

"Be the change you wish to see in the world!"
-Ghandi

Change is scary! It is a constant in our lives. It happens whether we want it to or not. Sometimes changes naturally occur. For example, your organization just got a new faculty or staff advisor. Other times, the need for change needs to be recognized and acted upon. Perhaps your meetings are not productive and you'd like to adjust the format.

Use the tips below to help you understand what change is, how you can impact change, and what it means to be a leader managing change in your organization.

Understand the change.

Before changes occur, it is essential that you understand the change. Reflect on the following questions to get a better understanding of the change:

- What is reason for change?
- Why is it important that the change happens?
- How will the change occur? How will the change be implemented and communicated?
- Who will be involved in the change and who will be impacted?
- Where will the change occur?

Once you gain an understanding of the need for change, you will be better equipped to successfully plan for and lead the process.

Define your role.

As a leader of your student organization, you have an important role when it comes to managing change. Many times, it will be your responsibility to recognize the need for change, initiate it, and communicate it to your members. Other times, your role might be to support the change that another member has decided to make for the organization. Take a moment to define where you stand in relation to the change. What support and resources do you need? What support and resources do you need to provide? How will your role ultimately impact the change process? How will your behavior about the change impact those around you? Behavior is contagious...help it spread!

See the big picture.

How will the change affect the people around you—your officer team, general members, and advisor? It may be easy for you to adapt and commit to the change, but others might find it difficult to accept. They may be angry or in denial about the change. In this case, what can you do to help educate and communicate to these individuals about the change? How do you help others to slowly realize that the change is reality? Provide opportunities for others to "test out" the new change and experience it for themselves. After the change occurs, turn this experience into a teachable moment and help these individuals to anticipate future change in your organization.

Be specific.

On the other hand, you must also look at change in terms of specific behaviors and expectations. If you want people to change, clearly identify what they should expect and what you want them to do. Additionally, give them a sense of why the change is happening. Change is much easier when individuals know where the group is going and why it's worth it.

Combat the barriers.

Many times, change does not occur because someone or something stopped it from happening. Do any of these reasons sound familiar? It is not only important to recognize these barriers that prevent change from happening, but you also must develop an understanding of the best methods to combat these obstacles.

- **Time:** There just isn't enough time for us to change right now. Or, we can't wait long enough for the change to happen. What can you do to help your officer team and members to carve out time to be an active part of embracing the change?
- **Attitude:** Negative attitudes and perceptions are stopping us from making the change right now. Communication is key to combatting this barrier—the more you talk about and get members actively involved in the change process, the more likely they are to buy in!
- **Support:** We just don't have the resources or help to make change in our organization. Money, manpower, and help are always out there for you, you just have to reach out and find them. Perhaps you could involve members in a brainstorming session where you each bring an idea that could make the change process a reality within your organization.
- **Involvement:** Nobody is willing to put the work into making the change happen in our organization. Create opportunities for members to be a part of the change process. Give them a specific task or project that matches their interests and that will involve them in creating and implementing the change. Ownership is essential to member buy in, and ultimately a successful change!
- **Implementation:** We tried to change, but it just didn't work. Consider taking time to reflect upon and break down why the implemented change didn't happen. Where did the failure occur? What can you do to prevent it from occurring next time?

Be positive!

Lastly, keep a positive attitude during the entire change process. Create a climate that embraces change! Celebrate the change! If members see that you are excited about the changes, they will understand the importance of the change to the organization.

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