



# CUTTINGS

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## Why Change Programmes Fail

**E**ver wondered why most change programmes and improvement initiatives fail?

Jim Clemmer gives some insights in a recent article.

Decades of studies have consistently shown that 50–70 percent of initiatives fail.

Some change and improvement efforts have been hugely successful. They've seen significant improvements in their measures of success. Others have been partially successful in some areas of their improvement activities. And some end up making things worse!

Jim Clemmer's research identifies a number of core execution problems or failure factors are common to all of the team, initiative or project, individual infighting and confusion ensued and the company failed.

His Top Five Failure Factors:

### Priority Overload

Many managers confuse motion with direction and "busywork" activity with meaningful results. A big part of the problem is that many measure effectiveness by volume (quantity) rather than real value added (quality).

A management group of a struggling administrative section in a large bureaucratic organisation, was discussing how well they've done in moving docket. They were proud of how much work they moved through their sector in the last year, but they had a list of 37 urgent goals and objectives on which little meaningful progress was being made. How hard you

work is less important than how much you get done.

### Partial and Piecemeal

The senior management team of a large national retailer that had enjoyed a dominant position in its markets, realised they had to make a number of radical changes to drive down their overhead costs while boosting customer service.

**"Our tendency is to try things out capriciously... without an in-depth grasp of their underlying foundation, and without the commitment necessary to sustain them.**

**When a new idea fails, we give up instead of investigating the causes of failure and addressing them systematically."**

**Richard Tanner Pascale, Managing On The Edge**

They hired consultants and launched a series of projects in logistics, markets, stores, product lines, customer service, training, IT, etc. The efforts were not coordinated. Each group fiercely protected and isolated their own

Like this example, many improvement efforts are too narrow and segmented. Broad, system-wide issues aren't addressed. Teams work with bits and pieces of processes and systems.

### No Infrastructure or Process

As with New Year resolutions, a burst of energy and good intentions may get things started. But little time is often invested in developing ongoing improvement plans, habits, or approaches. Even less time is devoted to reviewing, assessing, and reflecting on successes, problems, and lessons learned. Opportunities are missed.

Not involving those who will ultimately make the effort work in planning it (or sometimes even

understanding why, how, what, and who) is another cardinal failing of process, often compounded by poor communication skills. As John Kotter put it: under-communicating by a factor of ten.

### Fuzzy Focus

Too many improvement efforts are disconnected from the burning issues that keep senior managers awake at night. Improvement for the sake of "making things better," getting people involved, forming teams and fostering teamwork are noble but vague goals. A team or organisation's ultimate customers and external partners are often lost in the improvement haze. Their needs and expectations need to be the primary driver of all improvement activities. And the improvement work needs to be framed within the larger context of a picture of the preferred future.

### Leadership Lip Service

For Clemmer, the single most critical variable to the success of an improvement effort is the behaviour of those leading it. Successful improvement efforts are led by people who are highly involved leaders. They model, use, and live the approaches they are asking their team or organisation to use.

Unsuccessful efforts are headed up by managers who've done little more than give permission and then delegated to others. They pay lip service, often passionate lip service, to the importance of the initiative. Their actions loudly shout, "you need to improve. But I am too busy, already skilled enough, or have more important things to do."

*Jim Clemmer Moose on the Table: A Novel Approach to Communications @ Work <<http://www.clemmer.net>>*

# Snippets

*A collection of thought provokers and quotations...*

- ✘ “You risk tears if you let yourself be tamed.” *Antoine de Saint-Exupéry*
- ✘ “If you knew what I know about the power of giving, you would not let a single meal pass without sharing it in some way.” *Buddha*
- ✘ “We are called to be architects of the future, not its victims” *Buckminster Fuller*
- ✘ “What you cannot enforce, do not command.” *Sophocles*
- ✘ “It is better to look ahead and prepare than to look back and regret.” Jackie Joyner-Kersey
- ✘ “Human beings never feel close, never develop trust or are influenced by the thinking of people that they don't believe listen to them, invite their thoughts and ideas, and need them as an asset in the relationship rather than an object done to or a recipient done or provided for.” *Stephen Glen*
- ✘ “What you DO comes later. First, what do you want to BE?” *Robert Greenleaf*
- ✘ “Challenges are gifts that force us to search for a new center of gravity. Don't fight them. Just find a different way to stand.” *Oprah Winfrey*
- ✘ “Love all, trust a few. Do wrong to none.” *William Shakespeare*
- ✘ “There is no need to go to India or anywhere else to find peace. You will find that deep place of silence right in your room, your garden or even your bathtub.” *Elisabeth Kubler-Ross*
- ✘ “I can't say I was ever lost, but I was bewildered once for three days.” *Daniel Boone*
- ✘ “Everybody is ignorant, only on different subjects.” *Will Rogers*
- ✘ “Either lead, follow, or get out of the way” *Military aphorism*
- ✘ “That which soldiers are willing to sacrifice their lives for – loyalty, team-spirit, morale, trust and confidence – cannot be infused by managing.” *General Edward C Meyer*

## Friendships and Workshop

Jan Yager's book: *Friendships: The power of friendship and how it shapes our lives*, identifies workshop relationships which are less intimate than friendships but closer than acquaintances. These are pivotal relationships at work; they aid productivity and enhance retention. They are based on doing meaningful and satisfying work together. Workshop roles: Mentors – experienced organisation members who help you learn the ropes.

Champions – stand up for you and what you believe. They sing your praises, not only in your presence, but when you're not around

Trailblazers – peers who set an example

Researchers – keep you in the knowledge loop

Builders – motivators who encourage you to the finish line. They invest in your development and genuinely want you to succeed

Navigators – give you advice and keep you headed in the right direction. You go to them for guidance, and talk through the pros and cons until you find an answer.

Collaborators – share interests and ambitions in work and life.

Connectors – bridge builders who help you get what you want. They get to know you and introduce you to others to extend your network and give you access to new resources.

Energisers – fun friends who always give you a boost. You have more positive moments when you are with them. They pick you up when you are down. They get you going.

Mind openers – expand your horizons and encourage you to embrace new ideas, opportunities, cultures, and people. They challenge you to create positive change. They ask good questions and make you receptive to ideas.

## Influence Without Authority

From a John Baldoni podcast...

People are often handed projects and tight deadlines but no real power to get things done. What can you do?

1) Understand the situation. Before you can persuade anyone of anything, you must understand what's going on. Do some fact-finding and ask questions.

2) Develop the business case. Your idea will succeed if it has merit. Demonstrate how it will add value. Be realistic on cost, timeframe, and challenges.

3) Build a coalition. Show that this project is good for employees as well as the company. Make it clear you want people's ideas as well as their labour.

4) Be strong. There will be people who want to destroy your project. So keep your head up and develop arguments to fend off the nay-sayers.

Not easy. But make it happen and you will demonstrate that you are a good communicator and a leader.

[www.JohnBaldoni.com](http://www.JohnBaldoni.com)

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To discuss any ideas and to access the network, please call me direct:

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