Leading Change

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A thought regarding change…,

“I just installed a skylight in my apartment. The people who live above me are furious.”

- Steven Wright, Comedian
## Change and Transition

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<th><strong>CHANGE</strong></th>
<th><strong>TRANSITION</strong></th>
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- Change occurs outside the person and is relatively quick, focusing on the future and driving to commitment.
- Transition occurs inside the person, takes much longer, emphasizes the need to manage endings, and recognizes a “neutral zone.”
Transition curve

EXTERNAL FOCUS

Denial

EVENT

Commitment

RESISTANCE

PAST

FUTURE

FOCUS ON SELF

- from Rekindling Commitment, How to Revitalize Yourself, Your Work, and Your Organization. (Jaffe et al., 1994)
Transition phases
BEGINNING

The last phase of change brings us to the point where people begin to have confidence and show commitment to the change. Roles and responsibilities are defined and embraced, resources are utilized for learning and teamwork, and results begin to become evident.

NEUTRAL ZONE

The second phase of the change process refers to the period in which people are transitioning through resistance toward exploration. We’ve determined what is changing, but we haven’t accomplished the change yet, and there may be a large degree of disorientation or distress. Many things remain to be figured out, and the direction may seem unclear.

ENDING

During any change, certain things come to an end in order to accommodate the change. This initial phase explores what is ending, what things may be lost, and what needs to be let go.
Understanding reactions to “Endings”

Reactions to “Endings”

- Feelings of anger, pain, grief, despair
- Loss of meaning, identity, relationships, control
- Feelings of self-doubt, inadequacy
- Denial of reality
- Blocked from seeing possible alternatives
- Intellectualize the need for change but are unable or unwilling to let go

Managing “Endings”

- Educate staff on change / transition
- Define what is / isn’t over
- Identify the most susceptible and address one-to-one
- Acknowledge loss; allow space for perceived “overreaction”
- Sell the future state at every opportunity
- Provide updates throughout (even if you do not have all the details)
Understanding reactions to “Neutral Zone”

Reactions to “Neutral Zone”

- Feelings of aloneness, disorientation, confusion, distress, frustration
- Uncertainty
- Feelings are unclear
- May feel strange, awkward, empty, a time of nothing
- Reluctance or apprehensiveness – won’t take risks
- Begin to look at alternatives

Managing “Neutral Zone”

- Teambuilding activities
- Start to set realistic timelines/goals
- Allow staff the opportunity to update the vision, project/action plan, etc.
- Create opportunities for quick wins
- Allow forums for continual improvement on “future state”, action plan and processes
- Provide training on creativity and brainstorming
Understanding reactions to “New Beginnings”

Reactions to “New Beginnings”
- New life springs up
- Renewed sense of belonging and commitment
- New energies, new personal identity
- Teamwork forms, work gets done
- Learning new skills
- New roles and responsibilities defined and embraced

Managing “New Beginnings”
- Explain newly appropriate behavior, attitudes, accountabilities
- Create accessible/agreed upon action plan, timeline, etc.
- Update annual goals /expectations
- Redesign roles collaboratively; revise position descriptions
- Provide training, mentoring, and coaching
- Fine-tune change plan with feedback
- Publicize successes!
Supporting Transition

- Respect individual reactions
- Communicate, communicate, communicate!
- Be available
- Monitor work processes, results, and behaviors; motivate and encourage employees
- Share the possibilities and expectations of the future
- Be a role model, support the changes
Leadership influence

Sanctions – A hard tactic, when managers threaten to punish employees for non-compliance, either with reprimands or withholding desired rewards.

Legitimization – Another hard tactic that involves rationalizing that the change is consistent with organizational policies.

Ingratiation – This soft tactic is seen when managers praise efforts that are consistent with the desired changes.

Consultation – Another soft tactic wherein managers seek employee input and assistance in carrying out a change.

“While all of these tactics are more effective when the manager has a good relationship with employees, consultation tactics are most effective regardless of relationship quality.”

- Furst & Cable, 2008; Yukl et al., 2008
Communication during change

- Be organized
- Share changes appropriately
- When you don’t know something, say so
- Check your timing
- Recognize and show appreciation for all efforts
- Communicate with your management team
- Maintain a constructive problem-solving style
- Express a positive attitude – it’s contagious!
Leading change…,

“People underestimate their capacity for change. There is never a right time to do a difficult thing. A leader's job is to help people have vision of their potential.”

- John Porter