



# CBF Peer Learning Groups

## Initiating congregational change

John P. Kotter, Professor of Leadership Emeritus at Harvard Business School, has identified eight stages to affect change:

### 1. *Increase urgency*

- Focus on troubling issues (e.g., “the church is dying!”).
- Don’t get caught in the blame game. State as fact points that need to be addressed.
- Ask, What will happen without change?
- Reframe the situation as opportunity.

### 2. *Build a guiding team*

- Recruit and build the team by asking these questions:
  - Who has the energy?
  - Who has the power to make change?
  - Who will resist change (do you need them on team?)?
  - What formal/informal obligations need to be met for team legitimacy?
  - Are there any areas or people missing that need to be added?

### 3. *Get the vision right*

- The vision must be large and positive enough to overcome resistance.
- Visions that take into account core values are more readily accepted.
- Ask, Is the vision in line with God’s vision? The congregation’s? Leaders’?

### 4. *Communicate for buy-in*

- Develop a one minute “elevator speech.”
- Deal with anxieties openly and honestly.
- Model buy-in.
- Use multiple channels to communicate.
- Ask for commitment and support from others.

### 5. *Empower action*

- Who can make the change? What do they need?
- Look at organizational structure, job descriptions, etc. Do they align with the vision?
- Do people have time? If not, what needs to go to free up time and energy?
- Identify people who are resisting. What do they need to get on board?

6. *Create short-term wins*

- Look for sure-fire wins that don't need permission from critics.
- Choose projects that don't cost a great deal of money, time, and energy.
- Celebrate successes and reward those who made efforts.

7. *Don't let up*

- Don't declare success too early.
- Reflect on what went right or wrong or needs improving and act on this analysis.
- Continue to set goals.
- Continue to expand the team.

8. *Make change stick*

- Anchor changes in congregational culture.
- Tell success stories and celebrate positives of change.
- Publicly recognize team and contributions.
- Create plans to replace original leaders as they phase out.

*Questions for discussion:*

- What is your reaction to these eight stages? What resonates? Where do you find yourself resisting?
- What is one change you'd like to make in your ministry setting?
- What would the situation look like following the successful implementation of the change?
- What might some of the unintended consequences be?
- What could stand in the way of the change envisioned?
- What is the first step in making the change?