

Change management is not so much about managing change as about managing people through or during change. This is the reason that the focus needs to be first and foremost on the people and their needs, and secondarily on the tools and rules surrounding the change.

While there are plenty of prescriptions for effecting successful change, a few elements are common to most:

- A compelling vision for why change is needed
- Strong, aligned leadership
- Clear, consistent, and ongoing two-way communication
- Good planning and preparation
- A flexible implementation process that adapts to the needs of people

Vision: Making the case for change

Meaningful change is first and foremost conceived as a solution to a problem or an improvement to the current situation. A company is losing money and decides to downsize its work force. A married couple wants to share their love and chooses to adopt a child. A college senior, uncertain of her chosen major, takes a semester off to get a job and weigh her future options. Any change, meaningful or otherwise, raises a simple question: why?

The why is followed quickly by a barrage of other questions: How? When? Who? What? How will downsized employees be selected? When will we know if we're cleared for adoption? Who can explain this to me? What will I do if I can't afford to pay back my loans?

Where do you begin? What's right for your community? How quickly should you move through the process? Which Gloria should I pick? Why not just put the new Missalettes® out?

Where do we begin in the process of preparing communities for this major change in how we pray? Begin with why.

Whether changing a lifestyle, changing a work process, or changing a prescription for prayer, the best change happens for a reason. When the perception is that a change is “for change’s sake” or the reason is not communicated well, the likelihood of failure is increased. Absent a compelling reason for making a meaningful change, people are likely to view the change as irrelevant and will be less likely to engage.

When the Second Vatican Council made the decision to render the Latin Mass into the language of the faithful back in the 1960s, the compelling vision of participation quickly gained momentum. The central act of Catholic faith was being made comprehensible to the people of God for the first time in centuries.

The case for change presented by a new translation of the same Mass may not be as evident. But the need for and benefit of that change must be understood by people in order for it to be accepted in the long run. Most people will follow mandated change for a time. But ultimately change must take root in the heart.

In business, building the case for change is sometimes referred to as creating a “sense of urgency.” A business that is not growing in some way is shrinking. To stay competitive, businesses have to move their people to adopt change quickly and that means helping them accept that staying where they are—not changing—is not an option.

What does this mean for parish adoption of the revised *Roman Missal*? First, it means understanding what problem the change—the new translation—is solving. Why the change? What are the consequences of not changing?

Focusing on some of the concerns and opportunities the change is meant to address can draw a fuller picture for people and communicate a compelling case for the change:

- The newly translated texts capture more scriptural images than do the current texts.
- The reception of the new texts will create a new moment when people will be asking about the meaning of the Mass; this is a prime opportunity for developing a deeper understanding of and love for the Mass
- The new texts capture and express our Catholic beliefs in a fuller and richer manner.
- The new texts employ a noble, more elevated tone distinct from everyday speech, thereby making the texts at Mass more fitting for the worship of God.

Secondly, it means helping people experience the potential value of the change at both the intellectual and emotional levels. In their book *Switch*, Chip and Dan Heath fully explore this concept, building on the work of University of Virginia psychologist Jonathan Haidt in *The Happiness Hypothesis*.⁵

We tend to believe that people are persuaded to change by analyzing a situation, thinking about it, and then changing. In some narrow, well-defined situations, that is true. But for significant behavioral change efforts, researchers like the Heaths suggest that change is more likely to be successful when it is introduced through a visual manifestation that stimulates a feeling. Seeing something can stimulate our emotions and drive behavior. This is the basis for most advertising and for most storytelling. Providing a visual aid of the current and newly revised texts of the Creed side by side, for example, is an effective way to introduce this change.

Next Steps

- Discuss the reason for this change with other parish leaders. What makes it compelling for each of them? Can you arrive at a consistent way to describe it to the parish?
- Beyond the explicit reasons for the change, brainstorm what opportunities might exist to foster a renewal of the liturgical celebration.

Leadership: Get out of your own way

If you are a leader in your community, especially if you are a pastor or priest celebrant, your attitude during this transition will be one of the greatest influences on how well and how willingly your parishioners navigate these changes. First and foremost, you need to understand and commit to the change yourself. It means understanding both the challenges the new translation presents and the opportunities it affords, such as deeper formation, greater reverence, and community building.

If you truly want to enable people to focus on what's important and avoid being distracted by the rearrangement of the pronouns or the number of commas, then you have to be invested in the change yourself. Even if you are not sold on every aspect of the change, find a part of it that you can support. Model a commitment to get the best from this change, rather than letting it get the best of you.

What you say matters. How you say it matters more. Some considerations:

- If you have doubts or need to vent, save it for peers, confidantes, your bishop—those who can support you rather than those looking to you for support.
- If you are an enthusiastic advocate of the new translation, you may need to temper your enthusiasm and be patient as people work through the transition.
- Acknowledge that any change is an adjustment that may include a sense of loss.
- Acknowledge what the liturgy means to you and your community and what it was like going through the change to the vernacular—a much more abrupt transition.
- Be humble, be authentic, be clear.

Good leaders recognize that they don't have to have all the answers or do all the talking. Introducing the revised *Roman Missal* offers an opportunity to engage and develop leadership in your community.

Identify those among your parish leaders who have the natural talent to help lead this change: those who can think critically, communicate well, and who have the self-assurance to speak and the sensitivity to listen. Create a core group of these presenters and those who will lead change in specific areas, such as your music director. In many parishes, the change effort will be led by a key person with strong liturgical knowledge and experience, such as the director of liturgy or formation.

Next Steps

- Get up to speed on what the changes in the revised *Roman Missal* entail, as well as the reasoning behind them. Inform your thinking with a variety of resources, each of which may consider the revision in a slightly different context. See the resource list on page 40.
- Identify any personal hurdles or concerns related to the change. They might include:
 - Concern over the accessibility of the new texts
 - Lack of time to tackle the pastoral responsibility of leading this change
 - Anxiety over having to learn a new text or chant setting
 - Funding for the *Missal* and supporting resources
- For each hurdle, consider how you have dealt with similar challenges in the past or how you might mitigate the current difficulty:
 - Talk with a spiritual director or professional peer
 - Delegate administrative duties to free up time or delegate the change leadership to another staff member
 - Work with the music director to adopt new chants slowly
 - If finances are a concern, seek out a group dedicated to spiritual growth, such as the Holy Name Society or Knights of Columbus, to help underwrite costs.

- Resolve not to let your personal preferences or agenda drive how you communicate this change. You can acknowledge that the change is difficult or invigorating for you personally within the context of a positive message
- Assemble the core leadership group and engage them in a similar process to understand the changes and examine any personal hurdles.

Communication:

Do it early, do it often, do it again

In any significant change, the ideal time to begin communicating is when the need for change first becomes apparent. Acknowledging that need plants the seed for change. It helps people get acclimated to the idea that change may be coming.

This strategy is not always possible, as with sudden change or change in which the need is unclear. In such cases, it's best to begin communicating as soon as there is an awareness that change itself is on the horizon.

People will begin to ask, "What's the change?" "Why is this happening?" "When will it take place?" "Who will be affected?" "How will it affect us?" "What is expected of us?"

Nature abhors a vacuum; so do people faced with a change they don't fully understand and who are left out of the loop. You don't have to have all the answers. In fact, if you wait to have all the answers, you'll have two issues to manage: the change and the misperceptions.

Instead, at the outset you need to be able to articulate what the change is and why it's happening. As important, you need to convey with confidence that you or a team are planning for the parish's needs, and that information will be shared freely and regularly.

In a parish setting, you can start or build on early efforts by introducing the change to the pastoral council or worship committee to solicit their input and involvement. This is key to generating conversations that create support for the change. Done well, this can also build confidence in the leadership. "Our people are on top of this. We're in this together. It's going to be okay."

A generally accepted principle in change management is that a certain percentage of those affected will jump right on the bandwagon, a certain percentage will never climb on, and a majority will wait for a hand up before they get on board.

Experts disagree on the exact percentages. In most cases, it's irrelevant. The ratio—10-90-10 or 20-50-30—may have more to do with the nature of the change and its importance to those affected. For leaders, the lesson is that there will be early adopters to draw on who can help build positive momentum, especially if they are influential people in your community.

Influential groups or individuals in a community can be both a help and a hindrance. "Evangelists" can help spread the message. Those whom you have no hope of swaying can spread dissent. Anticipate their objections. Your goal is not to win these members over. Instead, focus on proactively addressing their concerns so they don't have an opportunity or reason to derail the transition before it gets going.

Keep the focus on what actually affects your faith community: the challenges and opportunities for incorporating the revised texts into your community's worship. Your communication will be centered on two things: the case for change, the reason and the benefits, and how your community will make the change.

Once implementation of the change plan begins, communication efforts often fall by the wayside. However, this is where open and ongoing communication is most

important. Allowing opportunities for feedback, formally or informally, can help you take the pulse of the change process. Equally important, it can inform decisions for further catechesis around the revised prayers or around continued liturgical formation.

Next Steps

- Identify any potential supporters and dissenters in your community. Engage the former; be prepared to address the latter.
- Consider how to use communication effectively to achieve your objectives:
 - Create awareness about the change and the reasons for it
 - Inform the community about how the change will be introduced
 - Drive the action needed to accomplish the change
 - Invite input and feedback on the change and addressing issues and questions that arise along the change journey
- Consider what communication channels are available, and which ones work most effectively for different purposes or different audiences in your community:
 - Print letter
 - Bulletin column
 - Bulletin notice
 - Parish newsletter or e-newsletter
 - E-mail
 - Posters
 - Web site
 - Worship aid

Face to face: homily, meeting, one on one

- Discuss how best to keep communication simple, clear and consistent. Perhaps that means drawing up a basic fact sheet with the reasons for the change and how it will be implemented in the parish. The fact sheet could be used by all leaders involved in the change and could be the basis for any other related communication as well.

Planning and Preparation: Plan for success

Good planning is a strategic activity, yet we often approach it as a tactical one. What's the difference? A strategic approach focuses on what we want to accomplish; a tactical approach focuses on what we need to do.

Tactics and tools can be important. But you want to make sure they are the right ones for the job. There are lots of different types and sizes of screwdrivers, for example. But if you don't have one that matches the screw head you're trying to tighten, the screw will likely be damaged. The best way to know which tool you need is to examine the problem before choosing the tool.

Good planning calls for probing and understanding the landscape of the change, as well as the mindset and behavior of the people who will be affected by it. Only then can you evaluate the best means of getting them from the current state to the future one. If planning is not a strength of yours, partner with a team member or staff member who is strong in analytical thinking and project management. You guide the vision; they guide the details.

Remember to begin with defining what successful change would look like in your community. What is the behavior you're trying to influence? How will you measure change? How will you know if the change was successful? Some signs might be that the assembly opens the Missalette® to participate in the revised prayers when prompted or sings the new Gloria.