



WHY SO SERIOUS?

THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN CHANGE MANAGEMENT



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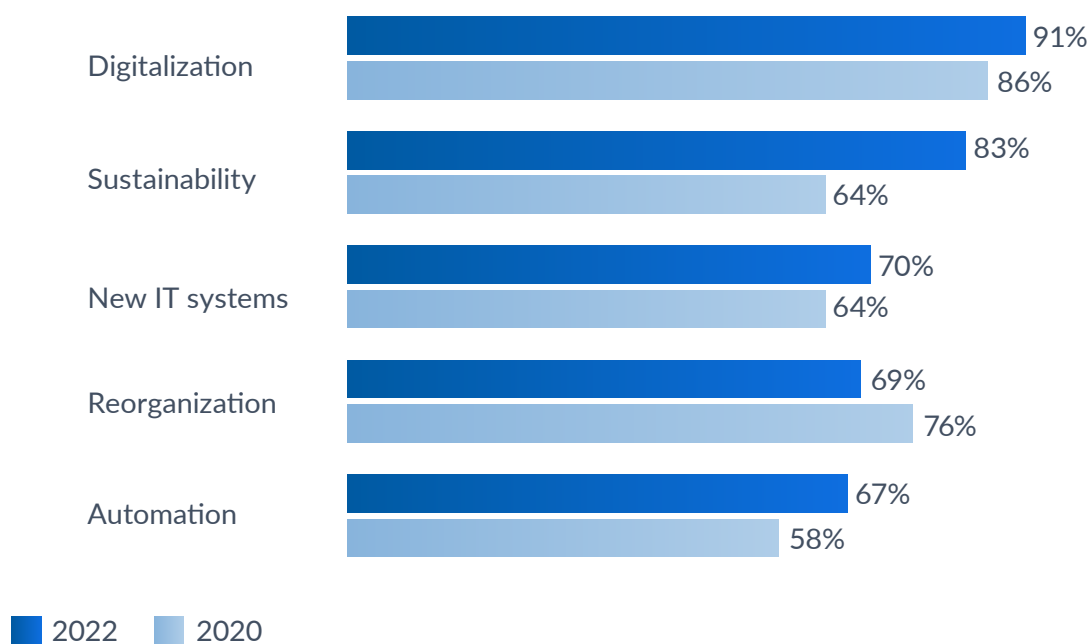
SII BUSINESS SERVICES TEAM

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1. Why is effective communication essential for a successful transformation?

The only constant is change. It's a cliché, but true in life and business. The world is rushing by, and our job as an organization is to keep up with it. We need to transform on many levels and in many dimensions, often simultaneously. When implementing a new ESG policy, we need a behavior change and how we handle processes, tools, work methods, and sometimes even organizational structure.

TOP TRANSFORMATION TOPICS



source: Change Management Compass 2023

So, if the dynamic development of business is based on permanent change, interconnecting into one complex network, why do we so rarely consciously manage this change (changes!)?

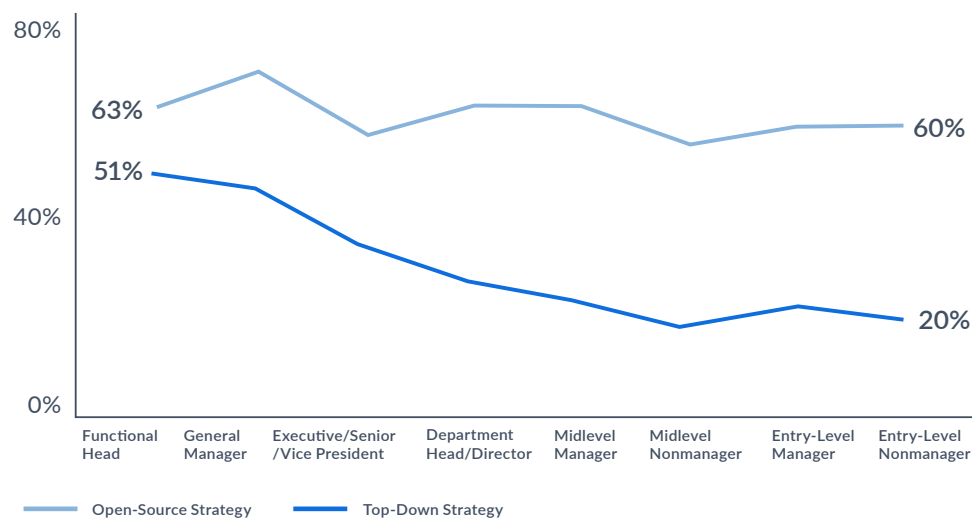
„Managers assess that 69% of transformations fail due to insufficient change management”

„66% of CEOs of the largest German companies are facing the challenge to guide their companies through a fundamental transformation.”

source: Change Management Compass 2023

Gartner's research confirms the findings and statements quoted. It shows the impact of a properly executed change management process on understanding and conviction to adopt change.

TOP-DOWN CHANGE STRATEGIES REDUCE UNDERSTANDING OF CHANGE IN THE WORKFORCE



Percentage of respondents understanding change by seniority
source: Gartner 2019 Workforce Change Survey

It is fascinating how the root cause of the issue often isn't about evaluating the company's starting point or devising a relevant plan. Rather, it stems from the failure of the executive team to motivate their employees to embrace forthcoming changes.

Put simply, many non-leadership employees are hesitant or unable to adapt, even if they're willing to do so. Even the most compelling business rationale may not lead to tangible progress because ingrained habits and decision-making processes maintain the status quo.

2. The components and purpose of change management

What specific activities should be undertaken during a conscious, structured, and budgeted change management project to increase an organization's adaptation and acceptance of change? Essentially, what are the responsibilities of the **change management team**?

To answer these questions, we'll use the ADKAR change management model, a widely recognized framework that helps to clarify the necessary, repeatable tasks.

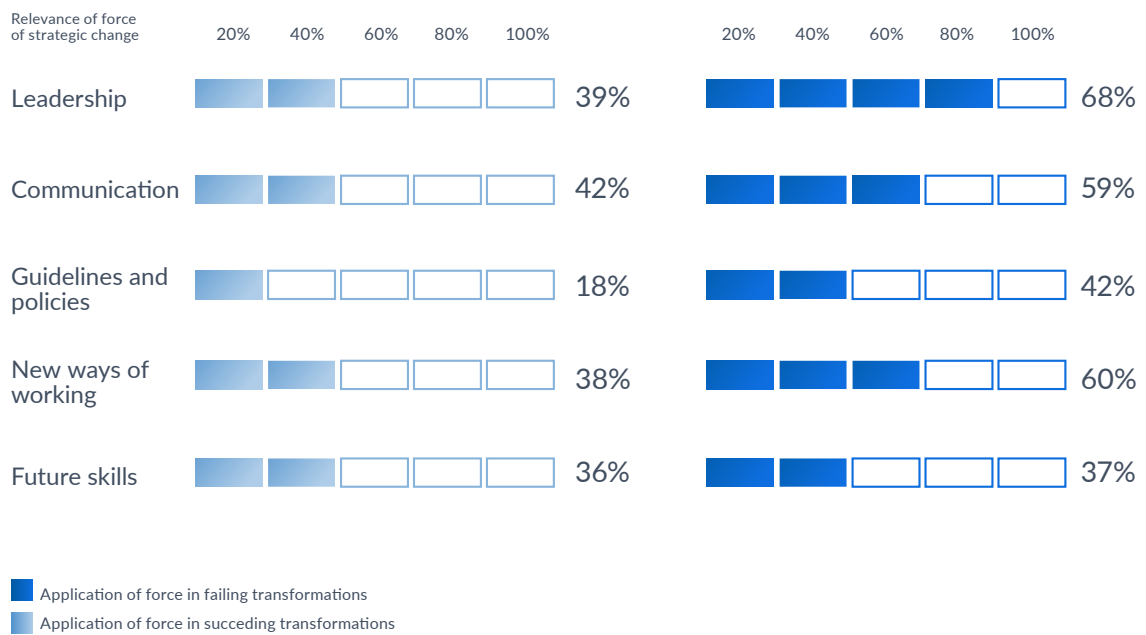
Stage	The main goal of the stage	Examples of change management activities
A – Awareness	Build awareness of the need for change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyzing the surveys conducted with different groups of stakeholders to understand their current knowledge and attitude toward change, as well as potential drivers and motivations for change on which we can base other activities Preparing and executing communication plan and content and platform for employees to ask questions and make suggestions
D – Desire	Inspiring a desire for change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring employees' reactions and addressing them accordingly Observing, conducting surveys, and communicating to monitor and address objections and obstacles Identifying and engaging change ambassadors Presenting benefits and desired outcomes adjusted to all levels of users and their needs
K – Knowledge	Providing the knowledge necessary to make a change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing training or coaching to show what employees need to do after the change occurs Following the communication plan and adjusting it to the current phase Offering dedicated resources to fill any skill gaps
A – Ability	Setting up conditions for the practical use of new knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule practice runs before the change is fully implemented Monitor performance and provide constructive feedback to adjust processes and strategies according to the changes Set and monitor reasonable goals and metrics
R – Reinforcement	Reinforce the change after implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring the change over time to ensure it fulfills the desired outcome. Making use of positive feedback, recognition, and awards to enhance the effects in the long term

One may wonder why we consider communication important when it appears in a smaller part of the list.

3. In what ways does communication impact change management?

The graphic below shows the first reason for effective change management, which is purely scientific. It demonstrates that communication is almost equally important as leadership, ranking second and on the same level as new ways of working among the five forces.

5 FORCES – EFFECT ON TRANSFORMATION SUCCESS



Effect of 5 forces of change on transformation success, source: Change Management Compass 2023

The second reason for this is derived from life and experience. To be practical, we invite you to answer these questions yourself using the following examples:

Stage	The main goal of the stage	Examples of change management activities
A – Awareness	Build awareness of the need for change	<p>Example: Let's conduct a survey to assess your subject knowledge level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the way we invite you to complete the survey and present its purpose and objectives affect your involvement or not? • Will the way we phrase the questions matter to you or not? • Will it be important to you what communication channels the survey will reach you through? • ...
D – Desire	Inspiring a desire for change	<p>Example: Imagine if we were to encourage you to participate in a project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you know all the potential benefits of the change, even those that may not be relevant to you, would it increase or decrease your motivation? • Does it make a difference who motivates you and the attitude of your closest co-workers? • If you have a platform where you can honestly share your concerns and then receive a clear answer, will you feel safer or not? • ...
K – Knowledge	Providing the knowledge necessary to make a change	<p>Example: Suppose we want to encourage you to take a series of training courses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the presentation and delivery of training content affect its perceived attractiveness? • Do you want to know which trainings are mandatory and which are optional? • Will earning points and gamification help to motivate you to participate in the training or rather discourage you? • ...

A – Ability	Setting up conditions for the practical use of new knowledge	<p>Example: Let's assume that we are after training and still before implementing a new application.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is training enough for you, or would working on a living organism have a better effect? • When learning to put new skills into practice, is clear and understandable feedback important to you? • Is the fact that, in addition to the change in the system, management will also take care to adapt your responsibilities and tasks to the new circumstances conducive to adopting the change or not so much? • ...
R – Reinforcement	Reinforce the change after implementation	<p>Example: Application deployed, effort made. How are you doing now?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it nice to receive positive reinforcement and appreciation of your work after the effort is made? • Does it help you persevere in new (though sometimes challenging) ways of doing things, or is it unnecessary? • Does adjusting the bonus or point system support adaptation of the change in the longer term at the organizational level? • ...

And here comes the final question – is it more engaging to go to your conclusions about communicated content, or have it announced?

Now that we understand the significance of change management, we must address the question of

„HOW“?
 – how do we communicate effectively, considering it is an essential component?



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4. Communication square or the 4 sides of each message

The great news is that effective communication is a skill that can be acquired. It is a capability, like any other, grounded on established theories and methods.

One of these theories, which we will discuss in this paper as a straightforward yet critical foundation for both message senders and receivers, is **von Thun's communication square**.

However, let's begin with a short story...

It's a sunny day, and many people went for a walk in the city park. An elegant man is walking with his majestic greyhound on a leash, capturing the attention of other walkers. One of them approaches the man and asks a question:

"Does your dog bite?"

"No," the man responds.

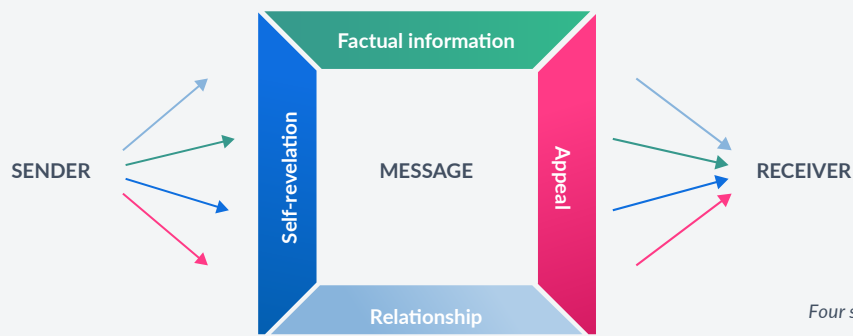
Feeling bold, the passerby reaches out his hand to pet the dog's back but is bitten unexpectedly. Outraged, he exclaims:

"But you said your dog doesn't bite!"

"Yes, but it's not my dog."

If only they had practiced effective communication, they might have avoided this unpleasant encounter. Von Thun's communication square suggests that each of us has a **dominant way of sending and receiving messages** (fun fact: it doesn't necessarily have to be the same!), which may differ from others' ways. This can lead to unintentional misunderstandings, where one person says „A” and the other party hears „B.”

4 sides of communication



*Four sides of communication
by von Thun*

1. The factual level is sending and receiving definitional, fact-based messages without any guesses or interpretations. This was the „ear” that the dog walker most likely had. He only heard the words used in the question and not the intentions behind it.

Here’s some advice: If you need help from a colleague with this type of „ear,” don’t ask him an allusive question if he has time. He won’t guess that you’re just asking for his help.

This brings us to the second level:

2. The appeal or plea level sends a message to persuade someone to act or refrain from acting (including certain thoughts or emotions). For instance, someone who asks a colleague for time may actually be seeking help and support. However, the colleague may not respond to this implicit message.

On the other hand, maybe our boss rushes into the office and calls out loudly: „It’s so cold in here!” and we immediately close the window because our ear of appeal has heard „close the window.” However, our boss looked confused because that wasn’t what they requested.

3. It’s time for the self-revealing level. This is the understanding of the message as information about the sender. A person with a self-revealing ear will understand the quoted call of the boss as if he wanted to say, „I’m feeling cold.” On the other hand, if our dog walker had a self-revealing ear instead of a factual ear, he might read the question „Does your dog bite?” as: „I’m afraid the dog will bite me,” which is what the passerby (with a self-revealing mouth) meant.

4. On the other side of the pole of the self-revealing level is the relationship level – interpreting the message as information about its receiver or the relationship between sender and receiver. Unfortunately, it is often negative. For example, when my mother hears from me: „This soup has such an original taste!” the transcription in her head says, „You are a bad cook.”

How to use the described theory in practice? What to take care of in communication to maximize the likelihood of being understood?

5. What to do to be properly understood? The use of the communication square in practice

Since we don't know what kind of „ear“ we are dealing with on the other side, let's take care of each of the indicated four levels. Expanding the message slightly is better than leaving the space for free interpretation. In other words, when constructing the message, include the following elements in it:



Intent

will help us manage the self-reveal and relationship levels. For example, in addition to the question „Does your dog bite?“; we disclose that we want to pet it but are afraid of being bitten. Or, after a remark about the original taste of soup, we add that only our mother can create ever-new and intriguing flavors!



Call to action

directly indicating our request about the message and what we want from the recipient. For example: „It's cold in here! Great, I love it. Please don't close the windows while I'm here.“



Facts, specifics, details

This is a fairly clear point, but it's worth keeping in mind and focusing on objective, observable behavior or situations instead of judgments and opinions.



MONIKA
RESOURCE MANAGER

6. Best practices in communication – some bonus tips

What should you consider in your daily communication for efficient change management?
Here are some best practices:

1

Listen to people

– feedback is king! Only when you know what you “fight” for, will you know HOW to do it effectively.

2

Don't hesitate to ask,

especially when you are afraid of what you might hear. If people have complaints, not knowing them will not make them disappear magically. And on the other hand – very often, it is already enough to create a space for them to share them openly and be listened to.

3

Communicate regularly and transparently

– even if nothing is new, communicate there is nothing new. Silence makes people create their own stories, which usually are not favorable. Take that into account!

COMMUNICATION

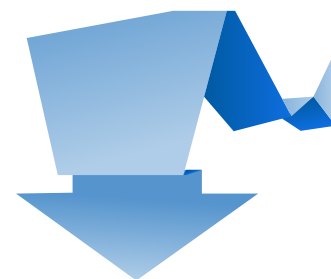
Successful CEOs understand not to put all their eggs in one basket when it comes to communication. Instead, diverse channels need to be utilized, ensuring that key messages create a coherent picture across the entire communication landscape and reach every stakeholder, no matter their personal format preferences.

83 percent of successful CEOs communicate by this principle, compared to only 53 percent of unsuccessful ones.

Across those multiple channels, the transformation narrative and key messages need to be repeated over and over. Behavioral research shows that individuals

Change communication must be conducted across a multitude of channels – as practiced by 83% of successful CEOs.

need to hear a message at least ten times before it sinks in. Reality proves theory in this case, with significantly more successful CEOs than unsuccessful ones heeding that advice.



Communication – success factors, source: Change Management Compass 2023

4

Don't be afraid to speak out about your fears

pull the corpses out of the closet. It is natural that everything has its opportunities but also costs and risks.

5

Build relationships,

create networks, and cascade communication through ambassadors. One communication specialist will not do a good job; they need a whole community of supporters – and the closer those supporters are to the stakeholders, the better!

6

Avoid form over substance

– keep your goal in mind and do not copy change management activities that do not bring any value apart from increasing documentation.

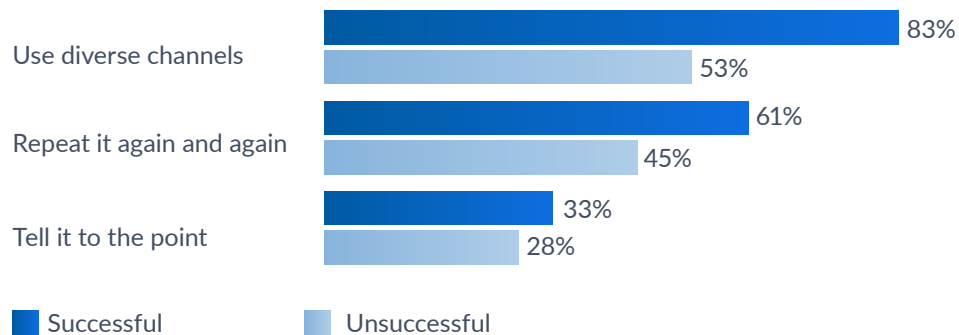
7

Celebrate successes and steps taken

– appreciate the behaviors and activities you want people to continue. Appreciation is one of the most effective motivations and, what might also convince your Management Board, it doesn't cost millions.

COMMUNICATION

Success factors



Communication – success factors, source: Change Management Compass 2023



7. Our offer in the change management area

– *Sii's approach to change management isn't just a service but a commitment to operational excellence, especially for clients implementing large tech solutions* – says Karol Szczuka, Offering Lead at Sii Poland.

– *We're viewed as strategic partners, not merely vendors, facilitating a smooth integration of these technologies into their existing frameworks across five workstreams. Our collaborative relationships and expertise in change management are fundamental in enhancing the operational effectiveness of our clients* – he adds.

1. Stakeholder management

Transform your approach to project management, using our specialized workshops on identifying and establishing ways to interact with different stakeholder groups as the basis and foundation for project success as a start.

With these workshops, you will increase efficiency, optimize collaboration, and set clear project goals. At the same time, you will precisely define each party's roles and levels of involvement, from Senior Management to end users. All this taking into account the availability and time you can invest in this stage.

2. Readiness and impact assessment

Analyze the organization's current level of readiness for change and identify any obstacles.

This information is the basis for creating a personalized change management plan tailored to the organization's specific needs.

Precisely prioritize the impact of the change, both positive and negative, taking into account all its dimensions (human, process, systemic, cultural, etc.). Based on this data, we will jointly develop a strategy for mitigating negative impacts and maximizing positive aspects of the change.

3. Interaction with end-users

Gain practical insights through our stakeholder interviews, focusing on organizational readiness and targeted change management using the ADKAR methodology.

It will help us to:

- Understand the current way of working
- Define and describe in detail the target groups with a summary of their concerns and motivations for change according to the ADKAR methodology
- Implement a personalized gamification system tailored to specific groups, optimizing areas from knowledge enhancement to cultural change and increasing the effectiveness of other activities

4. Communication, image, content

Fine-tune your message and get it on point with our support in preparing and executing your communication strategy to effectively reach your audience.

Among other things, we will help you:

- Conduct an audit of your channels and select those that fit specific audiences
- Create templates for specific applications and examples of targeted messages
- Develop a project site map, both graphically and in terms of content, so that users have access to communications regularly
- Optimize the content delivery process by involving a team of dedicated specialists

5. Trainings

Increase your team's productivity with our targeted training services, designed to analyze skill gaps and seamlessly integrate with existing platforms.

We will cover, for instance:

- Current state analysis
- Assessment of skill gaps
- Creation of training paths for defined user groups
- Development of target content structure
- Preparation of training design compatible with the existing platform
- Support in developing the process and procedures for training implementation and management

8. Benefits from cooperation with Sii



Thorough change process support

– cultivating team enthusiasm and ownership



Business know-how & technology

– addressing both operational and technical needs



Maximized benefits

to establish a new, efficient „Way of Working“



Accelerated transformation

– reduced time-to-market and streamlined processes



Proven expertise

– highly skilled professionals with a success record



Seamless integration

via utilizing the latest technologies for smooth transitions



One-stop shop

– from business consulting and implementation of IT systems to data analytics and marketing services



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Communication enthusiast, business coach, leader, and mentor. At Sii Poland for 15 years, she created and implemented HR strategy from recruitment processes, onboarding, internal communication, through all worker experience processes to off-boarding. She also participated in the company's transformation from 30 to over 7,000 people, leading teams through structural changes and also successfully implementing more than a dozen HR applications to support the company's operations. She advocates combining hard business data with a „soft” approach, which she prefers to call human. Her hors d'oeuvre is building effective teams based on effective cooperation and communication, leveraging diversity and its synergies in business, supporting transformation from the organizational and purely human side, and supporting women in their development.



Looking for support? Contact Sii!

Find out how to benefit from our experience and get to know Sii Poland's one-stop shop offer suited to your company's needs.

[Visit our website](#)

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