

Driving Change: Tips for Helping Stakeholders Stay Motivated

Hello! We're Josh Twomey and Joan Johnston, from UMass Medical School's Center for Health Policy and Research ([CHPR](#)). One of the more rewarding opportunities for evaluators is to work with organizations endeavoring towards seismic change. Our own work focuses on helping large medical organizations restructure services to integrate behavioral health care into traditional primary care – a task requiring massive cultural, technological, and logistical shifts. Inherent within this work is an assessment of where the organization is compared to where it hopes to be, along with what changes are needed to achieve transformational goals. While this work can be exciting, it can also be hard to keep all parties motivated. Uncertainty about how large change will impact job satisfaction, concern about working with outsiders (i.e., us), and 'change fatigue' are all common threats to stakeholder engagement. We would like to offer some tips to avoiding barriers to change and keeping clients motivated.

Hot Tips

Acknowledge the Content Experts – Evaluators often have the benefit of an external perspective (i.e., the bird's eye view of the end goal and how to get there). While this can lead to some great data-driven insights, it is important to recognize that we may not always understand what is happening on the ground. Communicate early and often to clients/stakeholders that they are the content experts and their expertise is essential to driving change.

Reinforce Importance and Value of Data Collection - In large scale change efforts, evaluators often collect a lot of data. Surveys, interviews, and other data requests can tax stakeholder time and squander goodwill. It is vital to be able to explain to stakeholders the importance of all data that you hope to collect. If you cannot justify the value of the data you ask for, stakeholders will see little value in spending time to provide it.

Change is Hard – Whether vocalized or not, change can be filled with fears, tensions, and uncertainties. This happens when people are asked to do their jobs in ways that are different from what they are used to. As evaluators or outside consultants, it is important for us to be beacons of the end goal. However, it is also important for us to recognize and empathize with clients' concerns. Environments where clients can voice these concerns and receive genuine validation can be great incubators of change.

As agents of change, evaluators can have a great impact in helping to support transformational efforts. We have found that the more open we are to the concerns, needs, and contributions of our clients, the more effective we are in supporting organizational advancement.

Rad Resources

[A Way of Being \(Rogers, 1980\)](#)

[Building measurement and data collection into medical practice \(Nelson et al., 1998\)](#)