

Briefing: Change doesn't happen unless it is spearheaded by a passionately committed individual or group. Such people aren't just good at grasping the climate change agenda; they also have strong "soft skills" such as the ability to tailor their communications to win support from diverse groups. They know from experience how change happens.

Why is this important? Agents of change can be co-opted by an organisation to accelerate action on climate change. However, the effectiveness of this strategy will depend on the amount of support and resourcing, degree of networking, and level of responsibility given to them by senior managers. Ideally, agents of change are recognised and positioned at all levels of the organisation. A strategy for agents of change needs to recognise the stresses that can accompany high levels of awareness and commitment and also needs to plan for succession: initiatives often run out of steam when a change agent moves on.

What we can learn: How you might best develop an agents of change strategy.

Ranking Exercise

The pen portraits need to be printed on card and cut up to enable this activity.

Please organise the following pen portraits into three categories:

- 1. Those you can discard as totally uncharacteristic of your organisation**
- 2. Those that most represent your organisation**
- 3. Those you are unsure about**

Take pile 2 and put them in order of most to least characteristic. Discuss.

A12

If someone suggests an initiative such as turning off computers at night or buying green electricity or shifting to a more environmentally friendly procurement policy, he/she gets no higher level support and may be discouraged from making other suggestions.

(dd21)

A11

If someone proposes any change to the workplace to accommodate hotter summer temperatures, or water-saving devices, or better drainage, they are ignored, regarded as odd or told it's the job of facilities management.

(gd71)

A6

A cross-organisational network of individuals meet or dialogue regularly about how to adapt to hotter, drier summers, wetter, stormier winters, sea-level rise, energy constraints, carbon trading etc. Internal operations and services are changing as a result.

(fd54)

A5

A specialist environmental manager/team or department is noticeably making headway with such things as carbon management programmes or carbon labelling, or climate-friendly procurement.

(ad53)

A7

Senior Managers and those at board level recognise and encourage the need for climate change champions or agents for change. They promote such individuals to positions in the organisation where they can exert the most influence. They empower them to initiate projects and report progress to the board.
(fd15)

A4

The particular needs of climate change agents for change are well understood, articulated and supported by the organisation. Agents for change are given time to meet up with others both inside and outside their organisations. They are supported to go on courses of their choosing to extend their capabilities.
(bd44)

A8

Informal but isolated climate change agents for change are beginning to attract attention. They may achieve something noteworthy like introducing rain-water harvesting to a new project even though this is not part of their role or job specification.

(fd42)

A3

A climate change agent for change or energy-saving monitor is formally identified. Their scope is mainly to encourage the workforce to use less electricity and their status is comparable to those in the organisation who are first-aiders.

(dd52)

A9

Recruitment procedures recognize two core qualities of climate change agents for change: passion and the relentless thirst to tackle barriers to change. Human Resources have a deliberate strategy in place to recruit and develop such individuals so that they are ready to contribute to future programmes.

(ed15)

A10

Those successful at championing other issues are encouraged to tackle climate change alongside a climate change agent for change where there is a clear overlap of interests. For example, someone enthusiastic about contingency planning may be working with an agent for change to update the risk register.

(cd44)

A1

Individuals who understand the dynamics and delays of climate change are eager to contribute because they can see opportunities to help managers make more progress on their climate change agenda. The way for them to do more isn't always clear.

(gd63)

A2

People with skills in energy management, carbon accounting, adaptation tools and so on are expected to use these skills to change internal practices.

(id23)