good engagement scores, but the ones that were more business-as-usual saw significant drops. It's a great example of how it can be tempting to assume that if people's jobs are safe, they'll be fine. But as Mehmet says, "Those people need support and information too."

Here are three other assumptions to avoid during change:

- 1 Managers automatically know how to engage their people.** They actually need tools, skills, and support to do it.
- 2 Employees know whom to go to for what—or what the must-win battles are.** They don't have access to the information you do. You need to tell them, and keep reinforcing it.
- 3 You have to spend a lot to achieve a lot.** "Effective employee engagement isn't about how much you spend," says Christopher from Menarini Asia-Pacific. "If you focus on the basic concepts and do them well, you can have a very cost-effective solution."

“Every manager needs to understand what a change continuum is and the kind of feelings everyone goes through. And every employee needs to understand how the change is relevant to them. The more aware they are, the faster they can work through the change continuum, adapt, and move on.”

Trine Ronningen, Global Specialist, Organization and Culture, Telenor

DON'T:

4 - Expect to take everyone with you.

“We have a duty to be as clear as possible about the direction we’re going in and the changes that are happening. It’s for individuals to make an informed decision about whether to get on board or decide it’s not for them.”

Christopher Tay, Chief Administrative Officer, Menarini Asia-Pacific

- **Accept that you can’t win them all.**

An eternal truth of change is that even if you do everything perfectly, you still won’t get 100% of your people behind you. And there will always be people who just don’t fit in your new business.

Start by setting realistic expectations among your leaders, managers, and other key stakeholders. Get everyone to agree what would be an acceptable level of attrition during your kind of change. Explain why your strategy will be to keep the unengaged minority as small as possible while engaging the rest—especially your high potentials and high performers (for how to do this, see **Involve Your People**). And remember that while high turnover can have a negative effect on engagement, a certain amount can be a good thing. “Sometimes, the company just can’t provide what a person needs to overcome their resistance,” says Trine from Telenor. “In those situations, it’s better for that person to move on and get what they want outside of the company.”

- **Show care and concern.**

You may not be able to engage everyone. But John at Virgin Australia believes that you can engage the majority—and motivate them to perform better—if you create a culture in which people feel comfortable.

You can help create a comfortable culture by developing the emotional intelligence of your leaders and managers, so that they’re more aware of how others are feeling and can act accordingly, and by helping them become active listeners. This enables them to really understand and deal with feedback.



- **Engage people on the way out.**

Redundancies are never pleasant, but they can actually be a great opportunity to build your employer brand—by engaging people as they leave.

Think about what practical help you could offer. Can you include a tips section on your intranet site? Or run workshops if you know that redundancies will be happening?

When an upcoming acquisition brought with it the risk of job moves and losses, Rexam created an online portal and ran workshops on topics such as success at interviews and CV/Resume writing. And when duplicated roles following the merger meant making some redundancies, Dixons Carphone was careful to make sure it articulated the “why” clearly. That meant that people left with dignity, and would still recommend the company as a great place to build a career. “Everyone that’s left has gone with the message that they’d be welcomed back should the model evolve again,” says Kirrie. “I think that’s really critical.”

- **Treat exit interviews as another useful source of feedback.**

A happy employee wouldn’t pick up the phone to a recruiter. So when people quit your organization, the salient question shouldn’t be “Why did you leave?” but “Why did you take the call from the recruiter (or competitor)?”

An exit interview is a great way of capturing how someone feels about your organization and what (if anything) might have made them stay. Put a process in place to make sure that feedback comes to you. Then review it with your team once a quarter to spot common themes and come up with actions for the business to take.

DON'T:

5 - Stop—become change-agile instead.

“The most dangerous thing is, you get to the end point where you’ve made all the changes and you say, ‘Well, we’ve done it now, so we don’t have to worry too much.’ And that’s where companies fail.”

John Borghetti, CEO, Virgin Australia

■ **Help your leaders change their perspective.**

To survive and thrive, your leaders need to stop thinking about change as something with a beginning and an end and start seeing it as a constant. And they need to recognize the key role employee engagement plays in creating a change-agile organization.

Christopher says that this has already happened at Menarini, which used an acquisition to expand into Asia. “We’ve been able to work with the business to truly weave in change management and employee engagement, so it’s part and parcel of driving business growth,” he says.

If you’re not there yet, keep supporting your leaders—both to move along their own change journey and to help others through theirs. “If you can help them to understand and factor in the change curve, and give them the tools to support their leadership, over time an organization can become more agile in the way it approaches significant change,” says Trine at Telenor.

■ Hire the right kind of people.

One way to be change-agile is to hire the kind of people you'll need in the future now. But first, you'll need to know what this employee of the future looks like.

Start by holding a talent-review workshop with key internal people. Or undertake a strategic workforce-planning exercise to establish the kind of workforce you'll need to meet your future strategic goals. If, like Menarini Asia-Pacific and Nord Anglia Education, you're growing rapidly, you'll probably want people who are quick and agile and who have a mix of operational and strategic skills. But people like that can be hard to find—especially if you have to hire them on a promise of what's to come rather than on the current reality.

That's where using the “why” comes back in. If you can paint an honest yet positive picture of what the future holds, you'll attract the right kind of person for your brand.

■ Develop them for the future.

If you haven't had a strong onboarding program before, you'll need one now. NBF has improved its program, putting a new plan in place that clearly defines the roles of managers and HR in supporting new joiners so they can be effective.

You'll also need to decide which skills your leaders need in a rapidly changing world, and put programs in place to develop them. Sit down with your executive team and key internal stakeholders to identify what these leaders of the future might look like. (Our book *Leadership 2030* is a useful guide.)

In development discussions and training plans, help people to understand where they are now and where they need to get to. Then discuss what on-the-job experience will help move them in the right direction. Nicky from Nord Anglia Education also suggests developing programs to improve people's well-being “so they feel prepared to fight the challenges”—in her company's case, integrating 10 new international schools into a fast-paced and challenging culture.

■ Send out the right messages.

For Lisa from AstraZeneca, dealing with constant change is about setting enough context for people. So make sure you regularly talk about what your organization is doing, what's different, and what your priorities are. And ask people what they think.

Be careful not to overplay the messages about change, though. “If you talk about it all the time, people get tired,” says Trine at Telenor. “I think the clue is to talk about what the business and its customer needs at all times, and how we meet those needs internally.”

Finally, check that all of the elements of your people strategy reflect the change you're trying to make—from how you assess new candidates to how you develop, reward, and recognize your people and manage their performance.

A close-up photograph of a person's hand touching a tablet screen. The screen displays various business charts, including two donut charts at the top and a bar chart below them. The background is blurred, showing other people and documents. A large purple rectangle is overlaid on the upper left portion of the image, containing white text.

What Our Data Says

Here, we've used our normative data to show the impact that a major change, such as a new CEO or leader, can have on the employee experience.

The advice in this report will help you meet these challenges—and engage your people through change.

Appetite for information

In uncertain times, the demand for information often outpaces what leaders and managers are able to supply.



During a CEO or leader change, the percentage of employees who feel the company keeps them informed about the performance of the business is 13 points lower than the global average.

Source: Korn Ferry normative database (55% favorable for those undergoing CEO/leader change vs. global average of 68%)

Clarity on organizational direction

With shifting plans and gaps in communication, employee confidence in the direction of the company is commonly lower.

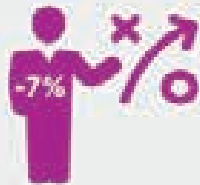


During a CEO or leader change, the percentage of employees who feel the company has good business prospects over the next 2 to 3 years is 10 points lower than the global average.

Source: Korn Ferry normative database (62% favorable for those undergoing CEO/leader change vs. global average of 72%)

Confidence in leaders

Instilling confidence in leaders and their ability to deliver for the organization can be a challenge.

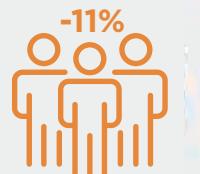


During a CEO or leader change, the percentage of employees who feel the company is effectively managed and well run is 7 points lower than the global average.

Source: Korn Ferry normative database (55% favorable for those undergoing CEO/leader change vs. global average of 62%)

Pay and performance

Ask people to deliver more and they'll become more sensitive to how the organization manages performance. Does it reward extra effort? Does it deal with performance problems effectively?



During a CEO or leader change, the percentage of employees who feel poor performance is generally addressed effectively in the company is 11 points lower than the global average.

Source: Korn Ferry normative database (45% favorable for those undergoing CEO/leader change vs. global average of 56%)

Keeping hold of talent

When an organization's going through change, confidence in its ability to keep key people can be an issue.



During a CEO or leader change, the percentage of employees who feel the company is able to retain high-quality employees is 12 points lower than the global average.

Source: Korn Ferry normative database (33% favorable for those undergoing CEO/leader change vs. global average of 45%)

Supporting success

Structure and processes help employees to understand what's expected of them. But when the organization changes, existing ways of doing things may no longer work.

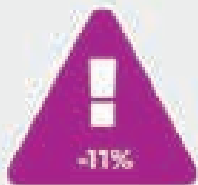


During a CEO or leader change, the percentage of employees who feel the company is effectively organized and structured is 7 points lower than the global average.

Source: Korn Ferry normative database (47% favorable for those undergoing CEO/leader change vs. global average of 54%)

Taking risks

Big change means taking big action—at all levels. But often, people are cautious about making decisions and taking risks.



During a CEO or leader change, the percentage of employees who feel encouraged to take reasonable risks (such as trying new ideas or new ways of doing things) is 11 points lower than the global average.

Source: Korn Ferry normative database (50% favorable for those undergoing CEO/leader change vs. global average of 61%)

“Amid transitions, leaders often struggle to build alignment with new directions and inspire employees to work in new ways.”

Mark Royal, Senior Principal, Korn Ferry



How to Use the Voice of Your People During Change

We often find that clients are unsure about carrying out an employee survey when they're going through change. But we know from our employee opinion data that high-performing companies are better at communicating with, and listening to, their people during these periods.

A survey is one of the best ways to gather feedback. It reinforces your change story, gauges how on-board people are, and shows where you need to focus your engagement approach. But because it's a two-way communication, it also sends a strong signal to your people that you care what they think. Which is engaging in itself.

Here are six tips for getting the most out of your survey during change.

1 Align it to the objectives of your change program.

Use the survey to connect people to the change. Add questions that relate directly to it, and take out any that aren't relevant. "Our questions included: 'Do you understand the vision? Is the leadership capable of achieving that vision? And are you driving it yourself?'" says Eike from BASF Australia and New Zealand.

Consider how your survey can embody the change—by including questions that reflect it or by using a new tone of voice. When Dixons Retail merged with Carphone Warehouse, for example, one of its first steps was to merge the two surveys into one, as a symbol that they'd become one company. "It was a very brave decision, given we're not on one system," says Karen. "But we weren't going to let that hamper us."

2 Explain what you're doing and why.

Change can be very unsettling. So be clear about why you're asking for feedback, how it'll help the change, and what you'll do with it. "Throughout our change, we've constantly communicated to employees that we really want to hear their views about the bank and how we can improve the working environment," says Abdulla from NBF. "The annual engagement survey is an important way of doing that. And we make sure we tell people what action we've taken with the results."



3 Focus, focus, focus.

Keep the survey short. You don't want to distract people from what the change requires of them—or overload managers and leaders with new information.

Make the questions relevant. Your employees need to believe that the survey gets to the heart of the issues. And your managers need practical information they can use to keep their people performing well. So make sure your survey homes in on the key factors that are most likely to affect performance during change. This report should give you some ideas, as should insights from your last survey.

Make the results actionable. Use a report format that allows time-stretched managers to grasp the key issues and conclusions quickly. And give them extra help if they need it: NBF gave its managers face-to-face training in how to interpret results and plan suitable actions.

4 Decide who's going to do what with the results.

Think strategically when you're identifying priorities, and decide who's responsible for delivering them at different levels and in different areas. You could give much of the action planning to a unit that's relatively untouched by the change, for example. Or, if your managers are struggling, you could agree on a core set of business-wide priorities with leaders and ask managers to help reinforce them.

See if you can engage any particular groups by involving them in the process. Dixons Carphone runs its results past its employee forum, for example.

“Employee feedback is really important, as it's the only way we can gauge how people are feeling about the business.”

Karen Rooney, HR Director (Corporate),
Dixons Carphone

5 Ask for feedback as often as you need to—but act on it.

The annual survey can help you track long-term change over time. But more frequent assessments—such as pulse surveys—can connect you more closely to how employees are responding to change and whether or not it's having the right impact. “We believe in growing our organization quite fast,” says Trine from Telenor. “So we need to check in with people more regularly than we do through the annual survey.” BASF Australia and New Zealand used pulse surveys twice a year to benchmark progress and adapt its approach. “Early on, results showed that a lot of people were concerned about roles and responsibility,” says Ross. “So we got the extended leadership team together to explain what they control and what's someone else's responsibility.”

6 Don't get too hung up on the scores.

It's perfectly normal for engagement scores to dip during a change. But the data isn't an end in itself—delivering the strategy is. The important thing is to find what's driving the drop in scores, and use that data to inform your engagement program. “When the survey came around, we were in the middle of a restructure, and we'd cut our overall head count by 25%,” says Antony from Vodafone New Zealand. “So the engagement score—68%—was disappointing, but understandable.”

“Listening and responding to the voice of our people is one of our highest priorities. From formal programs, such as an engagement survey and our talent management framework, to more informal support, such as a wellness program and our online forums, we do whatever we can to engage and enable our teams.”

Nicky Duggan Redfern, Group HR Director,
Nord Anglia Education

4 Ways To Get Started Today

We realize that there's a lot to absorb in this report. But you don't have to apply all of the advice all at once. You can start by taking these four steps.

Step one

Get the story straight with your CEO and top team.

Before you can do anything, you need your CEO and top team to agree on a vision for the change—and you need to be on board with that vision yourself. So carve out some time with them to discuss these questions:

- What do we need to change and why?
- What do we need to keep that's made us successful in the past?
- What does the future look like?
- What will people be doing differently?
- What's the change story for our organization?

See how consistent the answers are from each member of the team and how easy it is for them (including you) to answer the questions. If they struggle, or they don't all agree, you'll need to help them understand and get behind the story.

“In the past, we’ve been known as a commercial organization. The first stake in the sand was deciding to be really clear that we’re a science-driven organization, and our work is about how science delivers for patients.”

Lisa Naylor, Senior Director, Talent Development, AstraZeneca

Step two

Decide what you’re going to measure and how.

Your measures need to reflect the key things that are driving the change. If you’re restructuring to become more efficient, for example, your measures could include concrete business outcomes—such as faster customer-response times—along with less tangible changes, such as people making faster decisions or communicating with each other better.

Now decide how you’ll collect that data. Your annual survey is one way to measure whether people are thinking and acting in the ways you want them to. But you could also consider running more frequent pulse surveys to gauge how people are responding or, alternatively, holding focus groups with the most-affected employees. And think about how and where you can gather data on business outcomes.



Step three

Think about how to adapt your employee survey—or how to use a new one.

Consider asking specific questions about the change and whether your organization has implemented and communicated it effectively. If policies, processes, or team structures have changed, ask how that affects people's ability to get their job done. And if the strategy has changed, make sure the survey questions reflect the organization's new direction. Benchmark your current scores for all questions so that you have something to compare against later. And once the change is complete, remove questions that are no longer relevant.

Now look at your survey results and action plans. Use areas of strength to keep employees engaged as they work through change, and look at where you can improve. Then set reasonable goals based on how the change will affect your people. A team that's going through a restructure might not be able to increase productivity or engagement as much as they would have before the change, for example—so managers might set goals that are more achievable in the short term.

Finally, make sure that action plans are clear, specific, and measurable, and that they relate back to the change.

Step four

Work out who can help you.

If a CEO can't push a change through without any help, neither can you. So think about who in your organization can most influence whether the change succeeds or fails—and develop a strategy for engaging those groups.

These could be your high potentials, your future leaders, or your customer-facing teams. Or they could be the cynics: the ones who have the most potential to derail your plans.

Then there are the key teams you'll need to work with to deliver the change day to day: marketing, internal communications, and the wider HR function. And don't forget your own direct team. As Antony from Vodafone New Zealand says, they're going through the change too and can be a good barometer for how the rest of the organization may be reacting.

“The increased levels of engagement we've achieved over the last six years have delivered improvements in both the bank's customer-service levels and its financial performance.”

Abdulla Aleter, Head of HR,
National Bank of Fujairah

What Your Peers Say



The organizations we consulted for this report represent a wide range of sectors and countries. The advice and practical actions they gave us will help you navigate any change scenario, at any stage of the journey. We've collated what most of them said here. If you'd like to know more about a particular company or scenario, please contact us at kornferry.com/listen.





Who: AstraZeneca

What: New strategy and culture

TOP TIPS

Tip one

Really know your organization. Be totally clear about the problem you're trying to solve, and meet people where they are on the journey.

Tip two

Give people context, and time to absorb and personalize it. If they know what's different and what your priorities are, they can make decisions quickly.

Tip three

Be authentic and relevant. Work with your comms team to cut out the corporate speak. And stay relevant by connecting the change to people's everyday lives—and by measuring success by effort, not perfection.

“ People were super engaged because we were saying: ‘These are our values. Do you buy into them? What do you need to do to put them into practice?’”

Lisa Naylor, Senior Director, Talent Development, AstraZeneca

Tip four

See difference as a positive. To be creative and drive change, you need a little bit of difference. Help each leader to find their distinctive strength.

Tip five

Be flexible. Realize that different people will react and be engaged differently. Make your development program flexible to suit different people, and regularly look for opportunities to adapt it to a changing business environment.

“ The energy around our science and patients has come closer to the surface. As employees, we talk a lot about patient need and amazing science day to day.”

Lisa Naylor, Senior Director, Talent Development, AstraZeneca

Who: BASF Australia and New Zealand

What: New operating model and culture

TOP TIPS

Tip one

Acknowledge the crisis. [Ross says:] My first step was to acknowledge that major change was necessary to make sure the business was sustainable. Once I understood the scale of our challenge, it was clear that every aspect of the business had to be questioned.

Tip two

Build a core team that lives, breathes, and owns the change. An early action was to come together as a small group to figure out what we could do. We really challenged the status quo and set the framework for success.

Tip three

Harness the power of the burning platform. Engaging the leaders in the process and showing them the scale of our challenge helped to initiate the transformation. It gave us that *Thelma and Louise* moment when you just have to drive off the cliff.

Tip four

Get your leaders behind the change or you won't build trust. To be clear and consistent, we all needed to understand the need for change. We also had to have a shared, compelling vision for the future, which we communicated (and lived) consistently.

Tip five

Use communication to bring your change to life. Tell an inspiring story. Be open, honest, and use employee feedback to decide how to flex your approach for different groups. And accept that you won't make everyone happy.

Tip six

Maintain the momentum. An organization going through change is like an elastic band; if you let the tension go, it'll spring back to where it started. Give people a reason to change and reinforce your vision over time, so people are motivated to keep working towards it.

Tip seven

Talk about and learn from your—and your leaders'—mistakes. By sharing what worked and what didn't, and what people can do differently from now on, you'll make a real impact. And it'll stop you from making the same mistakes again.

“Announcing the new leadership team was a key piece of communication, because it showed we were starting at the top.”

Eike Croucher, Head of Corporate Affairs,
BASF Australia and New Zealand



Who: Dixons Carphone

What: Integrating after a merger

TOP TIPS

Tip one

Never think that people are sick of hearing from the business or its leaders. Use all your channels to bring the change to life. Paint a picture of the future and what it means for your people.

Tip two

Use lots of visual symbols of the new business.

We had a combined magazine, customer promise, and joint tone of voice on day one. We're doing our first joint survey. And we're embedding new values.

Tip three

Be brave. We didn't let the fact that we hadn't yet integrated all our systems and processes stop us. We brought things together before we had all the answers. And we challenged the business to make sure we didn't announce everything at once or say something in a disjointed way.

Tip four

Recognize that everyone's going through the change—including the people who are driving and managing it. We all tend to look to HR and leaders for answers, forgetting that those people are also debating what the new organization means for them, their role, and career.

Tip five

Engage the people you have to let go. We want people to still recommend us as a great place to build a career. So we've been very clear about why we need to make these changes—it's not a personal thing. Everyone that's left has gone with the message that we'd welcome them back if the model changes again.

“We all tend to look to HR and leaders for answers, forgetting that those people are also debating what the new organization means for them, their role, and career.”

Kirrie Kendall, Head of Internal Communications, Dixons Carphone

Who: Menarini Asia-Pacific

What: New owners and fast growth

TOP TIPS

Tip one

Create an inspiring vision of the future state.

Employees don't operate mechanically. They're going through a sea of emotion day to day, within and outside of work. Articulating a compelling vision is critical to attaining focus, alignment, and employee engagement.

Tip two

Strive to create a great place to work. If you have a great environment—"one where you trust the people you work for, take pride in what you do and enjoy the people you work with" (*A Great Place to Work*, by Robert Levering)—many of the other desirable outcomes will fall into place.

Tip three

Engage and enable your managers. Never assume they automatically should know what to do. Teach them how they can engage others effectively—and keep doing it.

Tip four

Focus on the basic concepts—and do them well. Effective employee engagement isn't about how much you spend, nor is it a one-time initiative. It's a continuous process. So keep doing the basics well.

Tip five

Accept that some people will leave the organization—and that's okay. If employee engagement is effective, some people will quickly learn that this company isn't the right place for them. And in the longer term, that's better for the organization and the individual too.

Who: Metinvest

What: Disruptive external change

TOP TIPS

Tip one

Don't wait for change to happen. Develop good employee engagement levels beforehand. It'll mean your people are better placed to weather the storm.

Tip two

Equip your managers to drive engagement.

They have more influence than anyone. Help them to have face-to-face conversations with their teams—and a lot more often than before. Talking helps to dispel anxiety.

Tip three

As an HR professional, don't be afraid to make yourself heard. In a crisis situation, there's often no right or wrong answer. Be bold, confident, and fight for what you believe in. That's how you'll influence a situation.

Tip four

Give employees faith in the future. Think carefully before you stop any initiatives—particularly any around strategic people planning, such as talent programs. People need islands of stability in the midst of change.

Tip five

Work closely with key internal teams. You'll need support from HR, internal communications, and top and middle management if you're to monitor and respond to employee feedback.

“Engagement is about keeping a future vision—one that excites people and that they want to be a part of. If you want to keep people, you need to show that you're still thinking about your people strategy, talent pool, and future potential.”

Natalia Strelkova, HR Director, Metinvest



Who: Rexam

What: Preparing for an acquisition

TOP TIPS

Tip one

When you see change coming, act. Implement an engagement plan to deal with the change. Communicate well and support your leaders and people. That way, they'll be ready and engaged when the change happens.

Tip two

Share anything you can share. As soon as you have any news, tell people. In today's digital world, it's likely they'll find out quickly anyway. And it's better if they hear it from you.

Tip three

Think flexibly. One size doesn't fit all. Consider whether you could offer different survey options, or different kinds of support, to different parts of the business.

Tip four

Don't make assumptions. It can be tempting to think that if people's jobs are safe, they'll be fine. But those people need support and information too.

Tip five

Develop a strategy for keeping people engaged over a long period of time. We knew we could be living with uncertainty for a year. So we used different tools and approaches to support people and keep them interested throughout.

Who: Telenor

What: New strategy

TOP TIPS

Tip one

Spend time building a clear and compelling case for change. Make sure people understand why you're changing and what it means for them.

Tip two

Customize your approach. There's no such thing as one-size-fits-all engagement. If you can help each person through their own personal transition, you can transform the company.

Tip three

Equip your leaders and become a change-ready organization. Help leaders to understand and factor in the change curve, and give them the tools to support their leadership, and over time your organization will become more agile in the way it approaches significant change.

Tip four

If engagement dips, don't panic. Take the time to understand what underlying issues are driving the dip—and use that data to inform your engagement program.

Tip five

Accept that you can't engage them all. Sometimes the company just can't provide what a person needs to overcome their resistance. In those situations, it's better for that person to move on and get what they want outside of the company.



Who: Virgin Australia

What: New CEO, new strategy and culture

TOP TIPS

Tip one

Make your communications clear and consistent. Everyone likes clarity. Stick to your strategy—consistency is key.

Tip two

Be careful about how you break bad news. If you share bad news in a large group, it leaves a vacuum. People can be afraid to ask questions and walk out with only the negatives. Share this kind of news in smaller groups instead, so people can discuss it.

Tip three

Remember that engagement isn't about giving people everything they want. The affiliative leadership style isn't good for performance. Sometimes you have to be honest and say that someone may be better suited to another organization.

Tip four

Be more trusting of your people, especially lower down the ranks. They're the ones who live and breathe the brand and tend to glue to you in times of trouble. Spend time engaging them personally.

Tip five

Don't forget your other stakeholders, such as the external media. They could make or break you. So make sure you have a strategy for engaging them too.

Who: Vodafone New Zealand

What: Integrating after an acquisition

TOP TIPS

Tip one

Accept that you can't control other people's engagement. As an HR leader, you're accountable for creating the program that drives engagement. But it's down to every individual and their leader to make it happen.

Tip two

Don't lose your focus on the customer. We got tied up in managing the synergy process, which made everyone too inward-looking. It's natural to have a dip, but we'd have come out of it sooner if we'd shifted the focus back to the customer earlier on.

Tip three

Use storytelling to help people to deal with the change. "Proud 2..." helped people to realize they can choose how to react.

Tip four

Don't forget that you talk the talk, but your leaders walk it. You need to balance what the organization does in terms of comms and engagement with what your leaders do. They're the ones who need to build their team's trust in the change.

Tip five

Use your own team as a barometer for what's happening in the organization. If they're exhausted, everyone else probably is too.



Now's Not the Time to Go It Alone

Engaging your people through change is tough—especially if you're already doing more with less.

We've helped clients of all sizes, in all parts of the world, through all change scenarios. So we can help you with every element of the change process—from getting your strategy, structures, and processes right to developing the right skills and behaviors in your people. And we can help you create an engagement program that reflects what you're trying to achieve—then measure and act on the results.

“90% of strategy is execution. And 90% of execution is people.”

Gary Burnison, CEO,
Korn Ferry

Find Out More

Get in touch with Korn Ferry. For more advice on how to engage your people through change, or if you'd like to know more about a particular company or scenario, go to kornferry.com/listen.

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Korn Ferry Listen provides survey research solutions that deliver insight across all the touchpoints of an employee's experience at work. Our customized survey programs generate breakthrough insights that enable our clients to attract, motivate, and retain talent; improve operating effectiveness; and drive customer loyalty. Through powerful digital survey tools and one of the world's largest databases of engagement and culture intelligence, we help our clients put the voice of their people at the center of successful strategy delivery. Contact us today to find out how Korn Ferry Listen can elevate your research program.

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