

Five Minutes with... Jennifer Long



My name is Jennifer long and I work at Telstra leading the area of communications and change within the Telstra HR Talent and OD Team.

My professional career spans more 10 years of operational and consulting experience in Organisational Psychology, HR Management, Management Consulting and Change Management. I have been fortunate enough to work as both an employee and a consultant for companies that include National Foods, Blackwell Publishing, Shell, BHP Billiton, Holden, Right Management, CGU Insurance and most recently Origin Energy.

All of the work I have undertaken has focused on finding ways to improve organisational effectiveness, through effective people strategies and management. Whether the program is a restructure, off-shore migration or a leadership development intervention, all the work has focused on people impact and performance.

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

I have had a long held belief that behaviour is the most critical success factors in organisational performance. Nothing could be achieved without people. Coupled with this, I had always had a fascination with human behaviour and how it can be predicted and managed effectively. Given this, I decided to complete my tertiary studies in Psychology, which included a Masters Degree in Organisational Psychology.

Working in Change Management has been an evolutionary process in my career. When I first started working professionally, I specialised as an Organisational Psychologist focused on performance at the individual level. As my career evolved, I became increasingly interested in how behaviour can be managed at



the 'whole of business' level, especially during periods of change. While I worked as a consultant, I decided to specialise in projects that specifically related to organisational change and have remained in this area for the last 6 years.

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

Businesses are changing more frequently than ever before. The degree of organisational and people agility required to keep up with this pace of change is paramount for organisations to survive. There are two components to making organisational change work; one is the successful implementation of the course of action and the other is its acceptance by those involved. The latter can only happen when effective change management is in place.

The acceptance of the change is about people and their readiness for change. This is more complex because it deals with human behaviour and emotion. When planned for well, effective change management can influence the speed of acceptance. This is critical when change is fast.

4. What makes a great change management practitioner?

An effective change manager is someone who first and foremost is tuned into and interested in people. This, coupled with an understanding of contemporary organisational practices, and an ability to work with complexity and uncertainty, will set most practitioners in good stead. Ultimately effective execution is the key. A good change manager knows whom, how and when to engage people to get the right things, especially people support, done at the right time.

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

First and foremost, make a list of what you are looking for in a job. If your list includes "challenging", "dynamic", "complex" and "people focused", then this could be the career for you! Network and talk to people who work in the field to get a detailed insight into the type of work they are doing. Never underestimate the value of further education either. There are many fantastic courses you can do that review contemporary practices, thought leaders and case studies in the area.

Get to know what the work involves and then see if you can do some kind of 'professional placement' (i.e. where you have the opportunity to watch, observe, and help someone working in the field). This is a terrific way to get your foot in the door and fast track your introduction to the field.



6. What is your idea of a great change management challenge?

Changing company and industry psychology toward more sustainable business practices, rather than an excessive focus on 'growth' and 'more profit' at all cost.