

Changes in Health Care: Kurt Lewin Change Theory

Change is inevitable. Healthcare is no exception. Using a change theory will help you make changes more smoothly. Lewin's change theory fits well with health care changes.

Lewin advocates three steps to the change process: Unfreeze, Change, Refreeze

Stage 1: Unfreeze

This is the first step in this change theory. This is a very important step because the need for change is identified and readiness for change is established. This step requires leaders and managers to prepare for change and help others to prepare for the change through education and motivation.

You also need to establish a deadline so that everyone understands there is a need for change and there is a timeline to follow. Remember, a timeline helps to establish urgency that change is necessary and change is going to take place.

This step provides another opportunity called Force Field Analysis. This analysis involves listing the pros and cons associated with the change you need to make. The pros associated with the change are called driving forces, or the forces that push for the change. The cons associated with the change are called the restraining forces, or the forces that are against the change. By listing the pros and cons you can determine if the pros outweigh the cons related to the change. As with any decision we intend to make, if the pros outweigh the cons, the change should be made. If the cons outweigh the pros for change, you may need to reconsider the change until you can determine additional pros for the change or determine a different approach to overcome one or more of the cons associated with the change.

Stage 2: Change

This is an important stage as the change determined in stage 1 actually takes place. You need to take the following actions during this stage:

- Provide continuing education to your staff regarding the change taking place.
- Provide support especially if someone is having difficulty with the change.
- Provide feedback to staff regarding how the change is going and any new steps that need to be taken. Feedback works both ways. Listen to feedback from staff regarding the change. Make necessary alterations to the change plan based on staff feedback.
- Continue to support the change process and provide encouragement to your staff as the change is made.
- Enlist individuals who believe in the change to encourage their peers and support them.
- Maintain communication with your staff regarding the change including the benefits of the change to them.

Stage 3: Refreezing

Now that the change has been made, providing stability is critical to the change holding and not going back to what was done before the change. You need to help your staff accept the change that has taken place. This stage takes time as individuals work through their doubts related to the change that has just occurred. This is also the stage where individuals who were not advocates of the change need to embrace the change.

- Remember, accepting change takes time.
- Do not rush the process.
- Reinforce the importance of the change.

Change Management Coach (2015). The Kurt Lewin Change Management Model. Retrieved from http://www.change-management-coach.com/kurt_lewin.html