



Five Minutes with... Ché Broekman

My name is Ché Broekman and I am presently the Manager of the Change Management Unit for Information Projects at the University of Melbourne. I have been working in the change management field for about 11 years after working as an organisational development consultant for prior 10 years. My clients include several universities in Australia and Singapore and the corporate sector including Telstra, BHP and Coles Myer.

How did you come to perform in a change management related role? What attracted you?

I think there is something very satisfying in achieving real change – it's what's wanted/required, it's not easy to get there, but fortunately and in most cases it's for the better for everyone. To achieve change, you really need to check-in to what is going on for people at a deep level, as their outward responses do not always accurately reflect the true lay of the land. Deeper levels of understanding yield better strategy and tactics for moving the business into the new order, congruent with the organisational vision and project objectives. Once realised, I feel this sense of achievement and satisfaction – a case 'yes, we've done it!'

Why is good change management so critical to the way businesses perform today?

As we all know, business is under ever growing pressure to become better at what it does. Yet in truth, it's not a 'business' per se, but rather the individuals working in the business that have to make these changes. Most of us like to put our attention to products, processes and 'objects' – things we can see and talk about with a degree of disassociation from ourselves. Yet all of these things come about through human effort and interaction, often posing complex and sometimes mysterious sets of circumstances to unfold. Business therefore needs the change management function to work at all these levels simultaneously, using the right mix of technical and people knowledge to get the required outcomes. A business that does this well realises program benefits faster/better, becoming more successful and providing greater security to its employees.



What makes a great change management practitioner?

For me, experience is probably my most valued asset, but other elements include clarity, flexibility, endurance and nothing less than terrific interpersonal skills. Technical disciplines such as impact analysis, surveys, training management, communications, and project and meetings management are all par for the course.

The practitioner also has to accept that no two projects are ever the same, which makes the application of repeatable processes a lot more difficult. Convincing the unenlightened project manager of this reality can also be a bit of chore at times. But there are key themes that are consistently in the spotlight and at the end of the day, the change manager largely needs to be focused on outcomes, the ambient realities, and the array of choices and actions available to influence events in the right direction.

What would you say to anyone thinking of starting/developing a career in change management?

Go for it and enjoy. Try to not let the complexity faze you – keep a good fix on key outcomes and use your common sense as much as possible. Don't try and address too much – it seems like change management can cover just about everything at times. Rather, keep your centre and leverage through the people you work with. Foster an ethos of care and respect for others – ultimately it's what we all want and need, and there seems to be so little of it around. Also, do a lot of reading and learning around change management and organisational development. Personal development such as NLP can also do wonderful things for you.

What is your idea of a great change management challenge?

Converting what was otherwise going to be a boring, verging on irritating experience for everyone, into a positive and enjoyable change event. This can be a new software program, a systems change, even a restructure. If good change leadership can be applied to the efforts of a competent and well-resourced project team, the outcome can become uplifting and inspirational for all – team members and staff alike.