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Change is quite necessary for most organizations to survive over the long-term. Organizations that delay or avoid change risk becoming obsolete unless they possess a core competency that is practically timeless. Regardless, the need for change should always be properly analyzed and balanced with the need for continuity.

In most instances an implemented change will work if an organization has effectively evaluated and understands its internal strengths and weaknesses as well as its external opportunities and threats. This means the objective of the implemented change is either to utilize a strength, eliminate a weakness, exploit an opportunity, or avoid a threat. When an organization hasn't done such an evaluation, then the implemented change may do nothing more than hinder the organization's effectiveness and reduce morale.

It's quite natural for people and organizations to resist change. People are creatures of habit. With so many vast and complex decisions that have to be made every day, it's nice to rely on habits or programmed responses for continuity and easy decision-making.

When we're confronted with change, our feelings of safety and security that accompany our habits become threatened and we don't like it. Some individuals fear that proposed changes

will have a negative impact on their personal income, causing an economic fear--especially if their pay is closely tied to productivity. Others resist change because they don't like to be inconvenienced. (This happens when the value of the change, as well as how people can benefit from it, are not obvious or known.)

Organizations, on the other hand, are very conservative by their nature. Group inertia, threats to member expertise, power relationships, and resource allocations can result in active resistance to proposed changes. This is why many organizations have built-in mechanisms to produce and maintain stability: things like standard operating procedures, job descriptions, and employee selection processes are all constructed to achieve and maintain stability and continuity in an organization.

When change is necessary, you need to have a strategy to communicate its purpose and to implement it. Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, said “change should be accompanied by a clear vision of where the change will lead to.” This gives people an idea of what the desired end state will be after the change is implemented.

Your approach in implementing organizational change should be accompanied by one or more of the following courses of action:

1) If feasible, offer employees a reward for accepting the change. Perhaps

a bonus for increased productivity or extra paid vacation days if the change is effectively implemented.

2) Communicate the reason why the change is necessary. Do it in person, in presentations, memos, letters, or on-line forums. Whichever method you choose, make sure your communication is sincere, clear, and enthusiastic. Remember, you need to win over people's hearts and minds and this typically requires an effective sales pitch. Throughout your communication effort be sure to anticipate what people's fears and concerns will be and address them, along with the benefits, at precise times to alleviate those fears and concerns.

3) As much as possible, include people who will be affected by the change in the process on deciding the need for change. If they participate in your analysis of a given situation, they may see the logic that cements the need for change. In this manner, they will not only feel they are part of the decision for change but will believe they are driving those decisions. And when this happens, they will support a decision for change from its announcement through its execution. People usually support a decision when they believe they came up with the idea!

So try these three techniques the next time you want to implement a change and there's a great chance you'll have increased “buy-in” and support from most people.

~ The End ~