

INTERSECTIONS

INSIGHTS

If Change is the Nature of Life...? Thirteenth Edition

If change is the nature of life, both personal and organizational, then why is it our nature to resist change so vigorously? Over the years, my micro-view from having been involved in mergers and acquisitions, new product distribution, design and development, and enterprise redesign, is that there are two opposing forces at work within the human psyche.

If you are part of the leadership that is implementing the change in an organization, you may favor it, but if you are on the receiving end of the change, fear may make you resistant. In some cases, fear and favor reside in equal measures, no matter what side of the equation you are on. Knowing that without change, atrophy sets in, intellectually we accept change but hope it will happen to others and not to us.



“What if we don’t change at all ... and something magical just happens?”

George Bernard Shaw stated, “*Progress is impossible without change and if you can’t change your mind, then you can’t change anything.*”

So the question is how to address organizational change thoughtfully and favorably alter the minds of people that are resistant. Well, to date we are not doing a very good job. According to the [2013 Strategy&/Katzenbach Center survey](#) of global senior executives on culture and change management, the success rate of major change initiatives is only 54 percent.

My associate, [Dr. Andi Simon](#), has just completed a book, called “*On the Brink, a Fresh Lens to Take Your Business to New Heights*,” which provides case studies that show how change and growth can be accomplished using innovative and creative methods. You can download a free first chapter [here](#).



While there is no one “secret” to ensure success of a change management program, I have found that a combination of elements within a structured methodology can create guidance and increase the organization’s chance for success.

Here are 5 elements that can ignite the change process and keep it on track.

If we are not talking about changing a culture, as it may be strong, entrenched and valuable and we are creating a transformation within a culture, it is beneficial to begin by finding the elements of the culture that support the change we want accomplished.

Most importantly, we need to see things from the staff’s perspective. Anais Nin said, “*We don’t see things the way they are, we see things the way we are.*” Believing that to be true, it is imperative to involve all staff potentially affected and make them aware of and understand how the proposed changes will alter their work as the data becomes known. Understanding this factor first and foremost will provide insight; are we dealing with fear, favor or ambivalence at differing levels within the organization? Take the pulse of the people involved in the process. Connect with each of them on an ideological basis to articulate:

How embracing this change will enhance my personal values

Why this change is good for me, if everything including my current position may be eliminated

Why this change is good for the company and what would be the result if the change is not initiated

Use both informal and formal leaders to communicate the change, both top-down and bottom-up. Don’t be afraid to employ creative approaches to spread the word.

Identify small wins that can be celebrated as you move closer to the long term objective. Find culturally acceptable ways to commemorate.

Identify the criterion that indicates successful change and design follow-up and accountability.

Create a communication strategy that uses a variety of methods:

Create a “story” with symbols that can rally the troops; both visually and verbally

Design open forums with senior management responsible for the change

Begin formal training sessions

Produce informal open-air sessions where concerns can be raised

Hold a funeral for those processes, jobs and work flows that were important and valued by the staff but are no longer required

Articulating a plan of action whenever change is initiated means that unlike the cartoon at the beginning of the post, we are not waiting for miracles to happen, we are artfully designing them.



Interested in learning more?

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