

Capacity for change

“If you want to change the culture, you will have to start by changing the organization.” - Mary Douglas

The big idea

There is little point in having bright ideas about the future if your business or enterprise is not in a position to act on them. This tool derives from a number of big ideas from the organisational development field. It includes thinking from the likes of Henry Mintzberg, Peter Druker, Warner Burke and George Litwin. It is also supported by the experiences of a wide range of managers and leaders. To consider how your business or enterprise might take advantage of its future opportunities, you need to review and strengthen four key areas:

1. Structure
2. People
3. Processes
4. Culture

Purpose

The purpose of undertaking a capacity to change review is to give you confidence that you are building on the strengths of your business. To assess your capacity to move towards your vision for the future, there are a number of guiding principles under each of the four areas that you can use.

Structure:

- Your team/s or departments are aligned with the core phases in your activities
- You have teams of manageable sizes at all levels
- Reporting lines and relationships are clear
- You have short chains of control and direction
- Managers delegate appropriately
- Activities are undertaken at the appropriate levels according to accountability

People:

- Responsibilities are clearly aligned to the business' or enterprise's mission and goals
- You have the appropriate range of management skills and experience
- You use and build on the specialist strengths of your people
- You use your team/s flexibly and appropriately
- You provide opportunities for individual development and progression (where possible)
- The enterprise has an environment that promotes effective team working

Processes:

- You have processes that provide close external relationships, for example with customers, audiences, suppliers, funders or investors
- Your processes are regularly reviewed and improved
- The enterprise has appropriate processes for effective internal communication
- Your processes ensure value for money
- Your processes ensure you are compliant with any regulatory requirements
- Your processes are balanced in terms of their priority and contribution to developing the business or enterprise

Culture:

- Your business has a successful track record in implementing change
- You are able to positively embrace change
- You are able to identify and focus on the priorities for change

The tool

The tool consists of a questionnaire that allows the people involved to rate your four key areas. To assess your business' or enterprise's capacity to change, work through the following steps:

1. Print out copies of the questionnaire below
2. Ask all those likely to be involved with the change to complete the questionnaire independently. Set a date for the completed questionnaires to be returned
3. Collate all the responses and compare the results

4. Note where respondents have filled in the 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' boxes. Also note any divergent views
5. Determine the areas for improvement or change
6. Draw up an action plan, which outlines areas for improvement and the proposed programme of change

Take the next step

Think about an experience you have had of organisational change. Can you recognise some of the guiding principles in how the change happened? What do you think worked well? What elements were missing? How might it have been improved? Did the end result of the change achieve what was intended?

Top tips

- Allow flexibility in the process. People often make the mistake of trying to over control change
- Communicate, communicate and communicate. Keep people involved
- Be honest in your review. Make sure the change is right for your structure, people, processes and culture

Hone your empathy. Make sure you can see the change from different perspectives

Capacity to change questionnaire (Reproduced with kind permission of Caroline Felton, Caroline Felton Consulting Ltd)

	I agree strongly	I agree	I neither agree nor disagree	I disagree	I disagree strongly	Comments
Your structure reflects the way you deliver your activities						
You have teams of manageable sizes at all levels (no more than six people reporting at each level)						
Your structure has clearly defined reporting lines and relationships						
Your structure provides short chains of control and direction						
It is easy to delegate effectively in your business						

	I agree strongly	I agree	I neither agree nor disagree	I disagree	I disagree strongly	Comments
In your enterprise accountability is devolved to the lowest appropriate level						
Your business has a strong leader internally						
Your business has a strong leader externally						
Your enterprise has the necessary span of management skills and knowledge						
You make good use of the specialist skills you have in your team/s						

	I agree strongly	I agree	I neither agree nor disagree	I disagree	I disagree strongly	Comments
You have the capacity to manage a major change programme within the current staffing levels						
Everyone's roles, responsibilities, objectives and measures are well aligned with your enterprise's objectives and measures						
Your business supports both cross-functional team working and functional specialisms						
The business provides ample opportunity for career development and progression (where possible)						
This organisation has close and effective relationships externally, for example with customers, suppliers, investors, funders etc.						

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	I agree strongly	I agree	I neither agree nor disagree	I disagree	I disagree strongly	Comments
Your processes are reviewed and improved regularly						
You have sound processes for effective internal communications						
You communicate with your staff effectively						
Your business ensures it is getting value for money from every process						
You have systems in place that ensure and make it easy to adhere to regulatory requirements						

	I agree strongly	I agree	I neither agree nor disagree	I disagree	I disagree strongly	Comments
Your systems are balanced in terms of their priority and contribution to developing your business						
Your enterprise has a history of successful change						
Your business is already undertaking minor changes						
Your business has a culture that embraces change						