

In short, the Internet age was seen as five years off, not fifteen, as was the forecast from some of Scottish Power's competitors. It was time to implement e-enabled customer billing and other services – before the market left them behind. Luckily, Jones had the foresight to introduce a change management infrastructure that would hugely benefit his company in the long run. Importantly, it was the inclusive and sensitive way the utility approached this change process with its staff that proved to be so beneficial. "We had the issue, of course," remarks Jones, "that our technology thinking was years ahead of the businesses, so we had to do it carefully, (by) working with the executive directors. We put in new technology in '95 for call centres and billing systems, and we were web-enabled from the beginning."(8). The net result of this action was a saving of tens of millions of pounds, not to mention being ahead of the game in infrastructure when the Internet fulfilled Scottish Power's projections and came of age early.

And the means to this financially fortuitous end? – Effective and inclusive management of change. The foresight to anticipate, plan for and act upon it. A change management solution that treated what was to come as a positive challenge, that wasn't implemented in some disconnected and bolt-on way, but was adopted by everyone with an interest in the company's future. As David Jones says of the changing face of customer relationships in the mid-nineties' power industry, "We realised nothing's going to stay the same. It's all going to change, and it will be dramatic." But it's his attitude to this change that is ultimately telling. For as he also perceived, "it will also be exciting, and opportunistic."(9).

So perhaps a decision is pressing for your own company; to change or not to change – that is the question.

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'Is Your Change Management Model A Copout?'

'Realising The Benefits Of An Inclusive Strategy For Change...'

For those of us who think Change Management is just a fad invented by our friends in HR, please reconsider. It's becoming increasingly accepted by senior managers that the benefits of effectively managing the "slings and arrows" hurled at your business can be tangibly measured; if only we'd adopt a more coherent and inclusive model for assessing change, or even acknowledge it as a factor in our strategic thinking in the first place. For as many management experts also agree, "There are two kinds of organisations in today's world: those that are changing and those that are going out of business."(1).

Managing change, with all its various models and champions, doesn't have to end in tragedy for your company. Often perceived as a "touchy feely" bolt-on solution used to paper over the cracks of real upheaval within an organisation, it's true that inclusive and well thought out solutions can ultimately prove their value. Positive models that acknowledge the rational, emotional and political nature of change can offer more than just decoration. But it's all about seeing change management as the property of all your senior executives, helping all team members to develop the skills needed to assess, plan and act upon change. You must employ a flexible model to be utilised by all levels of the management team, creating a structure where "people change (because) they are involved actively in the change process."(2). Sounds like a "sea of troubles", well, with a little thought, not really.

Firstly, it should be the role of the HR team to help your staff build up their change management skills, but this needn't be a stand-alone process, and should include everyone in every department up to senior managers. Developing a programme of change and role modelling based not just on training but involving on-the-job coaching as well, can foster such an inclusive system. After all, "people need pressure to change (but) it will only be effective under conditions that allow them to react and form their own positions."(3). Allowing change to be realised in this way, individual and by extension group targets are more likely to be met, as each person finds their own handle on the process of change itself and what is expected of them within it. Empowering your people to greet change as a positive force can have a tangible benefit to your working environment and bottom line. Because ultimately, "change and growth go hand-in-hand in a business. One usually leads inevitably to the other. If you have assessed your performance and set targets, you can embrace change and growth with confidence."(4)...

...So it seems that "strategic opportunism (is) the path of learning and constant improvement."(5). If each team member has the skills necessary to deal with change effectively then this attention to detail will help your business reap positive benefits, even in the face of unforeseen changes, or indeed, "outrageous fortune." If the unplanned occurs but you've put together a company of flexible team players who are trained to be adaptable and see change as a challenge, then the results of altered circumstance can be turned to your advantage. And research shows that empowered, included staff will stay with you, work more effectively in teams and be more productive. Let's turn the spotlight on Scottish Power for a moment.

In 1995 the power multinational was ending the change from a public to a private corporation. The then CIO David Jones remembers that because of this transformation, even more upheaval was on the cards, leading towards a "major process change and major culture change."(6). Jones realised that to stay competitive, they didn't just have "to deal with deregulation, but with the whole e-enablement factor that will change the customer relationship, the products and services we bring to the customer, the way we operate our businesses."(7).