

# Embedding successful change through collaboration

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**P**andemics, changing demographics, digital advancements, new treatments and political reforms are among the events and changes that affect the healthcare environment. Although change is an inevitable process, it frequently evokes an array of mixed emotions that may even include resistance from staff.

A nurse leader who wants to embed successful change needs to execute change effectively and communicate the vision clearly to the team.

Health care is a dynamic and constantly evolving environment that needs to introduce change effectively. The ability to lead successful change in nursing is important for improving patient outcomes and enhancing staff satisfaction. However, integrating change is challenging and often met with resistance.

This article provides 10 simple tips for nursing leaders who wish to introduce planned change while fostering a collaborative and supportive environment.

## Tip 1. Understand the context

It is important for a nurse leader to understand the context for change to provide a justified reason for introducing any change to the team. This first step is crucial to identify and assess what needs to change. This can be achieved by using Kurt Lewin's force field analysis, a tool described by Shafaghat et al (2021), who argued that this tool can help examine a proposed change, weighing the internal and external forces for it. This will make the change more meaningful and valued.

## Tip 2. Shared vision and purpose

A clear and coherent vision helps direct the change process and provides a sense of purpose. The nurse leader needs to articulate why the change is required by reinforcing

the impact it will have on patient care or the team. The vision needs to be realistic and assist staff to recognise the benefits, for example improving patient safety or fostering better communication among team members or between teams.

## Tip 3. Communication

It is essential for the nurse leader to articulate with clarity and ensure there are open communication channels so that staff are informed and given ample opportunity to discuss any concerns.

Using a plethora of communication methods, such as face-to-face meetings, virtual meetings, emails and workshops ensures that a consistent message is extended to everyone. Gaining trust is the cornerstone of implementing change. Alternatively, poor communication can have a disastrous impact.

## Tip 4. Readiness

Teams need to be prepared emotionally and cognitively to accept and embrace the change. Burnout and a sense of disillusionment can set in and pose a risk to change being actioned if the team is not ready.

## Tip 5. Inclusive engagement

Involving key stakeholders early on in the process is a crucial step for supporting staff and minimising resistance to implementing changes. Staff who feel involved are more likely to engage in the changes being embedded.

## Tip 6. Empowering the team

Empowering the nursing team to initiate the change process is imperative for long-term success (Nilsen et al, 2020). The nurse leader can delegate tasks to the nurses to help them to take ownership of the change process.

This fosters accountability and responsibility, which can forestall resistance and sustain the momentum for change.

## Tip 7. Understanding resistance

Change is not a linear process and the nurse leader needs to anticipate resistance from their team. Cheraghi et al (2023) indicated that nurses may be inherently resistant to change due to fear, uncertainty, mistrust and anger.

It is important to address concerns by actively listening and creating a safe space for colleagues to address any uncertainties. Providing suggestions for solutions to any problems, organising any necessary additional training and offering one-to-one discussions may help alleviate anxiety.

## Tip 8. Facilitating change

Once the need for change has been agreed, the leader must implement the change with a comprehensive plan. This entails information on roles and responsibilities for various stakeholders, timelines, specific tasks to undertake and so on. The plan also needs to identify potential barriers and strategies to overcome them. Change theories can assist this process, such as the three-stage change theory originally developed by Lewin in the 1940s, as described by Dean (2021), which entails:

- Unfreezing an old behaviour
- Implementing the new change
- Refreezing the new behaviour.

## Tip 9. Celebrating milestones

To ensure new changes are being executed, a leader must consistently reinforce and role model the changes via ongoing training and reviewing progress. Equally, celebrating milestones helps maintain morale and encourages staff to continue to embrace the change. Recognising the efforts of the team fosters a sense of accomplishment and commitment to the vision.

**Tip 10. Evaluating the process**

Once the change has been attained, Allen (2016) asserts that it is vital to evaluate the effectiveness of the change. Ongoing evaluation allows for any amendments and ensures that changes are sustainable and are achieving the intended aims and objectives. The nurse leader can use audits or service evaluations to monitor the change.

**Conclusion**

Leading successful change in nursing requires a multifaceted approach. By introducing planned change by taking an organised approach, nurse leaders

can inspire change initiatives that improve patient care and enhance staff satisfaction.

Nurse leaders must acknowledge the challenges of change management, ensuring that nursing teams can adapt to new demands at the same time as maintaining high standards of patient care. With the right leadership and strategies, change can be a powerful tool for advancing nursing practice. **BJN**

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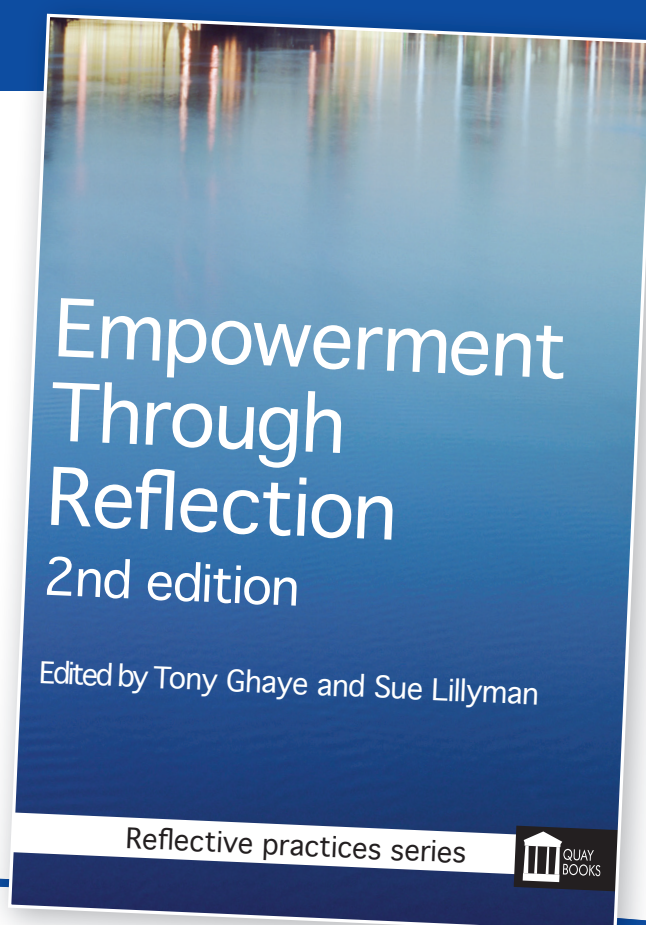
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