

Accelerate Your Organizational Transformation by Taking These Five Key Steps



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As organizations evolve and grow, they also inevitably need to adapt and occasionally restructure their processes, systems and even teams. It's a necessary part of success for any healthy organization.

Done well, restructuring can weed out operational inefficiencies, boost morale and improve overall productivity and performance. Handled poorly, restructuring can be disruptive and unnecessarily drive quality employees away.

Whether you're about to undertake a restructure or it's on the horizon, how can you be sure it goes well? You're more likely to achieve a successful restructuring when adhering to the following five critical steps.

1. **Commit to a successful organizational transformation** – Your restructuring will not succeed until the organization's leaders and their direct reports are aligned around the necessity of an organizational transformation, the steps to get there and the effort required. If operational or internal political reasons are keeping you from making that kind of commitment to restructuring, your likelihood of success greatly lessens. Consider the example of a large health system which had expanded through acquisitions and was still trying to operate as if were a smaller single-entity hospital. The health system's processes were

fragmented across entities and employees were functioning under outdated job descriptions, creating duplicative work and staff frustration. Despite these issues, the organization's leaders were still not fully supportive of restructuring. Unsurprisingly, their prior restructuring efforts had failed, despite multiple intercessions by external consulting firms.

2. **Determine and communicate your vision for success** – Plan to communicate not only the “what” of your restructuring but also the “why.” Employees need to understand the vision, rationale and context for your desired changes to support them. Paint a picture that enables employees to envision your desired future state and rally behind the direction. Prospects improved for a restructuring an organization's finance department when it began working to determine its future needs and engaged its employees in the decision-making process. This new collaboration created a consensus for a revised department structure.
3. **Give your restructuring the transparency and support needed to succeed** – The single most important factor in restructuring success is leaders who prominently and proactively “walk the talk.” You need to regularly champion and communicate about the restructuring process, especially amid inevitable delays or setbacks. Your leaders need to make themselves accessible to those directly leading the restructuring. Provide these managers with the coaching, training and resources they need to succeed. Leaders in a newly restructured organization did not fully understand the responsibilities and challenges of key departments and thus could not help these areas prioritize their work and create efficiencies. To address this deficiency, this organization brought in an experienced external resource to provide the sage counsel needed to objectively assess its restructuring needs and execute on them.
4. **Address your toughest decisions first** – Once leaders and staff members have analyzed and identified the greatest needs for restructuring success, courageously tackle these highest areas first. If this involves personnel decisions, handle it as you would want done for yourself. The examples you set in your decision-making, in terms of decisiveness and consideration of others, will establish the tone and likelihood of success for your future efforts. While a company's restructuring did not involve downsizing, it still meant multiple new roles, responsibilities and processes. By previously articulating the “big picture” necessity of these changes, and engaging staff throughout the restructuring process, the company's leaders were able to work collaboratively with team members to achieve success.
5. **Think long-term needs, then prioritize into logical phases of work** – It's easy in restructuring to think primarily in terms of physical operations – such as eliminating inefficiencies and getting the right people in the right places. Your work does not end there. Think of what's needed long-term. This can range from ensuring your changes are delivering their intended operational benefits to supporting cultural shifts necessary to support your changes. Once a company implemented its new structure, roles and processes, attention turned toward engaging senior-level leaders on a phased implementation strategy. This included updating department policies and procedures and providing corresponding staff training. Along the way, the organization made a point of celebrating all major restructuring successes and thanking staff for their

ongoing support, knowing it would be vital for the organization's long-term success.

Restructuring initiatives often have a less-than-stellar reputation due to ill-planned and poorly executed efforts. This does not need to describe your organization. By committing yourself to these five critical restructuring steps, including properly leading it and ensuring the availability of sufficient resources, you are more likely to succeed and retain the goodwill of your workforce.