

# 8 Steps and Power Tools for Leading Organizations Through Change





## Introduction

In 1996, Dr. John Kotter developed his 8-Step Process for Leading Change based on what he saw *worked* for organizations during strategic transformation<sup>[1]</sup>.

He saw that the world was moving at a much faster pace than just a few years prior – but the human ability to keep up with that increased pace was not changing.

He also found that leaders and organizations sometimes created even more obstacles for already-stressed employees.

***But there are things that leaders can do to guide their organizations through change successfully – and internal communications play a critical role in this.***

We're approaching the anniversary of Kotter's influential book on the subject, *Leading Change*<sup>[2]</sup>. Thanks to the Internet, today there are even more tools available to help leaders move their organizations successfully through change.

Read on to discover the internal communications "power tool" for each step of Kotter's change leadership process.

## 8 Steps and Power Tools for Leading Organizations Through Change

- 1 Create a sense of urgency.
- 2 Build a guiding coalition.
- 3 Form a strategic vision.
- 4 Enlist a volunteer army.
- 5 Enable action and remove barriers.
- 6 Generate short-term wins.
- 7 Sustain acceleration.
- 8 Institute change.

## Step 1

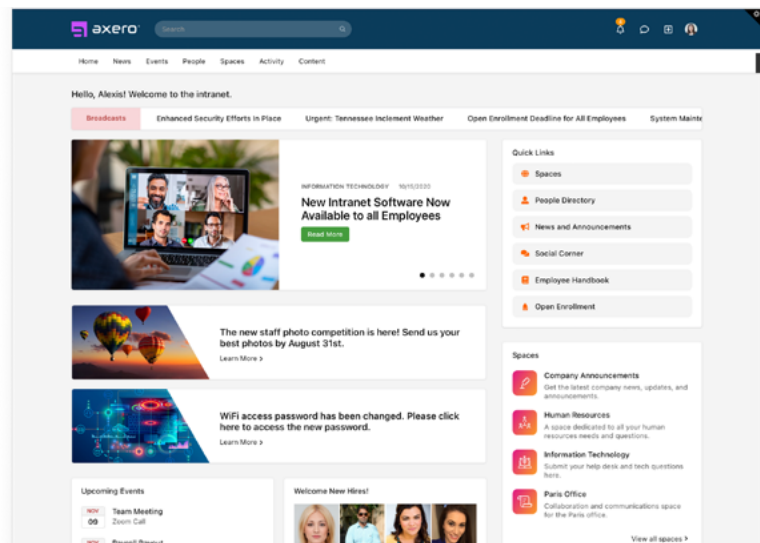
# Create a sense of urgency.

The first step falls squarely on the shoulders of internal communications. Leaders need to communicate to employees why the change is necessary and what the big benefit is. But here's the caveat: *this communication needs to be an emotional statement.*

Help leadership craft messages that connect to the heads *and hearts* of employees. This will help employees feel the urgency of the change and inspire them to do their part.

### Power tool for Step 1:

## Intranet Homepage



Post these important messages on company, organization or team [intranet homepages](#) to make sure they don't get lost in cluttered inboxes.

Step 2

# Build a guiding coalition.

For organizational change to be successful, the right people need to guide it – and they need to communicate effectively throughout the process. In this second step of Kotter’s change leadership process, it’s time to choose the right people for the right jobs.

Power tool for Step 2:

## User Profiles

The screenshot shows a user profile for Alexis Fox, CEO of Axero Solutions. The profile includes a navigation menu with options like Home, News, Events, People, Spaces, Activity, and Content. The main content area features a profile picture, a bio, and contact information such as email (noreply@axerosolutions.com), phone (444-333-5555), and location (San Diego, California). It also lists her expertise in Communications and Leadership, and her role as a Site Administrator in the community.



Tap into the right expertise and knowledge by searching user profiles for skills and abilities.

### Step 3

# Form a strategic vision.

Strategic vision creates the bigger picture and the end-goal that everyone will work toward. The initiatives, however – the activities that need to be executed – are how that vision becomes reality.

Power tool for Step 3:

## Task Manager

The screenshot shows a web-based task management interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Your Company' and a search bar. Below that, a sidebar contains a navigation menu with options like Home, Activity Stream, Info, People, Search, Blogs, Articles, Calendar, Cases, Discussions, Files, Ideas, Photos, Polls and Surveys, Tasks, and Videos. The main content area is titled 'Human Resources - Tasks' and displays a list of tasks. A dropdown menu is open over the 'Assigned to me' filter, showing options for 'Started', 'Due this week', 'Assigned to me', and 'Created by me'. The task list includes items like 'Prepare benefits package', 'Prepare paperwork', 'Initiate ID card printing and delivery', 'Discuss role, goals, and projects with supervisor', 'Provide job description and responsibilities', 'Prepare employee's workstation', 'Assign required reading', 'Create online software accounts', 'Update ID card system', and 'Give access to any tool they will need'. Each task has a status icon, a priority star, and a due date.

Task	Status	Priority	Assigned To	Due Date
Prepare benefits package	Completed	High	You	4/22/2018
Prepare paperwork	In Progress	Medium	Jane Mattie	3/22/2018
Initiate ID card printing and delivery	In Progress	Medium	You	10/6/2017
Discuss role, goals, and projects with supervisor	In Progress	High	Ben Newman	3/23/2018
Provide job description and responsibilities	Not Started	Medium	Not assigned	
Prepare employee's workstation	Not Started	High	Anthony Ruckman	6/3/2019
Assign required reading	Not Started	Medium	Not assigned	
Create online software accounts	Not Started	Medium	Brenda Keen	
Update ID card system	In Progress	High	You	10/6/2017
Give access to any tool they will need	In Progress	High	Julius Kirby	5/21/2019



Keep track of everything that needs to happen (and who is responsible for each item) in a robust task-management tool.

## Step 4

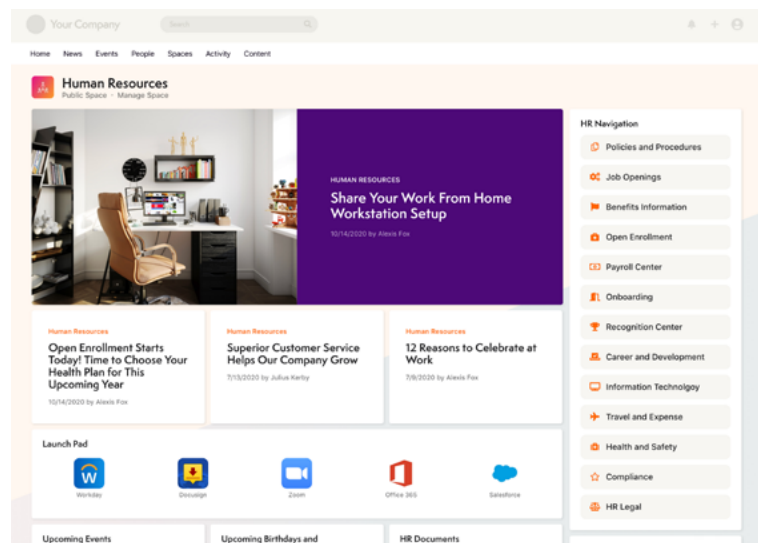
# Enlist a volunteer army.

Now that you've communicated the need for the change, selected the right people for the right jobs, and decided on a strategic vision and related initiatives, it's time for everyone to come together.

This is another powerful opportunity for internal communications managers to positively influence the outcome of organizational change. Help employees pull together toward a common goal with motivational communications that get everyone excited to participate.

Power tool for Step 4:

## Online Workspaces



Create an online workspace or group to bring everyone together and get everyone pulling in the same direction.

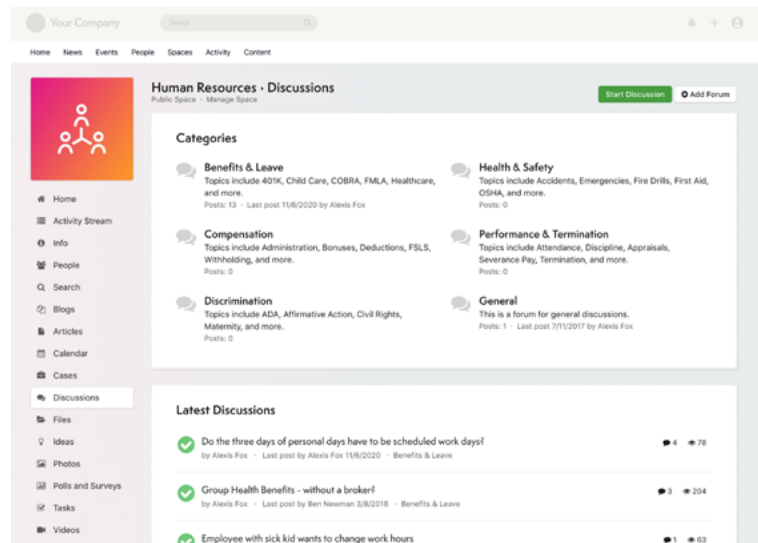
## Step 5

# Enable action and remove barriers.

Inefficient processes and unnecessary red-tape can cause organizational change to grind to a halt. Listen to what employees are saying about their experiences, and look for opportunities to solve pain points.

Power tool for Step 5:

## Discussion Forums



The screenshot shows a web interface for a company discussion forum. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Your Company' and a search bar. Below that, a menu includes 'Home', 'News', 'Events', 'People', 'Spaces', 'Activity', and 'Content'. The main content area is titled 'Human Resources - Discussions' and features a sidebar with navigation options like Home, Activity Stream, Info, People, Search, Blogs, Articles, Calendar, Cases, Discussions (selected), Files, Ideas, Photos, Polls and Surveys, Tasks, and Videos. The main content is divided into 'Categories' and 'Latest Discussions'. The 'Categories' section includes: 'Benefits & Leave' (Topics include 401K, Child Care, COBRA, FMLA, Healthcare, and more. Posts: 13 - Last post 11/6/2020 by Alexis Fox), 'Health & Safety' (Topics include Accidents, Emergencies, Fire Drills, First Aid, OSHA, and more. Posts: 0), 'Compensation' (Topics include Administration, Bonuses, Deductions, FLS, Withholding, and more. Posts: 0), 'Performance & Termination' (Topics include Attendance, Discipline, Appraisals, Severance Pay, Termination, and more. Posts: 0), 'Discrimination' (Topics include ADA, Affirmative Action, Civil Rights, Maternity, and more. Posts: 0), and 'General' (This is a forum for general discussions. Posts: 1 - Last post 7/11/2017 by Alexis Fox). The 'Latest Discussions' section shows three items: 'Do the three days of personal days have to be scheduled work days?' (by Alexis Fox - Last post by Alexis Fox 11/6/2020 - Benefits & Leave, 4 replies, 78 views), 'Group Health Benefits - without a broker?' (by Alexis Fox - Last post by Ben Newman 3/8/2018 - Benefits & Leave, 3 replies, 204 views), and 'Employee with sick kid wants to change work hours' (1 reply, 63 views).



Give employees a place to share their thoughts, ideas and experiences with a public or team-specific discussion forum – then watch for opportunities to break down barriers.

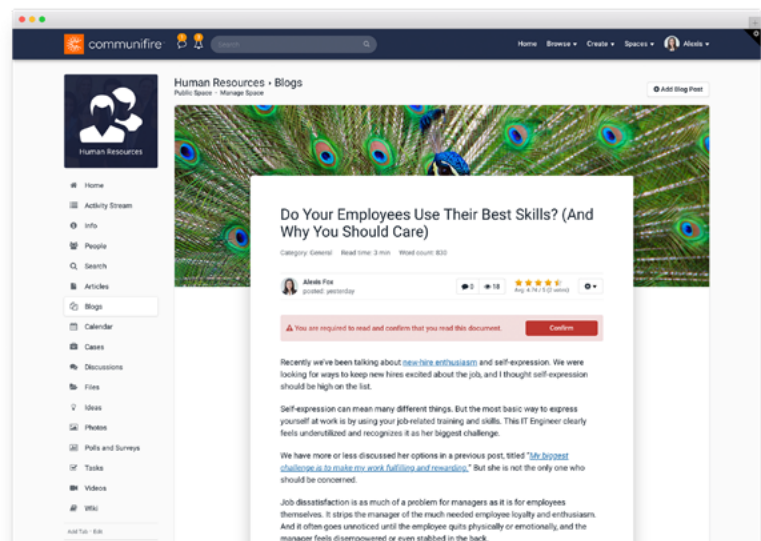
## Step 6

# Generate short-term wins.

Small wins can make a big impact on employee engagement. But don't stop at creating opportunities for short-term wins – make sure those wins are tracked and *communicated*. Get the word out about the positive things that are happening within the organization to energize and motivate everyone to keep going.

Power tool for Step 6:

## Blogging Platform



Share wins of all sizes with blog posts about what employees are doing and how their activities are making a positive impact on the company.

## Step 7

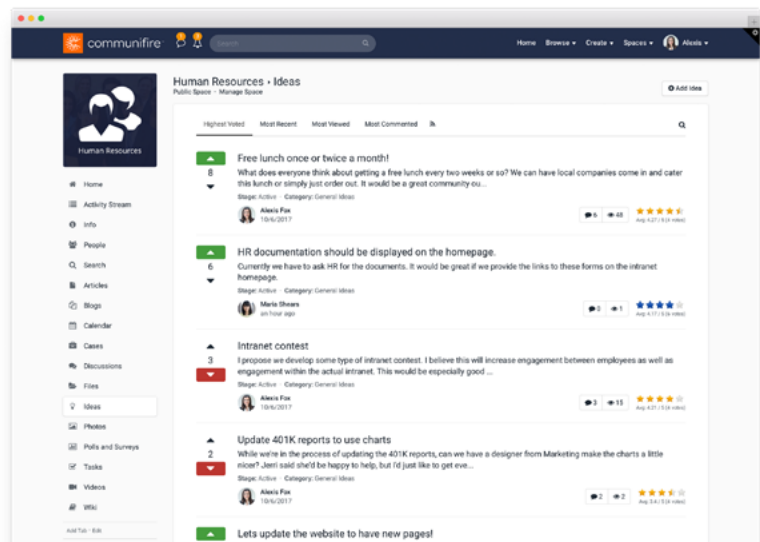
# Sustain acceleration.

Don't stop now! Change isn't easy, and it can be hard to maintain momentum as time goes on.

But speed is imperative. So look for opportunities to accelerate. Streamline processes, find new ways of doing things, and most importantly, *stay the course*.

Power tool for Step 7:

## Ideation Tracker



Your employees are your best resources for creative ideas around improving processes. Give them a place to share their ideas, and the ability to comment and vote on others' ideas.

## Step 8

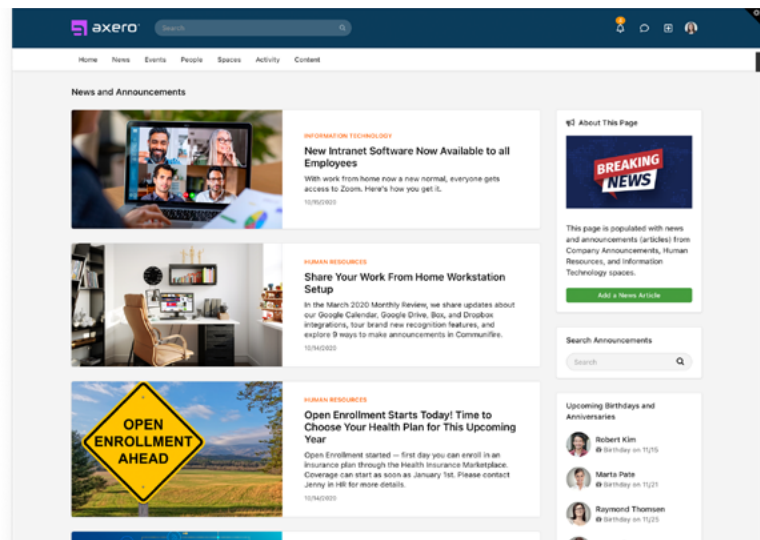
# Institute change.

The change has happened, and you've seen the benefits of it. Now make sure your employees are seeing how their hard work *directly led to those benefits*.

Communicate the connection between the changes employees have undergone (i.e. their new behaviors) and the organization's success. This will help make sure employees keep it up for the long run.

Power tool for Step 8:

## News and Articles



Share positive news and press releases to show employees how their hard work has paid off.

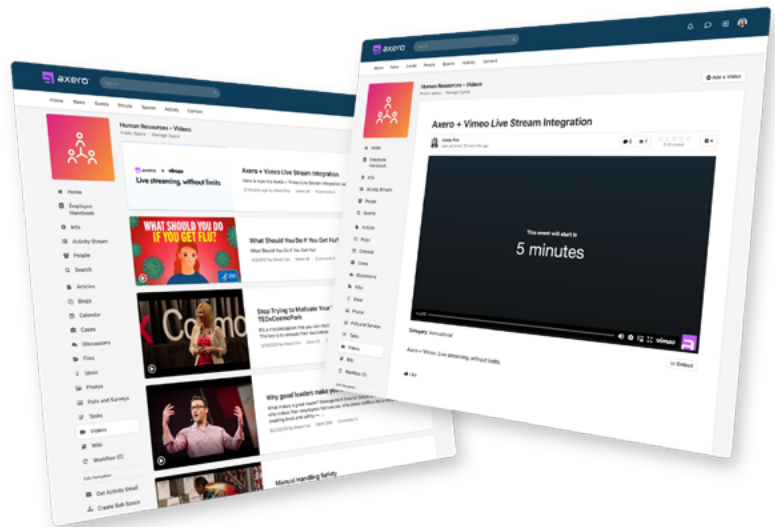
Bonus power tool

... for every step of the way.

Never underestimate the power of face-to-face communication during times of change.

Bonus power tool:

**Video  
Sharing**



Help leadership create motivational videos that convey the benefits of the change and the wins that the organization has seen since the change began.



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## References

1. "The 8-Step Process for Leading Change," Kotter International (2015). (Retrieved in May 2016.)  
<<http://www.kotterinternational.com/the-8-step-process-for-leading-change/>>
2. Kotter, John P., "Leading Change," Harvard Business Review Press (2012). (Retrieved in May 2016.)  
<<http://www.amazon.com/Leading-Change-New-Preface-Author/dp/1422186431/>>