

CHALLENGES OF A CHANGE PROCESS

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Any change process has certain predictable characteristics that require positive managerial intervention to achieve a successful outcome.

1. **Magnitude of the Change**

Minor

Major

Radical

The more radical the change, the more acute will be staff's experience that "things are falling apart."

- ☞ Managers need to believe that the apparent "falling apart" does not indicate a failure of the process and need to reassure staff that one has to undo old behaviors and approaches in order to institute new ones successfully.

MOTTO: *Have to undo the old to make way for the new.*

2. **Staff Attitude towards Change**

Eager

Mixed

Fearful/resistant

The more risk averse staff are, the more they will deny any need for change and assert that things are just fine as they are.

- ☞ Managers need to reinforce the fact that change *is* necessary and can have positive outcomes.

MOTTO: *The only constant is change.*

3. **Degree of Trust between Parties**

Trust
Intentions

Cautious

Distrust of
Intentions

To the extent that staff are distrustful of each other and assume attack or hidden motives, they will sabotage the change process.

☞ Managers need to model a positive interpretation of intentions or, at a minimum, a suspension of judgment until intentions can be discussed.

MOTTO: *Assume good intentions.*

4. **Commitment to Partnership**

Win-win

Neutral

Win-lose

If staff do not understand and accept mutual advocacy and a win-win approach, they will find it easier to externalize problems, focus on attributing blame, dismiss issues raised as unimportant or irrelevant or exaggerated, and avoid engaging in joint problem-solving.

☞ Managers need to help staff accept responsibility for their own role and understand that if one party feels there is a problem then “we” have a problem to be resolved jointly (though the root issue and possible solutions may need further clarification).

MOTTO: *“Tough love”; win-win.*

How You as a Leader Can Help:

DO:

- Plan for a short-term productivity decrease and acquire additional short-term support resources
- Refocus staff defensiveness and blaming on to what they can do
- Insist on an assumption of good intentions
- Refocus attention onto what partner needs are not being met and how they could be (joint problem ownership)
- Insist that staff honor what has been negotiated

DON'T:

- Demand normal productivity levels
- Remain aloof when staff externalize the blame
- Accuse other partners of suspicious intentions
- Engage in assessments of the “legitimacy” of partner complaints (“their” problem)
- Revisit the negotiation process and re-evaluate the negotiation outcome