Ever since childhood, Ondiko pondered the unfortunate reality of youth underemployment in Kenya. He examined the root causes as well as probable solutions. While still a student in university in 2011, Ondiko founded a youth-based organisation.

By 2014, the entity grew to 50 full-time staff and nearly 1,000 volunteers at universities across Kenya. Ondiko began to realise that the organisation could achieve lofty goals with some possible modifications. He knew some problems existed in various departments due to varying levels of skill sets. Inasmuch, Ondiko decided to hire an external organisational development consultant to look into the prospective issues.

So, as a leader of an organisation with potential issues, Ondiko clearly does not want to continue with the status quo. He, like most leaders, desires to change his entity for the better. Such leaders must understand the steps of the Action Research Model for organisational change. The Action Research Model contains eight useful steps to identify and fix potential problems.

**1. Any change initiative must begin with identifying the problem.**

When gathering your team together, take care not to become too specific with the problem. Acceptable problems may entail: “we fail to respond to client inquiries fast enough” or “our products are less creative than competitors”. Do not proceed to label something internal to your entity as the problem in this stage, such as: “our sales team is lazy” or “our design engineers lack talent”. Focus on the end problem, or outcome, rather than possible inputs or outputs that may cause the end problem at this point.

2. **Spend some time and consult with an organisational development behavioural science expert.**

Organisations from Kisumu to Mombasa and Paris to Shanghai often skip behavioural science advice. Then, those same entities often wonder why their respective change initiatives do not work. A behavioural science expert understands the motivations, expectations, and performance possibilities of workers.

Include such individuals early in the process, such as here at the second stage. Then, your approach, investigation, and solutions will run more smoothly. It will save you head-ache later. Find certified organisational development experts who understand worker behaviour through Kenya’s not-for-profit industry association: Institute of Organisation Development Practitioners.

3. **Collect data and conduct preliminary diagnosis of possible problems and root causes.**

Data collection could involve surveys, staff and stakeholder interviews, focus groups, as well as simple observations of staff interactions and reviews meeting minutes where possible.

4. **Provide feedback back to the key client or organisation work group.**

Companies in today’s competitive Kenyan environment desire actionable advice driven by data rather than non-quantified anecdotal observations. So, do not stand in front of the executive team and merely recount a few observations. Delve in with the team and show usable data. Break out data into easy to understand charts and graphs. Busy executives have no time to plow through mountains of data even if the data is useful. Summarise and present data clearly. If you are the leader rather than the consultant, demand nothing less. Consultants in Kenya command high fees. So, do not tolerate lazy feedback.

5. **The consultant and the client, often the organisation’s management team, must next jointly diagnose the problem based off of the data.**

Those internal to the entity, such as management, must remove their preconceived notions of firm problems and view data purely and objectively. Change consultants and management need to work together and not in isolation.

6. **Once the team identifies the problem, then the same team must jointly plan corrective action.**

Kenyan firms frequently enjoy utilizing Gantt charts when planning action steps. If you are a company leader or a consultant and you do not yet know how to do a Gantt chart, quickly Google it now and spend five minutes to understand the simple methodology. When planning, always include an overall objective, then actions to take in order to achieve the objective, as well as who is responsible for action completion and a deadline or timeframe. Often Kenyan firms find it helpful to also indicate how in the future they will measure whether the action step was successful.

7. **Go forth and put the action plan into place.**

By conducting the agreed action, you also must ensure executive support for the action or else your results will suffer. Business Talk shall also cover building company buy-in for change initiatives in the month of July.

8. **Finally, gather data once you complete the action.**

Like the second stage, firms often neglect the eighth stage as well. Companies often just push forward following the change initiative by making the assumption that the new institutional equilibrium actually achieved the desired result. NGOs call the eighth stage the evaluation component of M&E, or monitoring and evaluation. Companies, meanwhile, usually have no time to obsess over evaluation to external stakeholders. Corporations feel that profits speak for themselves. A company, rather, cares whether or not the new post-change organisational reality enhances productivity and efficiency.

Since you likely spent millions of shillings on a change initiative, you should make sure it achieved what you desired. Sometimes change initiatives make your initial problem even worse. If your evaluation comes back as sub-optimal, then go back and repeat the feedback meeting in stage four and proceed to jointly diagnose the possible problem again.

Prof Scott serves as the director of the New Economy Venture Accelerator at USIU’s Chandaria School of Business and Colorado State University, www.ScottProfessor.com. info@scottprofessor.com

Join dozens of other Business Daily reading social entrepreneurs, investors, bankers, donors, and researchers at the upcoming Social Entrepreneurs Networking Event at Safari Park Hotel at 6:30pm on July 11th.