

Chapter 2: What Is Organizational Change Management?

Let's talk about change. Not the vague, corporate kind people roll their eyes at, but rather the kind of change that happens when your job, your tools, or your priorities shift because of a project. That kind that causes anxiety, hesitation, and a whole lot of “wait, what?” from the people it affects.

And that's where Organizational Change Management, or OCM, comes in.

What OCM Actually Means

OCM is a way of helping people get ready for, and succeed in, new ways of working. That's basically it.

OCM is not a motivational poster. It's not a one-time training session. It's not just a communication plan. It's a thoughtful, structured way to prepare people for what's coming, support them while they make the shift, and help them stick with it long enough that the change works the way it was intended.

If project management is about building the ship, OCM is about getting the crew trained, equipped, and confident to sail it.

Why OCM Gets Ignored

One reason OCM doesn't get the attention it deserves is because it's often seen as “soft” work. People assume it's about sending out a few emails or throwing some slides together for a training.

But *change that sticks* doesn't happen because someone got an announcement in their inbox. It happens because people were brought along for the journey. They understand the why, they were supported, they were provided the tools and time to adjust, and they had someone to go to when things didn't go as planned.



Caught in the Middle

Leadership launched a diversity and inclusion initiative. Execs were all in. Front-line employees were interested. But middle managers? They didn't know what to do with it.

They got no training, no talking points, and no guidance. So, they defaulted to silence. And that silence created confusion.

The result? A well-intentioned effort with a clear business case quietly fizzled. Not because people didn't care, but because the people in the middle (the ones who carry most of the weight during change) weren't given what they needed to lead and support it.

What OCM Actually Looks Like

Effective *people-readiness* change management has a basic formula that can scale up or down depending on the size of the project:

- A clear message about what's changing and why it matters
- Engagement with the people affected, early and often
- Support systems, like coaching, feedback loops, and training
- Champions who help bring others along
- Reinforcement, so people don't slip back into old habits

If you want people to change what they do, you have to give them a reason, a path, and support.



Pro Tips

Change doesn't fail because people hate change - it fails because they weren't ready for it.

Middle managers make or break change.

If you skip them, your message dies in the middle.

If you're not sure where to start, ask this: **"Who's going to be most disrupted by this project?"** Then go talk to them.

[See Appendix D for a one-pager you can give any sponsor who needs clarity on their role.](#)