



The Professional Woman's Mentor

# Building a Change Agent Network

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Tip Sheet

# Building a Change Agent Network

## Introduction

You've likely heard the old saying "It takes a village to raise a child".

Well... I think it takes a village to lead change! OK, maybe not a village... but it certainly takes more than a single change manager!

Building a Change Agent Network (CAN) will help to ensure that:

- All impacted groups are considered and represented in the change plan
- The change manager has all of the information he / she needs to create the change management plan
- The right adjustments are made throughout the life of the project
- Pockets of resistance are identified and solutions put into place to bring people through their individual change journey

# Building a Change Agent Network (CAN)

## What is a Change Agent Network?

This is a group of people who come together to support change management for the life of a project. They are dedicated to helping the change manager create the deliverables and execute the actions outlined in the change management plan.

The group is comprised of people who:

- Will be impacted by the change
- Understand how the change will impact the group they work in
- Are committed to ensuring that the change is implemented successfully
- Will share their thoughts, observations, and ideas with the group
- Agree to create / assist with deliverables outlined in the change management plan

## Why do I need a Change Agent Network?

Change managers are skilled in leading change. It is likely that they won't know all of the details and the impacts of the project they are assigned to. There is a lot of work involved in the execution of change management plans. You will need the assistance of your Change Agent Network to create high quality deliverables and meet deadline commitments.

The Change Agent Network (CAN) assists the change manager by:

- Enhancing Communication Efforts
  - Advise on what impacted groups want / need to know
  - Provide a feedback loop for leaders and employees in their areas
- Boosting Ownership - Members of the CAN are invested in the success of the project. Their participation connects them to the change and the outcomes.
- Building Credibility - When employees learn that one of their peers is involved in shaping the change and the deployment, their level of trust in the project increases.
- Increasing Understanding - The CAN is the change managers eyes and ears. Members are committed to letting the change manager know when things are going well... and when adjustments need to be made to the plan.

## Who should be on my Change Agent Network?

The number of people and who should be involved will change from project to project. General guidelines for the CAN include:

- Keep the group small. The ideal size is 4 - 8 participants.
- Include one person to represent each of the impacted groups.
- Invite someone from HR when there will be changes to roles and responsibilities, anticipated layoffs, hiring new positions, or other significant impacts to employees.
- Invite someone from training if this team will be involved in:
  - Creating training materials
  - Facilitating training sessions
  - Collaborating with SME's on training delivery
  - The LMS will be used to house and track training modules

## Are there specific capabilities an ideal Change Agent Network member will have?

Absolutely! When you are thinking about who you want to join your CAN, be diligent in choosing people who are:

- Credible - They should have influence in the organization (especially within the group they are representing) and will engage to positively impact the implementation.
- Knowledgeable - They understand the business and how challenges / concerns of their groups.
- Committed and Willing to Roll up their Sleeves - This is a working group. Set clear expectations on the time commitment you are asking for and let CAN members know up front that they will be assigned tasks and deliverables as a member of this team. This applies to leaders as well as individual contributors.

Remember: Your CAN members do not need to have change management experience or expertise. The change manager will teach them what they need to know.

## What will Change Agent Network members be asked to do?

There are a variety of tasks / deliverables CAN members may be assigned to. Some of these include:

- Attend weekly meetings (these meetings should take priority over most other commitments on their calendars)
- Assist in creating the change management plan
- Create communication drafts
- Participate in the review & edit process for communications and other deliverables
- Participate in workshops
- Meet with members of impacted groups
- Serve as a liaison between the change management team and leaders
- Facilitate a feedback loop between the change management team and the group they represent
- Advocate for the change - The CAN members are champions of the change and are expected to be a positive influence on their peers and leadership team.
- Identify Pockets of Resistance & Propose Solutions - Members of this group are on the front lines of the change and will hear about employee concerns and struggles. It is their responsibility to share these concerns with the CAN and bring potential solutions to the group.
- Share what is working for their groups... and what isn't working - They are the eyes and ears of the change. Their feedback will improve the change plan, deliverables, and next steps.

## How Can I Organize a Change Agent Network?

Yea!! I'm so glad you asked! Here are the steps to creating a Change Agent Network to support your project:

- Identify the impacted groups (validate with your executive sponsor and / or business sponsor + the project manager)
- Identify one person for each impacted group that meets the CAN team member criteria (see guidance above)
- Work with your sponsor to secure permission from the leader of ideal candidates to participate in the CAN. (see the resources section for a list of the draft communications created for you)
- Executive Sponsor / Business Sponsor will send a “welcome email” to each identified CAN member (after their leader’s approval has been received)
- Set-up a regular meeting cadence for CAN meetings (ask participants to attend in person when possible)

### Additional Resources Available to You:

- Leader Talking Points
- Leader Request email
- Leader Confirmation email
- Participant Welcome email
- Meeting Invitation and Agenda (Change Agent Network)

## Connecting with Carla

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