

How Cessna Achieved Positive Change in Its Organization

A CLIENT STORY



About Cessna

Using cutting-edge technology, Cessna produces a vast line of aircraft. Every day its employees focus on change—how to make the planes better, faster, safer; how to make the workforce the best in the industry; how to pioneer aircraft production initiatives. Teamwork, dedication and education, which includes Paradigm Learning’s training program **Right Turns: Change in Action**[®], have enabled Cessna to build more aircraft than any other aviation organization.



Cessna Aircraft Company’s Managers Are on the Front Lines in the Battle for Effective Organizational Change

Change Is Necessary for Cessna’s Growth

Solid, safe and dependable: important words that come to mind when boarding an aircraft—words that Cessna has embraced throughout its 80-year history. Since 1927, Cessna has been a pioneer in the light to midsize jet and single-engine aviation markets, maintaining its edge as the industry leader by producing high-quality, efficient aircraft.

Yet, Cessna must also be progressive, innovative and able to change quickly in response to the marketplace. How is it able to do both, especially in a constantly changing industry? By staying competitive, constantly improving its products and services, and providing value to its customers and shareholders.

Cessna executives realized a basic fact about change: it creates obstacles that must continually be overcome. Change can be expensive. Change is contrary to the instincts of many employees and is often met with resistance. Change requires communication and education.

Cessna’s challenge is to make change a positive force by educating its employees about the need for continual evolution—and to do so in an efficient, cost-effective manner.

The Path of Change

Research conducted by corporate training leader Paradigm Learning has identified a simple way to think about the path an organization needs to follow to achieve success:

- **Planning** is the stage that moves everyone from “we’ve decided to change” to “we’re ready.” Changes need to be planned carefully—with objectives, outcomes and implementation steps clearly identified.
- **Proceeding** advances everyone from “we’ve started to change” to “we’re moving along well.” During this stage, the organization and its managers need to communicate constantly, keep a consistent focus on the change and move quickly to demonstrate progress.
- **Persisting** is the stage that keeps everyone focused and on task to meet change objectives. The organization and its managers must ensure that the plan continues to move forward, since there is often the temptation for people to move off the path, get distracted by other priorities or get stuck.

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Managers as Change Facilitators: What They Need to Do

Managers throughout an organization will be able to manage change and contribute to the success of organizational change initiatives if they:

- Understand the change thoroughly
- Personally commit to the change
- Champion the change to their team or departmental employees
- Help employees recognize and deal with their emotions
- Develop and use effective leadership skills
- Demonstrate credibility and honesty
- Communicate well and often

And along this path to success, it is people whose actions and behaviors will make or break the change effort. Leaders at every level of the company are in the best position to make sure that the actions and behaviors of people support a positive change.

Cessna's Educational Approach: Managers as Change Leaders

Cessna's training is aimed at managers, team leaders and key salaried employees—those who need to embrace new change initiatives first so they can communicate these initiatives effectively to the rest of the workforce. Chuck Stump, Cessna's senior instructor of learning and development, is responsible for providing managers with the specific training and on-the-job tools they need to fulfill this accountability.

"We needed to streamline training, reduce classroom time and increase participant involvement in our continued efforts to maintain our edge as a lean organization whose employees do their jobs better, faster and easier while producing high-quality, efficient, safe aircraft," says Stump.

Stump was especially challenged by Cessna's broad range of functional areas that needed to be aligned, including product engineering, marketing, materials, quality and reliability, manufacturing and product support. In addition, the company's managers were geographically dispersed and had a limited amount of time to devote to training.

"Breakdowns in communication can occur in a very large company where there is a wide range of responsibilities spread out over a large geographic area," explains Stump. "We needed to find a way to manage these issues while communicating the fundamental issues of change in a consistent manner, being prepared for stumbling blocks and aligning employees across the company to changes we're making and why they're important."

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CHUCK STUMP
Senior Instructor of
Learning and Development
Cessna

To accomplish his educational mission, Stump turned to Paradigm Learning, a leader in designing corporate business games, business simulations and Discovery Maps® for Fortune 500 companies. Paradigm developed a customized version of its highly interactive business game: **Right Turns: Change in Action®**.

The program uses a colorful and engaging table-sized Discovery Map coupled with activity cards that lead participants through an in-depth analysis of change issues. As learners explore the map, they are guided into discussions about what is changing in the organization and why, how change progresses along its path, what "right turns" in actions and behaviors will be necessary to succeed, and the emotional issues that can help or hinder progress.

One of the visual metaphors used on the map is that of a "Shared Vision of Change" bridge. This bridge illustrates how managers can make it easier for employees to cross the bridge from the past to the future by helping them understand why change is necessary, what the change will involve and how they can participate in ways that help the organization as well as themselves. When managers effectively communicate with and align employees around a change, they are more likely to become active rather than passive partners in change success.

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Right Turns: Change in Action®

Right Turns: Change in Action® is a powerful classroom-based learning experience that guides managers and employees to explore the realities of change and the actions and behaviors that lead to success.

Small teams gather around an engaging illustration called a Discovery Map. Guided by activity cards, they work together to explore and discuss the key concepts of change. Company-specific exercises bring the lessons home—employees explore organizational change in their own companies or departments, developing insights to take back to their jobs.

Whether learners are employees who are **dealing with organizational change** or managers who are **leading organizational change**, this fast-paced discovery learning experience will build understanding, alignment and commitment for any corporate strategy.



“By using the **Right Turns** Discovery Map to engage its managers and key personnel in understanding and embracing Cessna’s vision for change, the company was able to develop change leaders who can, in turn, help ensure that other employees understand the organization’s vision and objectives,” explains Robb Gomez, president of Paradigm Learning. “As with most changes in today’s workplace, speed is extremely important. When managers at all levels take action to align the people on their teams so that they can take action to align their own job goals with the goals of change, the ‘bridge’ toward change success gets stronger.”

Cessna Makes the Right Turns to Change Success

Cessna is encouraged by increases in productivity and several other indicators of success around its change initiatives. “We’ve increased production of our aircraft and reduced the number of ‘squawks’—an airline term for imperfections—in our planes,”

says Stump. “Training, combined with other initiatives we’ve implemented, is making a real difference in our products and processes.”

Cessna managers who participated in **Right Turns** have reported that they can now:

- Articulate ways in which they and other company leaders influence and guide change initiatives
- Clearly describe the overall leadership skills and personal attributes that are important to leadership success when an organization is undergoing change
- Take more appropriate actions as they manage their own emotional responses to change
- Work more effectively with people on their teams when emotional responses are recognized and need to be addressed
- Use critical thinking skills to analyze their own change leadership actions and attitudes and to plan ways to be more effective in this key accountability area





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Feedback from those attending the training program has been overwhelmingly positive. Stump says participants consistently tell him the three-hour training sessions are fun, straightforward and easy to understand; they like the small-group discussion format; the Discovery Map kept them interested and engaged; and the entire exercise helped them understand their important role in facilitating the process of change.

After a **Right Turns** session, an individual in a senior leadership position explained the company's position on training: "We strongly support both our technical and our 'soft' skills training initiatives because we see the value in a well-versed, educated workforce. Training efforts ultimately lead to benefits,

both economic and emotional. With such high turnover rates in the marketplace today, we want our employees to feel connected and feel a sense of belonging to the company."

As an experienced training professional, Stump believes that **Right Turns** employs effective learning methods to educate learners about the most critical issues in change management while also providing after-session tools that can help learners on the job. He points to the fact that sessions, which are conducted by company facilitators who have been trained by Paradigm Learning, allow dialogue in safe, open forums and that the program acknowledges and deals with the "natural" emotions that learners may be experiencing around change.

How Managers Can Keep Change Initiatives in High Gear

Cessna's Right Turns program helps managers take these "right turns" when introducing and managing change:

Loudly and clearly kick off new initiatives. Get creative. Whether it's a meeting, a show or an interesting voice mail, you'll need to break through the clutter of everyday communications to get a new initiative started with energy.

Generate energy... and keep it high. Take advantage of momentum. When there's an electric feeling in the air, people will pick up on this energy. If you're excited, your people will be excited too.

Provide a clear vision of success... and then celebrate small achievements along the way. When people can take a few sure-footed steps in the direction of change—and when you recognize their results throughout the change process—it's easier for everyone to keep moving.

Be ready for emotional reactions to change... acknowledge them and deal with them. Emotional reactions are natural. As you guide your employees on the path of change, they will be tripped up by the gremlins of surprise, sadness, anger, excitement and fear. Recognize these emotions, acknowledge them and then take action to deal with them. They're manageable—you can do it!

Be ready to tackle a "stalled" initiative. When you and your employees get stuck, help everyone get back on track: review objectives, revisit the vision, ask questions, seek new ideas and help people learn new skills.

Communicate, communicate, communicate. You are the change leader. Make sure you are continually talking to your employees about the change and keeping them focused on it.



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Messages in the **Right Turns** program that resonate well within Cessna, according to Stump, include the following

- To survive in today's business environment, a company must be faster, more flexible and more innovative. Therefore, change is inevitable. It isn't a question of whether a company should change. It's a question of how it can change successfully.
- People at all levels of the organization need to fully understand changes that are being implemented—and they must embrace these changes. Only when the majority of managers and employees choose to cross the bridge of change can a company move forward successfully.

Cessna is way ahead of the curve when it comes to change management and has provided a positive and valuable learning experience that has benefited not only the managers involved but the organization as a whole.

Fluid and dynamic like its aircraft, Cessna is committed to freeing its change implementation process of potential “squawks” to ensure a lean, well-run operation.

Make Your Own Right Turn

Hundreds of managers in both large and small organizations have participated in **Right Turns** since its introduction in 2006.

When such companies as Cessna focus on the training of managers, executives and other organizational leaders in **Right Turns**, they provide them with powerful insights and valuable on-the-job tools that allow them to be facilitators of successful change. The bottom line is that when leaders better understand their key role in the change process and take accountability for the success of change initiatives, they will make the “right turns” themselves and will be able to help others make right turns too.

About Paradigm Learning

Paradigm Learning (www.paradigmlearning.com) is a privately held company based in Tampa, Florida. Since 1994, it has worked with organizations of all sizes, including more than half the companies on the Fortune 500 list, creating award-winning business games, simulations and **Discovery Maps®** to address specific business needs. Its flagship product, **Zodiak®: The Game of Business Finance and Strategy**, has been played by more than one million people worldwide. Other products and services address such issues as leadership accountability, teamwork, project management, talent leadership and organizational change.

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