

Mowbray's Bake the Cake framework of change.

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Introduction

There is an abundance of change processes, theories and procedures that it becomes confusing and difficult to establish what works well compared with those processes that are less successful.

One of the challenges is that there are so many variables in any situation that is undergoing change. This makes it difficult to capture the nuances of change, and when the person or people responsible for change, should step in to help the process along.

I've used the 'bake the cake' approach to change for many years. I composed this process in 1990 when trying to bring about major change in health services outside the UK.



Who's the baker?

Who is going to make the cake?

Who is wanting to bring about change. The initiator. This is the person or people who have the idea for change or who are instructed to bring change about.

Decide what you want?

What sort of cake is being wanted?

What is the purpose of the change envisioned? What will the result of the anticipated change look like?

Work out the ingredients

What ingredients are needed to produce the desired cake?

What quantities and weights do each ingredient need to be to produce the desired result?

Work out in detail what and who is included in achieving the result you want.

Are the ingredients of the proposed change available or do you have to go looking for more?

Work out the detail of what each person or action is supposed to achieve in the change process.

Work out in advance the amount of involvement each of the ingredients will contribute to produce the result you want.

Mix the ingredients together.

Mix the ingredients to produce what you want. The intensity of the mixing process is determined by what you want as a result.

Ensure the ingredients can mix together and are compatible or if they need something to glue them together (see next).

Choose the strategy of conviction to help mix the ingredients together. Imposing change (the strategy of imposition) doesn't produce the best results unless backed up by legislation (eg. smoking, seat belts, speed limits) and even then, not everyone complies.

What is the glue?

What will you use to ensure the ingredients stick together and produce the result you want?

What will hang the process of change together? Is it an incentive of some kind, a promise of a brighter future, introducing brilliant technology that everyone will love, or the promise of some kind of enhancement such as promotion or a better life?

What gives the cake its' shape?

What gives the cake its' shape? A cake tin?

What are the boundaries of your topic for change?

Will there be unintentional consequences?

Will the process of change spill over into the wider environment?

Which oven are you going to use?

Electric, gas, solar driven, camp fire, pizza oven?

Who is going to provide the 'heat' to turn the ingredients into the change that is desired?

Is it the Board, Senior Team, all leaders, all managers, everyone, selected few?

How long should ingredients be in the oven to achieve the desired result?

How long does this cake need to be in the oven to be properly cooked and produce the desired result?

How long do you estimate the change from the original to the new will take?

This depends on the heat or intensity of commitment of the ingredients to the change (see next).

What temperature should the oven be set?

What is the intensity of heat that will ensure the cake is cooked in the preferred oven?

What level of commitment is required by those providing the 'heat' for the change to take place?

How do you know the cooking is progressing well?

Dip in and out of the oven to test if the cake is cooking according to plan. Some people use a skewer to see if any of the ingredients stick to the skewer when taking it out of the cake.

The initiator of the change process needs to see if the change process of moving forward as planned or whether the process is stuck somewhere and needs more 'heat'.

Is the taste to your satisfaction?

Take a taste as the cake cooks to see if the taste is satisfactory or there needs to be an adjustment in ingredients, mix, oven, or temperature. Maybe, even, the baker needs adjustment because of poor taste!

Is the result of change meeting expectations? Or is something else happening that hadn't been thought about or even planned?

Has the initiator been the most appropriate person to initiate this change process, or should it have been someone else or a different purpose to achieve?

Is the outcome a good cake?

Once everything is completed, is the outcome as expected, or do you need to start again?

Has the change processed worked?

If not, why not?

About Derek Mowbray



Derek Mowbray is the Director of the Management Advisory Service (MAS) and a leading expert in organizational health and well-being. With a background in psychology, particularly in the fields of behavioural and occupational health, Derek has dedicated his career to fostering psychologically healthy work environments. His approach emphasizes the importance of positive leadership and the creation of resilient workplaces that support both employee well-being and productivity.

Derek is widely recognized for developing the The WellBeing, Resilience and Performance Agenda, a framework that guides leaders in creating trust-based, supportive, and empowering workplaces. His expertise lies in helping organizations prevent stress-related issues by implementing strategies that enhance autonomy, engagement, and team cohesion.

As a consultant, coach, and speaker, Derek has worked with a diverse range of clients, from large corporations to public sector organizations, advising on leadership development, cultural change, and mental resilience. He is also a prominent advocate for mental health in the workplace, blending his academic knowledge with practical solutions to address modern work challenges.

Derek's work at MAS reflects his mission to not only improve individual well-being but also to boost organizational performance by fostering environments where employees thrive.