



Peeling the Onion

(or, Always Remember that You Don't Know What You Don't Know)

Dealing with major change in the workplace is very much like peeling the proverbial onion. Just when you've managed to turn back one layer, another one presents itself. That was the case recently, as we introduced a new, online platform for delivering training. We anticipated some of the impacts of change on our customers but ran into a few unknowns inside the organization, where the change started.

Operationally, it's amazing how many unintended consequences—and not necessarily bad ones—occur when you launch a big change. When we switched from our analog world to a new digital universe, that one “small” change resulted in several process changes we didn't anticipate—like realizing we needed to completely redesign training content to be accessed in different environments. Then there was the much larger issue of, how do people best learn? How do we maximize the engagement level in a roomful of class participants with laptops vs. old-style workbooks? Back at the office, planning the logistics of training workshops would no longer be about materials; it would be about digital-keys to access proprietary online content, downloads and data capture.

In addition to all of the unknown impacts on processes, major change also affects a company culturally. We learned we needed to consider not only who would welcome the change, but also, who might be resistant to it. Some people are much more comfortable with rapid change involving technology than others, so we had to ask ourselves, what can we do to make the transition smoother? Maybe introduce the change in phases? Build in more time for training?

In a previous blog post we talked about the importance of having a good roadmap when you are about to launch a big change, or if you need to make a course correction. Our “map” took the form of a list of 12 valuable questions*, several of which are worth repeating here because they can help you to better



anticipate the unknowns: *What is the scope of the change? Who is impacted the most? the least? How will work processes change? How will technology change? What barriers or obstacles do you foresee?*

As a result of involving staff in the change process sooner than later, team members stepped up, accepted more responsibility and learned new skills. By including customers and partners in the design, we've developed external partnerships that have collectively helped us to deliver the highest standard and market-leading offerings. In other words, we found that being successful in introducing change inside the organization depends on a kind of best-practice communication: the right questions, up front, or at any point in the process. You'll still have to peel the onion, but there won't be so many tears.

*Ref: Prosci-ADKAR Model/ <https://www.prosci.com/adkar/adkar-model>