



Tools Training Strategy Facilitation
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Test the changeABILITY of your project

Is your change project ready to change the world?

Find out if you've followed project design practices likely to lead to a successful behaviour change project.

This test applies to any project that aims to influence the behaviours or practices of any group of people, whether members of the public, farmers, business people, or fellow employees.

PROJECT SET UP

1) Are you using a multi-disciplinary team?

For instance: Will your project team involve a mix of disciplines such as educators, facilitators, community workers, infrastructure staff, policy, public relations, technical experts, or community members?

A rich mix = 2

One or two other disciplines = 1

We've all pretty similar professionally = 0

2) Is your project:

Strictly a one-year project? = -4

Likely to have follow-up funding? = 1

Planned as a two-year project? = 2

Planned as a three-year project? = 4

Emerging practice in many sectors calls for change projects to have 3-5 year horizons. Single year projects have very little chance of producing sustained behaviour change.

3) Will you set a concise, measurable 'top-level' outcome or purpose as the first step in designing your project?

If someone asked: 'What's the point of this project?' do you have an succinct answer? Will you collect evidence to measure your progress towards that goal?

Yes = 2

No = -2

4) Will you carry out thorough desk research before you begin?

In particular will you examine: Lessons from similar projects elsewhere? Technical, scientific and regulatory aspects? Relevant corporate goals and strategies of partners? Community studies? Baseline data on the problem? Additional sources of money?

Yes = 4

Sort of = 1

No = 0

5) What sources of knowledge will you mobilise to design the purpose, strategy and tactics of your project?

A bunch of hunches = -4

We asked a few experts = 0

We mixed expert and local knowledge = 2

We ensured rich input from BOTH experts and locals = 4

Top-down expertise-driven projects rarely produce sustained change.

6) Will you include members of the target audience as partners in decision-making about the purpose, strategy and tactics of your project?

Yes, they're on our steering committee = 4

Yes, we've consulted them = 1

Not really = 0

Community partners give you credibility and are a great reality-test for your ideas. Also, a factor that determines whether project is likely to be sustained by a community after the project funding runs out is: were they genuinely involved in making key decisions about their project?

7) Has your CEO signed off on the strategy and stated his/her commitment to it?

He/she is a true believer! = 2

We got the tick = 0

He/she doesn't really understand the project = -1

We're scared to tell them = -4

FORMATIVE RESEARCH

8) To set your objectives, will you analyse and weigh the likely causes of the problem your project is trying to tackle?

'System thinking' means understanding a problem not in terms of symptoms, but as a system of causes. To set objectives, it's a good idea to map the system that's producing the problem, and then weight the 'attackability' of the various causes you identify. That ensures your objectives are actually linked to the problem you are trying to tackle.

That's exactly what we did = 4

That's sort of what we did = 1

We never did anything like that = 0

9) Will you 'reality test' the desired behaviour(s) with potential 'users' to make sure that:

a) they are perceived to be better than what they do now?

b) they are an easy fit with their other daily practices?

b) the perceived risks are minimised?

Yep, we tested it and potential 'users' think it's a winner = 6

Yep, we tested it and potential 'users' think it's probably doable = 2

Nope, we're following the boffins' advice = -6

You can talk to early adopters, try it yourselves or observe others doing it. If you find any problems with the do-ability of the behaviour, you should, of course, redesign it to make it more beneficial, easier, more compatible, less risky!

10) Will you check whether your project is about something your target audience actually cares about?

Yes, it's a hot local topic = 6

Not sure = 0

They couldn't care less = -4

If people don't care passionately about an issue they won't invest their time and energy in solving it. If there is no intersection between the agency's values-at-stake and the audiences' values-at-stake there will be no behaviour change.

Framing your project purpose is important here, for instance: you may have little success involving farmers in 'biodiversity', but you will certainly be able to involve them in attacking an aggressive weed that's damaging the productive farms they hope to pass onto their children.

11) Will you acquaint yourself with the target audience's 'buzz' of hopes, fears, and beliefs, and attitudes regarding the problem and behaviours you want people to adopt?

We'll use focus groups or have similar in-depth discussions with members of the target audience = 4

We'll talk to a coupla folks = 2

We'll kick it around the office = -2

If you are not surprised by your audience research then you haven't done enough. Focus groups or informal conversations with members of the target audience are essential. Surveys alone simply reinforce your prejudices.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

12) When it comes to tactics, will they be enjoyable and engaging?

Absolutely! = 4

Maybe = 1

I guess not = -2

Will there be food? Will there be fun? Will people be introduced to new friends? Will people be encouraged to interact with their peers?
The acid test is: would YOU get involved if you weren't being paid?

13) Will members of the target audience interact with each other and solve problems together?

Yes = 4

It isn't that kind of project = 0

We never thought of that = -2

The surest way to involve adults is to facilitate them to solve their own problems (it's a fundamental principle of adult learning).

14) Will you utilise passionate-similar-connected-respected people as the voices of your project?

No, we'll use the Mayor = -2

We don't need a 'voice', we're from the government = -4

We found someone the audience knew and respected and who was just like them = 4

Remember that change depends on relationships and people prefer relationships with people not institutions. The most influential relationships are those with passionate-similar-connected-respected peers, not celebrities or experts.

For instance: A business manager doesn't want to hear from you, they want to hear from another business manager they know and respect.

15) Will you pre-test your messages, images and materials?

Pre-testing means having informal focus groups with members of the target audience and inviting them to peruse the materials and offer their suggestions and responses.

Yes = 2

We'll kick it around the office = -2

We'll take the risk = -8

MONITORING, EVALUATING, REPORTING and LEARNING

16) Before you launch the project, will you plan EXACTLY how you'll collect evidence to assess progress.

Yes = 2

No time, too hard, it's all too bothersome etc = -2

After the project has rolled out, it's very expensive to collect evaluative data. But plan how to collect it as you go and it's cheap.

Test your changeABILITY

You should collect more than just 'outputs'. You'll also want baseline beliefs/attitudes/behaviours, reach, response rate, participation, satisfaction, observed behaviour, the measurable achievement of objectives, plus stories of people's experiences.

A great idea is to split your target audience into two groups and make one the 'control group'. That will allow you to 'prove' the effectiveness of alternative tactics (e.g. information approaches vs participation approaches).

17) Will you leave the office at intervals during the project to reflect on the stories, data and experiences you are collecting?

Reflection is for sissies = -2

My manager won't let us out of the office = 0

It's already in the project plan = 2

'What was interesting or unexpected?' 'What could it mean?' 'What should we do differently?' Questions like these let you take control of a project.

18) Will you report on progress to participants, partners and gatekeepers?

We'll be too busy = -2

We've already set aside the time = 2

When people give their energy, it's respectful to keep them in touch with the project. It helps the process of change and builds good relationships for the future.

HOW'D YOU DO?

More than 40: You are a change champion. Keep on doing what you're doing.

30-40: Your project has a good chance of success, but there are still plenty of ways to tighten it up. Go back, check your answers and take action on those you scored poorly on.

0-30: Your project is fundamentally flawed. Without radical surgery it's unlikely to lead to any measurable change at all. You really need to go back to the drawing board, clarify why you are doing it (question 3) and put some good development steps in place, especially formative research. Go through the questions one at a time and consider how you could implement each one. Hint: don't do this by yourself: find some friendly collaborators - inside or outside your organisation - to apply their brainpower to the questions.

Less than 0: Yikes. You will have to cook the books to make this parrot squawk. Stop right now and ask what is the point of investing time and money in a change project whose chances of success are effectively zero. It's just a thought, but maybe you could put off the launch till next year and use your time to do some serious developmental research (questions 1 to 11), especially looking at the needs and perceptions of your audience regarding the behaviour you're hoping they'll adopt.

This quiz was created by Les Robinson based on the training workshops he delivers to professionals in the fields of sustainability, health promotion, road safety, emergency services and natural resource management.

**Les's web site has numerous helpful resources:
www.enabling-change.com.au**

**You can also ask him directly for advice on
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