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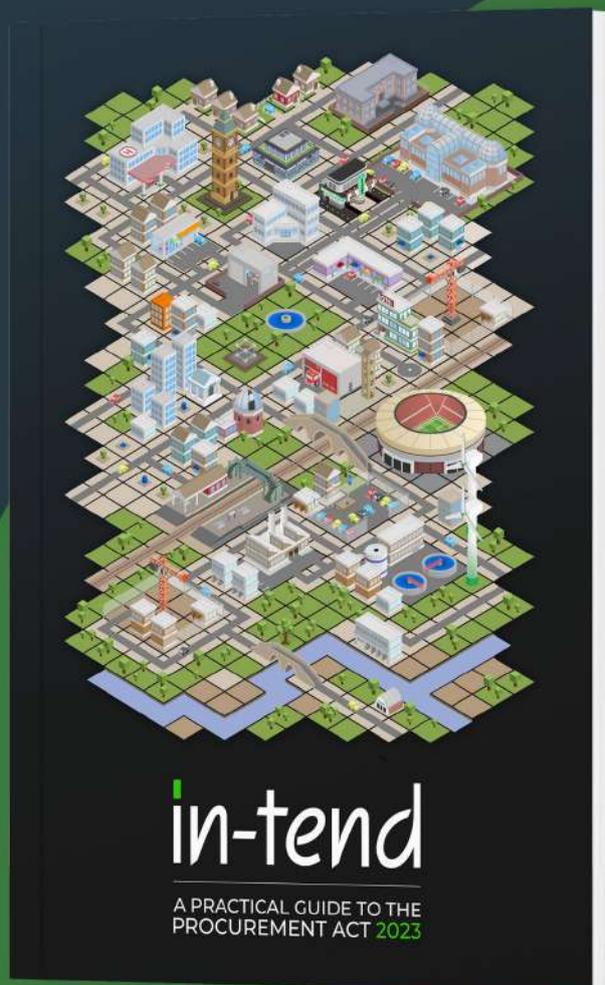
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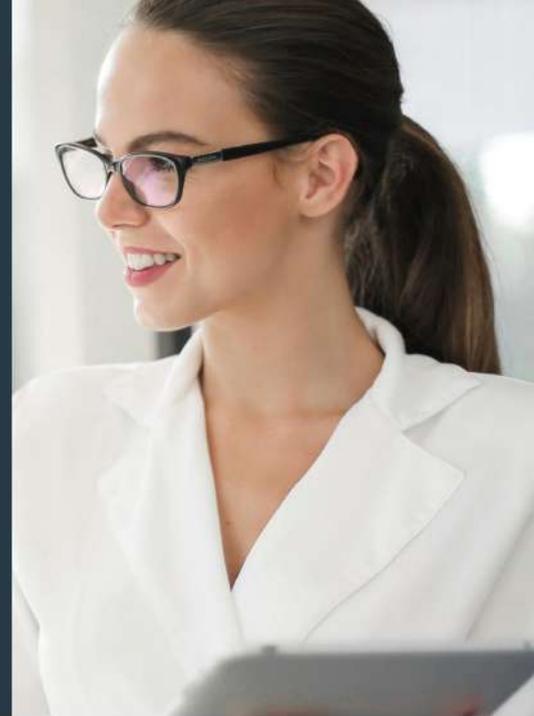
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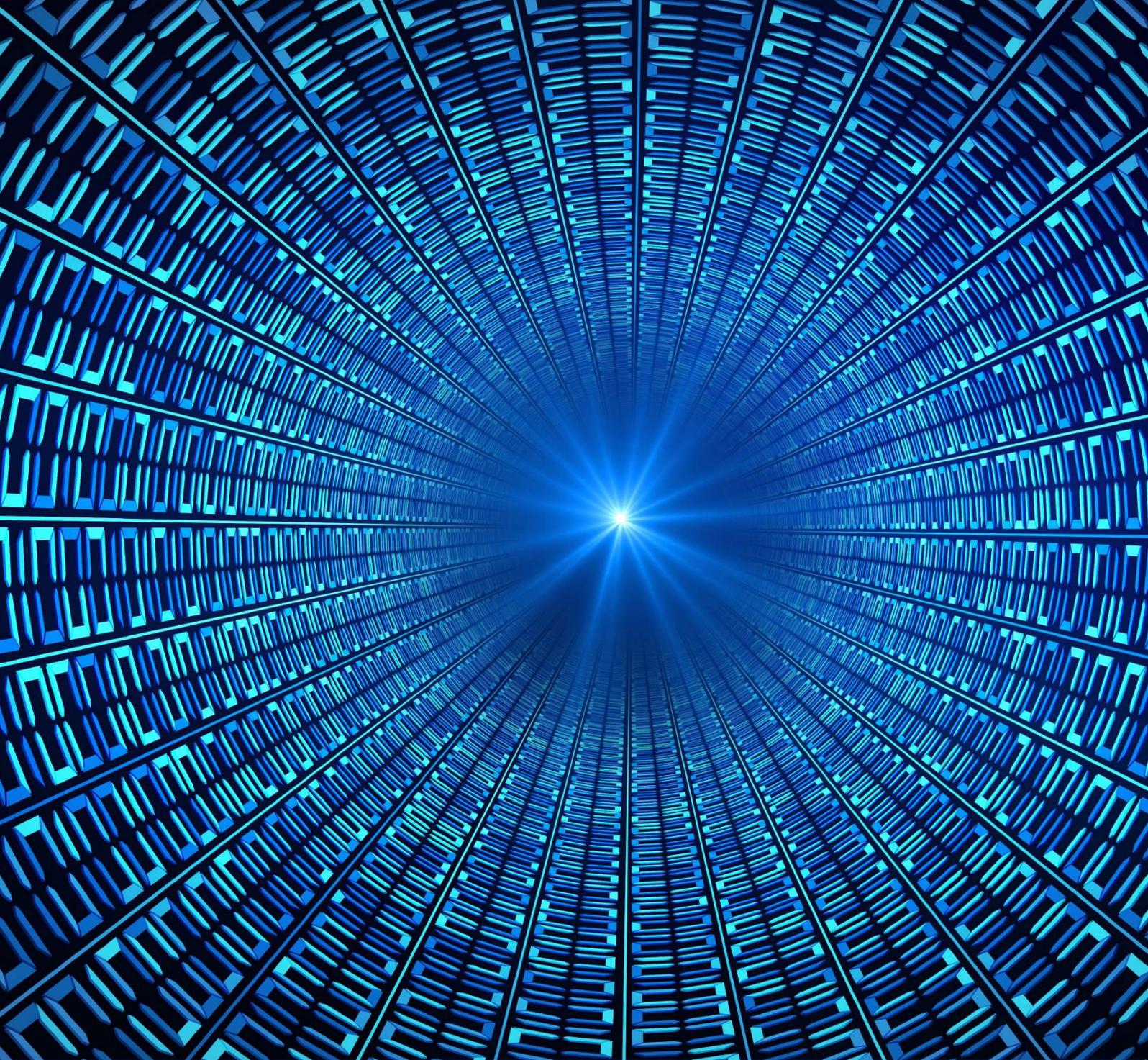
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**THE NEW  
CENTRAL DIGITAL  
PLATFORM:  
WHAT YOU NEED  
TO KNOW**



“ The Central Digital Platform is designed to offer a centralised, comprehensive digital hub where all government procurement activities can be monitored and managed efficiently. ”

## What is the Central Digital Platform?

The Central Digital Platform is designed to offer a centralised, comprehensive digital hub where all government procurement activities can be monitored and managed efficiently. It aims to simplify and improve the procurement process by providing a single location for both contracting authorities and suppliers. Each supplier will be assigned a unique identifier upon registration, allowing for seamless tracking and management of procurement activities. This identifier will be used across the platform to ensure consistent and reliable data handling.

- Connected persons information: Details about individuals or organisations with significant control over the supplier.
- Exclusion grounds: Records of relevant convictions or exclusions as outlined in the Procurement Act.

This "Tell Us Once" approach also benefits contracting authorities by ensuring consistent and accurate supplier data is available, reducing the need for repeated information requests.

## 2 Increased access for smaller suppliers

By providing a clearer understanding of buyer expectations and simplifying the bidding process, the CDP aims to level the playing field for smaller businesses, giving them better access to public sector opportunities.

## Key features and benefits of the Central Digital Platform

### 1 Simplified supplier registration and data sharing

The CDP embraces a "Tell Us Once" approach, meaning suppliers only need to submit their core information once during registration. This data is then stored securely and made available for reuse in multiple tenders, saving time and reducing administrative burdens. Suppliers will be required to submit:

- Basic information: Name, address, VAT number, legal form, company registration details, relevant qualifications, and classification (e.g., SME, VCSE, or public mutual).
- Economic and financial standing: Recent financial accounts.

### 3 Efficiency and transparency

The platform supports contracting authorities in publishing supplier identifiers and collecting consistent data, fostering transparency and reducing administrative burdens. There is no requirement for contracting authorities to use the Central Digital Platform to collect supplier information in below-threshold procurement, and the publication of supplier identifiers is optional in below-threshold notices. However, there is nothing preventing the contracting authority from requiring supplier information to be submitted in a below-threshold procurement. If known, contracting authorities should include supplier identifiers.

By Ian McKinnon,  
Chief Product Officer at  
Veriforce CHAS

The government is set to launch its Central Digital Platform (CDP) in February 2025, aligning with the introduction of the Procurement Act 2023. Contrary to some misconceptions, the CDP does not replace the need for supplier prequalification, but it is being billed as a significant step in modernising public services, streamlining procurement activities, and opening new opportunities for suppliers, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Ian McKinnon, Chief Product Officer, Veriforce CHAS shares what you need to know.

## What the Central Digital Platform doesn't do

While the CDP is designed to offer many benefits, as emphasised earlier, it is important to note that it is not a replacement for prequalification. Contracting authorities must still conduct their own due diligence to verify supplier eligibility and ensure compliance with transparency and contract award notice requirements.

Consequently, prequalification standards, and in particular, the Common Assessment Standard (CHAS Elite) remain vital to the qualification process for government tenders. In fact, an update to the Standard Selection Questionnaire introduced in March 2024 signalled the phasing out of PAS 91 in favour of the Common Assessment Standard, highlighting its growing importance in public procurement. More recently, the Crown Commercial Service confirmed that suppliers applying to its new Construction Works and Associated Services Framework, which will run from October 2026 until October 2034 and is worth up to £80 billion, must be certified to the Common Assessment Standard (CHAS Elite). One of the key advantages of the Common Assessment Standard is its ongoing review and updates, ensuring it remains aligned with the latest standards and legislation. This year, the standard will be updated twice to reflect the requirements of the Procurement Specific Questionnaire (PSQ) and the Procurement Act 2023, which takes effect on 24 February 2025.

## Preparing for registration

All contracting authorities and suppliers must register on the Central Digital Platform upon its launch, even if they are already registered on Find a Tender. Suppliers are encouraged to begin gathering the necessary information now to streamline their registration process.

The "Tell Us Once" system means that once registered, suppliers can review and reuse their data for future tenders, reducing duplication of effort and improving overall efficiency.

## Looking ahead

It is hoped that the Central Digital Platform will help to transform public procurement, combining modern technology with a focus on efficiency, transparency, and inclusivity.

While contracting authorities will still need to undertake due diligence, the platform should simplify much of the groundwork, allowing all parties to focus on the quality and value of procurement outcomes. As February 2025 approaches, suppliers and contracting authorities should familiarise themselves with the CDP and prepare for its requirements to take full advantage of its potential benefits.



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# CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

## A LIFELINE FOR PROCUREMENT PROFESSIONALS



By Iain Steel, FCIPS(CS)  
FCMI FCILT  
Director of Procurement &  
Business Transformation  
Beneffrey Consulting

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As a procurement professional, you've probably found yourself in a situation where everyone in the room is silently fuming, and you're the one trying to keep your cool. Procurement isn't just about finding the best deals, negotiating with suppliers, or writing the perfect tender document. It's also about managing the inevitable conflicts that crop up. After all, even in the most straightforward procurement processes, there's room for disagreements, tensions, and the occasional raised eyebrow. But don't fret! Conflict management is a skill that can be mastered without pulling your hair out (or worse, losing sleep over it).

### Why Conflict Management Should Be in Your Procurement Toolkit

You might be wondering, "Do I really need conflict management skills in procurement?" The short answer: yes, absolutely.

“ As a procurement professional, you can't avoid conflict, but you *can* control how you respond to it. ”

The slightly longer answer: procurement involves multiple stakeholders, tight deadlines, high-value contracts, and significant public interest – it's practically a recipe for potential conflict. Whether it's a supplier arguing about terms, a colleague disputing your decisions, or a supplier claiming that your tender process was "unfair," conflicts are part and parcel of the job.

Procurement professionals will often have more complex relationships than a marriage counsellor. You're balancing the interests of suppliers, clients, internal stakeholders, legal advisors, finance teams, and a handful of others who each think they know the "best" way to do things. Throw in some public sector accountability (hello, transparency and compliance) and suddenly, the stakes feel much higher.

### Common Conflict Triggers in Procurement

Before you can manage conflicts, you need to know what to watch out for. Here are a few classic procurement-related conflict triggers:

**Misunderstandings Over Contract Terms:** This happens when one party believes the terms are crystal clear, while the other party thinks they're deciphering



hieroglyphics. When expectations aren't clearly set from the get-go, disagreements inevitably arise.

**Bureaucratic Red Tape:** Public procurement often involves long processes, multiple approvals, and, let's face it, more paperwork than anyone ever wanted. The delays and frustrations can lead to tempers flaring.

**Tendering Drama:** Every procurement professional has undoubtedly seen a tense moment when bids are being reviewed. Stakeholders, suppliers, and the project team can get passionate about their choices, sometimes veering into territory that's more akin to a reality TV show than a professional decision-making process. Both figuratively and literally, I have the scars from a particularly (explosively) tense moderation session – but that's probably a tale for another day!

**Stakeholder Interests Clashing:** Internal stakeholders with differing goals can be a nightmare. Finance wants to save money. Legal wants to cover their bases. The end user wants the best quality, and senior leadership wants results quickly. When these interests don't align, conflict is inevitable.

**Supplier Pushback:** Suppliers, no matter how reputable, can sometimes feel that they've been wronged during procurement processes. Whether it's over an award decision or contract terms, disagreements happen. How you handle these situations determines whether the conflict remains manageable or turns into an all-out, protracted battle.

“ By implementing the right strategies and maintaining your composure, you can turn potential conflicts into opportunities for better understanding and stronger relationships. ”

### Conflict Management for Procurement: The Skills You Need

As a procurement professional, you can't avoid conflict, but you *can* control how you respond to it. Here are a few conflict management strategies to help you survive, and get the best from, these situations:

#### 1. Stay Cool, Calm, and Collected

It's easy to get swept up in the emotional tide of a conflict. But as a procurement professional, you're the one expected to keep a level head. Responding with frustration, anger, or sarcasm only escalates the issue. Instead, maintain your composure and use your emotional intelligence (yes, it's a thing).

This means recognising your own emotional triggers and managing them while empathising with others. You can't expect to defuse a tense situation if you're equally fired up.

#### 2. Practice Active Listening

This is the most underrated, yet effective, conflict management tool. When conflict arises, listen. Really listen. It's easy to jump in with your own opinion or defensive response, but taking a step back and understanding the other party's point of view can open doors to resolving the issue. This is crucial when you're dealing with suppliers who feel they've been unfairly treated. Giving them space to speak and validating their concerns can often be the key to resolving the situation without escalating things.

### 3. Clarity Is King

One of the leading causes of conflict in procurement is a lack of clarity – whether it's about contract terms, specifications, expectations, or timelines. Setting clear, concise, and transparent guidelines from the beginning is essential. Whether you're managing a supplier relationship or working with internal stakeholders, ensure that everyone is on the same page about expectations and processes. It's far easier to resolve an issue when there's no ambiguity to begin with. So, don't be afraid to over-communicate if necessary.

### 4. Be Transparent and Fair

Transparency in procurement isn't just about compliance – it's also about trust. When stakeholders believe they've been treated fairly, even if they don't agree with the final decision, they're less likely to cause a scene. This applies to supplier negotiations, internal team discussions, and tender evaluations. Being open about your decisions, processes, and the reasons behind them helps minimise conflict and builds respect from all parties involved.

### 5. Have a Conflict Resolution Framework

Having a framework in place for dealing with conflict is a worthwhile investment of time and resources in maintaining control. Whether it's a structured process for handling

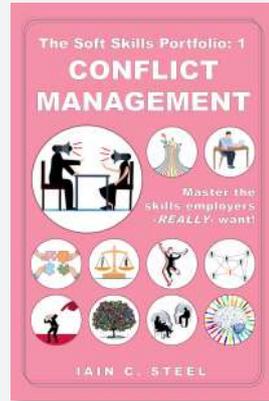
disputes with suppliers or a system for managing internal disagreements, creating a system for resolution helps avoid situations where emotions take over. This might involve escalating the issue to a manager or involving a third party for mediation, such as your legal or compliance team, or an external advisor. The key is to have a protocol that everyone understands and trusts.

## Turning conflict into opportunity

In the end, conflict is a natural part of any procurement process, but it doesn't have to be destructive. By implementing the right strategies and maintaining your composure, you can turn potential conflicts into opportunities for better understanding and stronger relationships.

Remember, conflict isn't something to fear – it's something to manage. So the next time you find yourself in the midst of a heated supplier negotiation or an internal disagreement, take a deep breath, implement your conflict resolution skills, and remind yourself that with the right approach, you'll come out the other side as the hero of the day.

And who knows? You might even look back at those conflict-laden moments and smile. After all, they make for some of the best stories!



Conflict is inevitable in the workplace, but how you handle it determines success or failure. Whether you're navigating high-stakes negotiations, managing a difficult team, or seeking to rebuild trust after a disagreement, this book provides the tools, techniques, and insights you need to turn conflict into opportunity. Written by an industry expert with over 30 years of global experience in business transformation, leadership, and

procurement consultancy, 'The Soft Skills Portfolio: 1 - Conflict Management' is your guide to mastering the art of managing workplace conflict. Drawing on real-life examples, and actionable strategies, this comprehensive book equips you to approach conflict with confidence.

#### What's Inside?

- The psychology of conflict
- Proven conflict resolution frameworks and techniques
- De-escalation techniques for high-tension situations
- Post-conflict strategies to rebuild trust and relationships
- Strategies for handling resistance and power imbalances
- Ethical and legal considerations in conflict management

With a light, engaging tone and containing techniques, tools and tips for professionals at all levels, this book transforms conflict management from a dreaded task into an essential skill for success.

Whether you're a manager, leader, or aspiring professional, this book is your essential companion for navigating the complexities of workplace relationships.





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# Navigating the waves: the crucial role of change management

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In today's fast-paced business environment, change is not just inevitable; it's essential for survival and growth. Whether it's adopting new technologies, entering new markets or restructuring organisations, change is constant. However, the success of these changes depends on how well they are managed. This is where change management comes into play. If it's effective, it can ensure transitions are smooth, employees are engaged and organisations achieve their strategic goals.

**Understanding change management**  
Change management is a structured approach to transitioning individuals, teams and organisations from place A to place B. It involves preparing, supporting and helping individuals adopt change, thereby driving organisational success. The process includes planning, implementing and monitoring changes to ensure they're effective and sustainable.

## Ensuring the process runs smoothly

There are several steps that organisations can take to ensure any changes run smoothly.

**1. Minimising resistance to change:** one of the biggest hurdles in any change initiative is resistance. People are naturally resistant to change, especially when it disrupts their routines or threatens their job security. Effective change management addresses these concerns by involving employees in the change process, communicating transparently and providing the necessary support and training.

**2. Ensuring smooth transitions:** change can be disruptive, but with a well-structured change management plan, organisations can ensure smoother transitions. This involves detailed planning, clear communication and continuous monitoring to address any issues that arise. By doing so, organisations can minimise disruptions to operations and maintain productivity.

**3. Enhancing employee engagement and morale:** when employees are involved in the change process and understand the reasons, they're more likely to be engaged and supportive. Change management fosters a culture of open communication and collaboration, which can boost employee morale and commitment to the organisation's goals.

**4. Reducing costs and risks:** poorly managed changes can lead to costly delays, errors and even project failures. By following a structured change management approach, organisations can identify potential risks early, develop mitigation strategies and ensure changes are implemented on time and within budget.

## Key elements

To ensure change management is effective, there are some central elements that must be considered.

**1. Clear vision and objectives:** Successful change management starts with a clear vision of what the organisation wants to achieve. This vision should be communicated effectively to all stakeholders to ensure alignment and buy-in.

**2. Strong leadership:** Leaders play a crucial role in driving change. They need to be visible, supportive and committed to the change process. Effective leaders inspire confidence and motivate employees to embrace change.

**3. Comprehensive communication plan:** communication is key to success. Organisations should develop a comprehensive communication plan that includes regular updates, feedback mechanisms and opportunities for employees to ask questions and express concerns.

**4. Employee involvement and training:** involving employees in the change process and providing them with the necessary training and resources is essential. This helps to build their confidence and competence in adapting to new ways of working.

## How Consult can help you

Consult offers a range of services that can support your change management initiatives. Some of the main ways in which we can help include:

**1. Providing expert guidance and advice:** Consult provides expert advice on payroll and pensions, which is crucial during times of change. Our consultants can help you navigate complex regulatory requirements and ensure compliance, reducing the risk of errors and penalties. We provide insights into industry best practices and benchmarking data, helping you understand how your organisation compares to others and identify areas for improvement.

**2. Tailored solutions:** every organisation is unique, and so are its change management needs. Whether you need help with process redesign, system implementation or employee training, we can develop a tailored plan to support your change initiatives (see <https://ow.ly/3KEH50Tum1G>).

**3. Communication strategies:** effective communication is key to success. Consult can assist in developing communication strategies that keep all stakeholders informed and engaged throughout the change process, minimising resistance and ensuring a smooth transition.

**4. Ongoing support:** change management doesn't end once the initial changes are implemented; continuous support is essential to ensure that they are sustainable. Consult offers ongoing support to help monitor progress, address any issues and make necessary adjustments.

By leveraging the expertise and resources of Consult, you can enhance your change management efforts, ensuring smoother and more successful transitions for your organisation. For more detailed information or to discuss your specific needs, contact [consult@ippeducation.co.uk](mailto:consult@ippeducation.co.uk).



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