

THE WORLD HATES CHANGE

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A PLAN THAT MEETS THE CHALLENGE OF RESISTANCE.

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SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES – IN A COMMUNITY, A BUSINESS, A DEPARTMENT, AND FOR EMPLOYEES – DEPEND UPON THE WILLINGNESS OF INDIVIDUALS TO ACCEPT CHANGE. RESISTANCE TO CHANGE AFFECTS BOTH PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS. LEADERSHIP NEEDS TO INCLUDE A PLAN FOR ADDRESSING THE NATURE, THE SCOPE, AND THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF RESISTANCE TO NEW INITIATIVES AND PROJECTS.

CHANGE IS NEVER PAINFUL, ONLY THE RESISTANCE TO CHANGE IS PAINFUL. *GAUTAMA BUDDHA*

Underestimating resistance causes risks to a project. Examples of risk include employees who experience initiative fatigue, anxiety that key employees will leave, project delays, objectives not being achieved, and project abandonment. Employees can become frustrated and demotivated, and absenteeism can increase. As a result of these, productivity declines. Inefficiencies and negativity increase. Employees may build barriers and seek to control projects, undermining the success of initiatives. Employee resistance adds to monetary costs.

IF WE WONDER OFTEN, THE GIFT OF KNOWLEDGE WILL COME. *ARAPAHO*

Routines make people comfortable, thus the introduction of changes to routines may make people uncomfortable. Being forced into change can cause real anxiety and actual fear of change. We know that resistance to change is a normal reaction of employees who do not know what their new routine will look like.

Employees experience change throughout their working life. It's not so much anxiety about change itself, as it is anxiety over uncertainty, the unknown, and the ways in which they will be affected.

Approaches to minimizing resistance to change need to include both organizational "best practices" and the organization's culture. As resources increase, growth becomes a key theme as new initiatives are launched by leadership. Having an understanding of employee resistance to change is fundamental in strategic and project planning.

RESISTANCE IS THE FIRST STEP TO CHANGE. *LOUISE HAY*

Keep in mind that resistance to change should be seen as a normal reaction. Even the most cooperative, supportive employees will likely experience resistance. Yet, change should not be introduced believing that nothing but resistance will occur, or that resistance will be severe.

Change should be introduced in a positive manner, with the belief that employees will want to support the changes. Leadership can affect the degree to which resistance develops, the degree to which it is reduced by the actions taken, and the degree to which employees are involved in the process.

Successful solutions to the challenge of resistance have always included a commitment to planning, informed by the knowledge that some resistance is inevitable. There needs to be a dedicated focus on engaging leadership and staff – to raise awareness of resistance, to have a good understanding of it, and to be committed to dealing with it.



OFTEN, THE GREATER OUR IGNORANCE ABOUT SOMETHING, THE GREATER OUR RESISTANCE TO CHANGE. *MARC BEKOFF*

It would be ideal if every employee could talk about the changes being planned, provide input into the change, and have an impact on it. Leadership must continually and sustainably communicate the nature, scope, and rationale for change to encourage employee participation.

How leadership communicates the change has the single most important impact on how much resistance to change will occur. One of the key factors to consider is why a change is needed. Letting the employees know the “why” of the change and what the group can and cannot effect are important messages. Spending time discussing how to implement the change and make it work is essential. Answer questions, share earlier reservations and how they were addressed and overcome, and be clear that leadership is committed to making the change successful.

FORCE, NO MATTER HOW CONCEALED, BEGETS RESISTANCE. *LAKOTA*

Leadership needs to engage the employees in the change management process, because only the team can make the change happen. Support the employees in identifying what’s in it for them. Remind them that the team has the knowledge, skills, and strengths that will move the project forward. Additionally, employees must feel that benefits from the time, energy, commitment, and focus necessary to implement the change will be worth the effort. A good portion of resistance disappears when employees are clear about the benefits the change brings to them.

Listen to the employees, and don’t minimize an employee’s response to even the simplest change. Hearing the employees out and letting them express their point of view in a non-judgmental environment will reduce resistance to change. This is known as constructive resistance. Control of their own jobs is one of the key factors in what employees want from work. Give the employees control over any aspect of the change that they can manage.

THE WORLD HATES CHANGE, YET IT IS THE ONLY THING THAT HAS BROUGHT PROGRESS.

CHARLES KETTERING

Leadership should include the following items in planning their resistance to change:

- » Don’t underestimate the level of potential resistance
- » Ensure that all leaders totally support the change
- » Start communication planning early in the process
- » Identify areas of resistance
- » Coach those employees implementing the change
- » Sustain communication methods
- » Celebrate project achievements

Leadership should communicate early, regularly, and transparently. They provide the direction, the rationale, the goals, and the parameters that have been set by the organization. Within that framework, leadership’s job is to empower the employees to make the change work.

WE CAN ONLY BE WHAT WE GIVE OURSELVES THE POWER TO BE. *NATIVE AMERICAN PROVERB*

ISMO HEIKKILA has over twenty-five years of consulting and management experience in financial services, both in mainstream corporations and with First Nations communities. The creation and implementation of a communication and change management framework for First Nation leadership is his passionate focus.

Ismo has a demonstrated ability for developing and executing communication and change management programs through seminars, workshops, and real-time consulting. He is a long-time contributor to JAM and has been a speaker at both AFOA Canada’s national and regional conferences. He has also presented on communication and change management at conferences hosted by the National Aboriginal Trust Officers Association (NATOA) and the Canadian Association of Native Development Officers (CANDO).

Ismo looks forward to learning about the opportunities and challenges that community leadership is dealing with on behalf of their members and citizens. Visit Ismo Heikkila Consulting at www.ismoheikkila.com