



## Managing Change:

### *Announcing change does not make it so*

*By: Ward Kever, CTG HealthCare Solutions Executive Director of Executive Services*

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Moses led the Hebrews through the desert for forty years before announcing it was time to cross over the Jordan River into the Promised Land. But that announcement alone did not assure a successful transition. As a CIO, you have the responsibility to announce many 'new beginnings': organizational changes, a new (and often reduced) budget, and almost certainly, implementation of a new system. Frequently, these announcements signal scary times. People will be asked to give up a comfortable environment—one in which they understand how to succeed—and take on a new set of responsibilities and relationships often perceived as involving a high degree of risk.

Beginnings are strange occurrences. People understand the need for change and may even want to change. Frequently, they're relieved to feel that the 'Promised Land' is in sight. Yet, beginnings can also be fraught with anxieties as situations change and new commitments are required. A beginning is a gamble: it's always possible the new structure, process, system, or budget won't work. A new beginning can also create accountability where previously there was a certain level of comfort.

Announcing a new beginning does not make it so. Rather, there is a natural transition process much like the natural change of the seasons. Most unsuccessful beginnings are due to the failure to understand and manage this transition period.

Transition has four critical elements for success. They are:

1. Explain the purpose and benefit of the change. Participants need to understand the logic for the change.
2. Share the vision for the outcome: how it will function? The vision must be elegantly simple so as to not seem intimidating. Participants need to understand and buy into the vision to encourage their willing involvement in the change process.
3. Formulate a step-by-step plan that specifies the major phases of the change. This will allow participants to monitor success, handle roadblocks as they occur (and they will), and overcome obstacles.
4. Make clear assignments that include a schedule, accountability, and the authority to achieve the desired goals. People need a tangible way to participate and buy in to the larger vision.



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As a CIO, my excuse for being overweight was the necessity for all those lunches where I drew and redrew pictures on napkins to illustrate my vision for change to the various stakeholders: subordinates, peers, and bosses. This is a marathon process, requiring multiple lunches with the same people as the transition moves forward. (I now need to find a new excuse.)

Done correctly, this process will achieve the following:

1. Participants will gain insight into the problem being addressed and be more receptive to the solution.
2. Participants—you and your staff—will be aligned on the same side of the problem.
3. Assigning parts will provide the opportunity for participants to bring their first-hand knowledge to bear on the solution. Often, this is knowledge you don't have.
4. Participation will facilitate interest in the new system, which may overcome self-interest in the old one.
5. Inclusion of more people 'in the barrel' will reduce the number outside the barrel to take shots.

And finally, don't forget to celebrate! A celebration can be as simple as a group lunch or a heart-felt thank-you note. Perhaps a token or memento—a t-shirt or coffee mug—would be appropriate. Yes, it sounds corny. But a simple 'thank you' goes a long way in creating appreciation and loyalty. Take the time to offer a genuine thanks and recognize that the wandering through Egypt is over. Good luck.