Tip Sheet: Embedding Change

Once an organisation has taken the decision to use a problem-solving approach to bring about change in their business, and has trialled and accepted new working practices, the next step is to fully implement these changes so activities do not revert to ‘old ways’ of working. Embedding the changes you have made into your operating practices will help you to realise further benefits; importantly, it will ensure that the efforts you put into positive changes are maintained in the long term.

**Steps for embedding change**

The main steps in ensuring change are embedded in your organisation are:

1. Create an implementation plan, tailored to your business. What is your approach and what are you trying to achieve?
2. Change or develop your Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) documents to standardise and embed the new waste prevention practice.
3. Develop a set of indicators to measure change.
4. Communicate changes and encourage others to get involved.
5. Reinforce the benefits of the changes you have made – importantly, don’t forget to celebrate success!

**1. Develop an implementation plan**

An effective implementation plan should aim to identify your approach to implementing change, including:

- How will the impact of change be sustained?
- Are there further opportunities for improvements?
- How will these plans be implemented?
- How will change be communicated to staff?

Importantly, an aligned and committed leadership team is critical to embed change. In fact, a lack of leadership and top level support is often cited as the main reason for the failure to sustain changes in an organisation. Although top-management buy-in should already have been gained earlier in the project, the development of an implementation plan is a good stage at which to further formalise this involvement.

**2. Create Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**

When a new practice is introduced that prevents waste from occurring, this practice should be formalised within a standard operating procedure (SOP) document.
SOPs provide detailed explanations of how this new practice should be implemented. By following a documented, clear standard procedure, all staff can ensure consistency of approach. SOPs should be periodically updated to take account of improved processes. In this way continual improvement and positive changes are embedded into the fabric of the company. By formalising SOPs you are essentially anchoring improvements and ensuring that learnings and best practices are not lost if employees move on.

The content of SOPs will vary depending on your organisation’s activities, but when developing SOPs you should consider if they are:

**1. Targeted**
- Is it clear who will be operating to the new SOP?
- Which department will be affected by the change?

**2. Clear**
- Is the language used in the SOP document clear?
- Can any large sections of text be broken down into easy to understand bullet points or stages?
- Where possible, does it make use of pictures or illustrations to clearly show what is required?

**3. Informative**
- Have the SOPs been developed alongside those workers who will be carrying out the tasks?
- Are relevant occupational health and safety requirements included?

Of course, introducing SOPs will not have any impact if these practices are not communicated to staff. Training can often be an essential element in communicating change and also gaining feedback from front-line staff who may have their own ‘best practice’ procedures which may be incorporated into SOPs.

**3. Measure change**

Measuring change is a vital part of ensuring the success of any project. Meaningful measurement provides the basis for monitoring performance, and can be used to communicate improvements within your organisation. Measuring is therefore important in embedding change. It is important that any measurements clearly benchmark your new procedures against the old way of operating. This comparison is vital in ensuring that the new way of operating is working as effectively as planned.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) work as a series of measurements to show how your business is performing, and to indicate the impact of any changes within your business. Improvements made during a project can be captured by KPIs, and the
results used to ensure that processes do not simply slip back to how they were. KPIs should be:

1. Useful and meaningful to your organisation;
2. Align with the overall strategies of your organisation;
3. Realistic and attainable within a specified timeframe;
4. Understood by all individuals in the organisation; and
5. Be frequently reviewed – KPIs must be relevant and may require regular updating.

4. Communicate change

Communication across your business is vital to ensure that positive changes are embedded in working practices.

The implementation plan should have identified how changes are communicated to staff. The use of tools such as internal training sessions, staff notices and/or emails will be vital in ensuring that all staff members are up to date with any new, improved working methods.

Successful outcomes should be communicated to the immediate and wider business, providing measurable evidence of any positive changes. This may include for example: financial or volume (tonnes) savings as a result of changes, or other measurements such as carbon savings or hours worked. Any communications to the wider business should also include information about the project: why it was started, how it was conducted and, importantly, how the project could be applied in other areas.

5. Reinforce the benefits

By recognising team effort you are also encouraging others to get involved in the changes your organisation is making, embedding change further and ensuring continuing success.

And finally, make sure team efforts and successes are celebrated to reward participation and motivate involvement in any future initiatives.

Further guidance

There is a wealth of information on embedding change in organisations. This tip sheet is intended to provide key information to enable an organisation to effectively embed project learnings. More detailed guidance can be found at:

- [http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/environmental-strategic-review-guide](http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/environmental-strategic-review-guide)
- [http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/workforce-partnerships-resource-efficiency](http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/workforce-partnerships-resource-efficiency)
- [http://epub.wrap.org.uk/](http://epub.wrap.org.uk/) (the e-pub tool contains specific information on behaviour change)