

## Kotter's 8-Steps of Process of Leading Change

According to Dr. John Kotter, successful change typically follows an eight-step process

### The Eight Steps

1. **Create a Sense of Urgency**
2. **Build a Guiding Coalition**
3. **Form a Strategic Vision and Initiatives**
4. **Enlist a Volunteer Army**
5. **Enable Action by Removing Barriers**
6. **Generate Short-term Wins**
7. **Sustain Acceleration**
8. **Institute Change**

Each step is described in detail below.

**Step 1: Create a Sense of Urgency.** Cooperation is needed to make organizational change happen, but complacency can stop cooperation. Complacency can occur when there is no major crisis, too many visible resources, low overall performance standards, organizational structures that tell employees to focus on narrow goals, a lack of accountability, and denial about the need for change. To increase urgency, complacency needs to be curbed. Ways to do that include setting goals that can't be reached without change, ceasing to measure too-narrow performance goals, having more honest discussions, stopping management "happy talk," and showing people their future opportunities and potential rewards.

**Step 2: Build a Guiding Coalition.** Significant change requires the power and force of a group; isolated managers and out-of-touch boards can't do it alone. For a guiding coalition, you need to recruit people in positions of power as well as those with expertise, credibility, a positive reputation, and leadership skills. You should avoid recruiting people with big egos or who have a tendency to sow mistrust.

**Step 3: Form a Strategic Vision and Initiatives.** An effective vision is achievable, desirable, focused, and easy to explain. Developing the right vision includes starting with an idea, usually from one individual, and then bringing in a guiding team to develop it over a longer period of time. Flexibility and creativity are needed to arrive at a final product.

**Step 4: Enlist a Volunteer Army.** Staff must be bought-in and moving in the same direction. To effectively communicate your organizational vision, keep the explanation simple, use examples, repeat it often, lead by example, explain any inconsistencies or issues, and encourage discussion and feedback from others.

**Step 5: Enable Action by Removing Barriers.** Remove any structural barriers that fragment resources and responsibility, including too much middle management or information silos that reduce efficiency. Train employees on their new responsibilities and empower employees to align themselves with the new organizational vision.

**Step 6: Generate Short-term Wins.** A useful short-term win is recognizable, achievable, and motivating. Publicize these wins to show employees their efforts are worth it, reward change agents, discourage cynics, keep leaders on board, and build momentum. Short-term wins should be earned by good planning, not good luck.

**Step 7: Sustain Acceleration.** Organizational change is difficult because in order to change one thing, almost everything else must be changed. Urgency is needed, and resistance must be minimized. At this stage, successful change can lead to more positive change, so perseverance is key.

**Step 8: Institute Change.** Anchoring change comes last, not first. It's difficult but necessary work. Offer people who are committed to the old way of work early retirement, show people evidence of performance improvements because of the new changes, and make sure new hires and new leaders are not entrenched in the old way of work. Continual growth makes organizational change last.

Adapted from Kotter [website], 8-Step Process. Retrieved February 1, 2019 from <https://www.kotterinc.com/8-steps-process-for-leading-change>

