A checklist for change

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If you're a leader in an organization, it can be difficult for people to accept and comply with change. Because of this, some leaders avoid decisions that create change. But even with the slightest attempts at change, some people will still deflect it. Regardless how effective leaders are or how accepting people are of change, one thing is for certain: some degree of change will be necessary for the longterm survival of an organization.

If you find yourself juggling with a decision to change something, here's a checklist of questions you can answer to gain a better perspective on whether the attempt at change may or may not be successful:

Will this change benefit the followers?

Is this change compatible with the purpose of the organization?

Is this change specific and clear?

Are the top influencers in favor of this change?

Is it possible to test this change before making a total commitment?

Are physical, financial, and human resources available to make this change?

Is this change reversible?

Is this change the next obvious step?

Does this change have both short- and long-range benefits?

Are leaders truly capable of bringing about this change?

Is the timing right?

If you answered yes to these questions, the chances of the change being successful are pretty good. If you answer no (or maybe) to any one of them, there's a much greater chance the change will be difficult to implement. The last question, "Is the timing right?" is the ultimate consideration for implementing change. A leader's success in bringing about change in others will happen only if the timing can accommodate some type of opportunity or threat.

When it comes to change, one of the four following formulas applies:

1) Wrong decision at the wrong time = disaster.

2) The wrong decision at the right time = mistake.

3) The right decision at the wrong time = unacceptance.

4) The right decision at the right time = success.

Circumstances are also key. For many people, change becomes most likely when they hurt enough they have to change; learn enough they want to change; or receive enough they are able to change. As a leader you must recognize when people are in one of these three stages. In fact, you may have to create an atmosphere that causes one of these three things to occur.

If you're caught in the middle when a superior directs the implementation of a change that results in some answers in the checklist being "no," it will require a high degree of leadership and communication ability on your part to move forward with your people. If the change is ethical and doesn't hint at criminal consequences, you'll have to take on the mindset that the decision is yours and have to sell it to your subordinates as if the order is coming from you. *(Hint: a good dose of "why" in your sale helps quite a bit.)*

If you're unable to sell the decision because of its potentially malicious nature, it's probably time to think about moving to another organization with a culture that better aligns with your values and beliefs. With preparation and reliable networking, a transition to something or somewhere else can occur much smoother than expected.

But either way, change is paramount or organizational extinction becomes inevitable. Everything else in between is for leaders to iron out. Be the leader who irons it out with the right iron, on the right setting, on the right fabric, on the right type of ironing board, for the right reason, at the right time and your outfit will look amazing!

~ The End ~