

Gaining Support for Change

This text outlines a simple and straightforward four-step approach to gaining broad support – “enrollment” – for a significant change initiative in the organization¹. In cross-functional groups of no more than 20 people, participants step through the program to produce action plans to implement the change. The entire exercise can normally be completed in a half day.

Concretization

In small groups, or as a whole, participants gain a feeling for what the environment would be like if the change were implemented, by going through an exercise or “game” designed to highlight the key elements of the change.

Conceptualization

A respected member of the organization presents senior management’s reasoning and rationale for adopting the change. This presentation is normally given to the group as a whole.

Reflection

In small groups of five or six, participants answer the question: “How does this change affect me?” The groups may decide to answer the question both *objectively* and *emotionally*, looking at both the up-sides and down-sides, using the *white*, *red*, *black*, and *yellow* hats in the “Six Thinking Hats” approach described by Edward de Bono.

The answers are then shared in the larger group, with the facilitator drawing out the overall conclusions of the group and documenting any outstanding concerns that really should be addressed.

Action

In small groups of five or six, either the same or different from those in the *Reflection* step, participants answer the question: “If we were to adopt the change, how would we implement it?” The groups may decide to answer the question using the *green* hat in the “Six Thinking Hats” approach.

The groups identify what further information is required to proceed with the change, or even move just to the next step.

The session concludes with a total group discussion on how the group feels about the change, and how they felt about the session itself.

¹ Derived from material published by Peter G.W. Keen.