



Providing the Retail Community with Strategic, Analytical, and Operational Consulting Assistance

Transferring New Ideas to Your Stores....How to Avoid the Pitfalls !

Whether your firm is developing a new “Best Practice” approach to operating your stores, updating an existing process, or you are introducing entirely new processes, you will face the daunting task of transferring the finalized program to the field. As most store operations veterans are aware, the successful transfer of a large program is by far the most difficult part of the entire challenge. In fact most store executives will admit the initial change process development and testing were simple when compared to the effort required to properly install them in the field.

Despite best intentions, many of the transfers attempted by retailers over the years have been far less than successful. Most operations executives regretfully admit that they have had more than their share of incomplete or totally ineffective transfer efforts. Even worse, some of the transfer efforts were so poorly conceived that they made a second (recovery) transfer attempt far more difficult, if not impossible... as the field becomes angered and is just waiting to thwart the next attempt.

Observations of this phenomenon over the years have indicated repeating patterns of transfer efforts that were less than successful. Also observed were the following related characteristics that seemed to be a significant factor in the transfer process failure rate:

- The leaders of the change were influenced by everyday pressures of their jobs and insufficient time was available to focus on the new processes
- Not enough experienced staff was available in the field to properly train the store associates on the new processes
- Little or no change management expertise and direction was employed during the planning and execution of the transfer effort
- There was not enough time to do it right before the Christmas season came along and the holiday focus overshadowed the transfer effort
- Other major initiatives were in place at the time of the transfer and they took precedence
- The “Project of the Month” syndrome kept the field from believing that the new processes were important and not going to be forgotten in short order

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- Not enough management support and focus was given, and management attention to other activities drew the attention of the associates away permitting the new processes to eventually wither

So how can you accomplish a successful transfer?

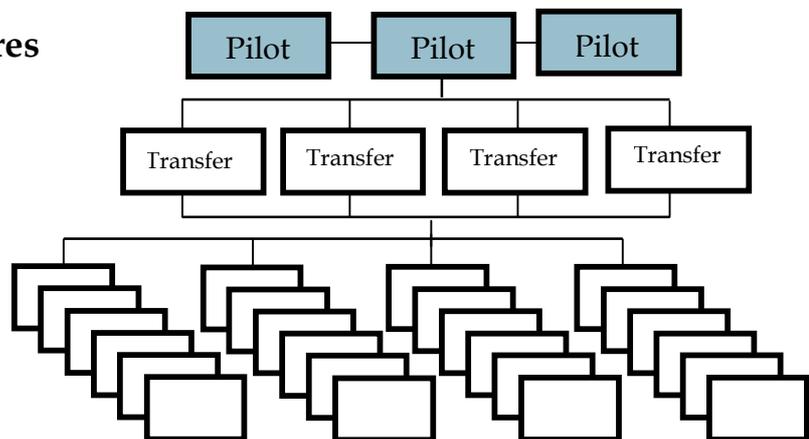
Despite the fact that transferring a new process or combination of process changes is a big task, operations management can significantly increase the odds of making their program transfers more successful by utilizing the following recommendations:

- Insure your new processes are properly tested in the field and you have a few “cheerleaders” you can count on to vouch for the benefits
- Build upper management support before you start the rollout to the field
- Select your initial transfer locations carefully. If the new processes don’t take hold properly in these stores the latter locations will resist the changes
- Never underestimate the need for training. Typically, initial training estimates need to be doubled
- Don’t try to transfer to too many stores at once. The following graphic depicts a “cascade style” rollout technique that has proven to be one of, if not the best, methodologies to transfer new processes to stores

Initial Pilot Stores

Division/ Region Stores

Chainwide Transfer



- Assess your culture. Organizational cultures are stronger than one executive or even an entire department. Determine how your unique culture will most likely affect the transfer of the new processes and take proactive steps to utilize the positive aspects and counter the anticipated negative influences

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- Insure you have enough staff in the field to properly train and support / visit all of the locations undergoing change. Most retailers write new procedures or make a video to describe desired changes, regardless of how important they are. Almost every one of those organizations will also tell you that utilizing that approach just doesn't work.
- Manage the number of changes that are being rolled out at once. Major process changes that occur monthly will overwhelm the stores. Time your process change rollouts and group changes together to be able to spend more time on one big transfer effort versus multiple smaller ones.
- Avoid the Christmas season. Ideally, most transfer efforts should be started in late January or early February and work through the summer, ending in late September. If you don't have all of your process changes rolled out by that time, wait until next year to resume.
- Celebrate your early successes. Communicate the early "good news" to all of your stores so that they will have a more positive expectation of results before they are even slated for introduction of the desired changes
- Expect that 15% of your stores will readily adopt the changes, 70% will need a little hand-holding, but will eventually be on-board, and 15% will significantly resist the changes (either actively or passively)
- Employ metrics to properly measure the impact of the changes and prove the value of the rollout to the organization

The team from Atlanta Retail Consulting is well positioned and properly experienced to help your organization effectively deal with your "store transfer" challenge. We are skilled at assisting retailers to develop and successfully implement process changes in multiple locations.

We invite you to contact us for a no obligation discussion concerning your process transfer challenge and how we might be able to assist you.