



Five Minutes with... Jennifer Lace



My name is Jennifer Lace and I am currently engaged as the Communications and Change Lead with Medibank Private in their IT Business Projects Division working on a large IT transformation project.

My professional career spans 13 years and includes involvement in large IT projects with a particular focus on managing organisational change, communications, training and business readiness. I have worked as both an employee and consultant for a number of companies including Medibank Private, Thomson Reuters, Corrs Chambers Westgarth Lawyers and Freehill Lawyers. Last year I took a career break to have my first daughter Lucy, the biggest ongoing transformation project I have undertaken yet!

My work has focused on designing change management strategies to accompany the introduction of new technology. The overall outcome of my work has been to ensure that the transition to new systems is a positive experience for the business – from those staff directly impacted through to the wider business. This has included the development and implementation of communication strategies for internal and external stakeholders, developing business readiness approaches and the management of training requirements.

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

About 13 years ago, after returning from the UK, I got a lucky break - a role which involved working on a large IT transformation project. The Project Manager had



change management high on his radar. Back then, change management was a reasonably new concept, but gaining momentum as a number of IT projects had failed by not recognising the impact that change would have on their staff and productivity. I took the opportunity to introduce change initiatives in training programs and communications - writing newsletters, running information sessions and constructing posters for the business about the project.

I then found myself working with Human Resources on structure and role changes and talking to various impacted business areas about getting ready for the new technology. I was attracted to working closely with people and guiding them through change which can be a really difficult and an unsettling time. It was interesting, and each new project required a new and creative approach. I found that I was working closely with different people from all areas of the business.

I enjoyed the work so much I completed a Post Graduate Diploma in Business Information Systems taking subjects that focused on Change Management and Project Management.

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

Large IT projects are a very costly investment for businesses and as the purse strings tighten in the current economic climate, there is a greater expectation that projects produce measurable business benefits and add value. Good change management must be seen to add value. It is critical that a change agent can promote awareness and gain acceptance of the change across all areas of a business. By equipping leadership teams, project sponsors and stakeholders with the necessary knowledge and skills, they receive a level of comfort throughout the change process and beyond.

4. What makes a great change management practitioner?

There are many attributes that make a great Change Manager, the most important is the ability to relate to different types of people from all areas of a business – and to be a good listener. What separates the good from the great is someone who has a creative flair, with the ability to come up with initiatives that stimulate business awareness and influence others to embrace change. By ensuring that people have an understanding of the rationale behind the changes is an essential part of the role and can make a huge impact on the success of the transformation.



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

It can present some interesting challenges at times – but can also be extremely rewarding when you can turn a project around with good change management initiatives.

If you can get some experience in IT projects, that is good starting point as you can observe and learn from other change managers. I found additional study was very useful.

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

I have always been fascinated with the conversion to the Euro in Europe and the change management requirements for a project of this size and complexity. That has the 'WOW' factor in it for me.

On a personal level my next great change management challenge is to persuade my father, a retired farmer in NSW, to use the internet and email.