
Make sure you understand “DREAD” it’s all about change.

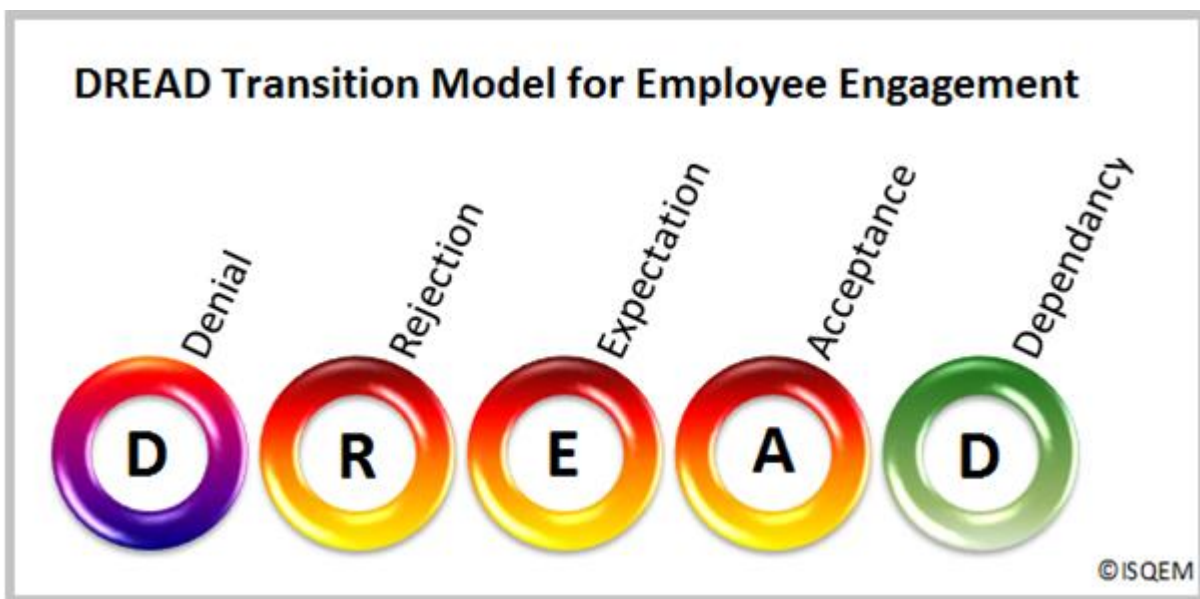
November 5, 2013

Article by: Wayne J. Harris – International Safety & Change Management Specialist

Now let’s imagine that you have managed to convince the CEO of the business to invest time and money in developing and implementing a new safety management system. You have trained everyone from the top management down in their new roles and responsibilities and at the same time run an extensive promotion campaign. So it should be a success (or so you may think.)

However 6 months later people have still not changed their ways of working and safety has not really progressed any further. The simple fact is that organisations don’t just change because of new OHS processes or training courses. They change because people within the organization have successfully gone thru a period of transition that we call DREAD.

Denial, Rejection, Expectation, Acceptance, Dependency (DREAD)



Only when the people have made their own personal transitions thru the “DREAD Zone” can an organisation truly reap the benefits of change. Some may start at the denial stage others at acceptance; however each stage must be managed and monitored constantly.

Denial: This is the first stage that must be managed with the utmost care. It’s the point of time that you have to sell to senior management the reasons a change is necessary for both business continuity and employees personal safety. It is normal for people to initially deny there is a need to change. We have all heard “we have been doing it this way for years” or “let’s wait and review next year” as the excuse not to change.

Rejection: As people are introduced to the new safety system they may resist the change actively or passively depending on their personal concerns. For the organization, this stage is the “Sink or Swim point of the change process” if this is badly managed, it may result in total failure.

The challenge is to help and support people through their individual transitions (which can at times be stressful). The easier you can make this for people, the quicker the organisation will benefit, and the more likely you are to be successful.

Expectation: If you managed to survive the first 2 stages it means people have started to believe the reasons behind the changes. This is when you have to demonstrate progress and what has been delivered by everyone. It’s the “walks the talk” stage of the whole process.

Now you may have promised certain improvements, management involvement, training for staff etc. So show people your progress and be visible on the results. One thing for sure never fabricate results. If you are behind in the programme tell people and let them know the reasons and how you will resolve it.

Acceptance: This is where you can let out a sigh of relief. You have reached the stage where you can definitely see people have adopted the new safety management system. The majority of employees are now following the procedures and people see the value it can bring to the business and most importantly to themselves as individuals.

Dependency: It’s now time to wave the corporate flag to the rest of the industry you work in. If you have managed your complete OHS change management in a structured and programmed way you will have achieved a stage of dependency. It means complete and full integration of safety has been achieved at all levels and is fully embraced as part of the culture and values of the organisation.

Conclusion:

It’s easy to think that people will always resist change out of pure stubbornness or lack of vision. However you need to recognize that for some change takes time and people need to be supported throughout the whole process. Companies can change it just needs to be planned, introduced and managed carefully.

Tip: keep you OHS change programme simple, clear and understandably and you will greatly increase your chance of success. Remember, if you over complicate then people will naturally reject.

Author: Wayne J. Harris

Wayne is a highly respected HSE (Health Safety Environment) professional with over 30 year’s international experience. He has extensive business and technical acumen gained successfully undertaking director and senior level roles, specialising in corporate change management and strategy.

Email Contact: wayneharris@isqem.com