

LEADERSHIP & CHANGE MODULE

Change has a considerable psychological impact on the human mind. To the fearful it is threatening because it means that things may get worse. To the hopeful it is encouraging because things may get better. To the confident it is inspiring because the challenge exists to make things better.

King Whitney Jr.

Introduction

A wise man once said, that the only thing that mains constant is change. In the age of budget cuts, greater accountability, and doing more with less, society's changing needs continue to surface. The world is faster paced now more than ever before. Kotter (1996), in his work *Leading Change*, tells us "The rate of change is not going to slow down anytime soon. If anything, competition in most industries will probably speed up even more in the next few decades. Knowing that change is inevitable and to resist is at best unproductive, the key to dealing with change as a leader is in your response to change." In this lesson, using theories suggested by Kotter, we'll look at the eight errors that cause change to fail, as well as the eight stage process we can use in getting change to work for us!

Lesson Objectives

At the end of the lesson, learners should be able to:

1. Identify reasons why change wouldn't work
2. Identify factors that could assist an individual in bringing about change

Lesson Content

Change is sometimes scary- there's no way around it. But why is it that sometimes change seems to happen easily and seamlessly; people seem to just adjust to the new surroundings or situations and other times change seems to begin, meet obstacles, and flitter away? Kotter (1996) describes eight errors that are committed when people or organizations try to bring about change, that cause that change to fail.

- ***Allowing too much contentment with the current situation*** - Kotter says that this is the number one mistake when people begin to make changes within their organizations. Smart people with great ideas fail to make their peers, followers and superiors see how important their change can be or how it could make the organization better. When selling the ideas, the seller doesn't make it clear to the buyers how much this change is needed. When this is the case and individuals believe that the current course is still a viable one, new ideas are hard pressed to take root.
- ***Not creating a strong group to help implement the change***- When it comes to change, an individual would have a hard time. An individual who approaches a group of people with no power will not be able to make change. In the case of real change, the key is for an

individual or group of individuals to get in touch with other groups of individuals who have real power. These are the people who can make up the best group to bring about change.

- ***Underestimating the power of promoting a positive future-*** Common, positive visions give organizations a direction. It bonds groups together as they try to reach common goals. Without this kind of positive vision, individuals can get caught up in any number of projects that have no similar purpose. When this is the case, change fails.
- ***Not talking enough about our positive futures-*** Major change is impossible without the commitment and sacrifice of individuals within the organization. But even if people dislike the current situation, without the leader talking about the vision for change and the benefits that will come, followers believing the change is important may not happen, and your change fails.
- ***Allowing road blocks to stand in our way-*** When smart people avoid confronting road blocks, they weaken their team or organization and they slow the change process. Individuals must confront blocks honestly and openly to keep the road to change free from these "blockers".
- ***Failing to take small steps to ensure the feeling of success along the way to change-*** Change takes time. Without small steps that team members decide on and work together toward, that let people feel like they are making progress, interest in the change may end. A leader must create short term successes and when they do, they will not risk losing the team's commitment because they haven't seen good results.
- ***Saying that you're done too soon-*** Telling the team you have completed the change when you first see success may be saying you're done too soon. As we talked about above, the job of creating change is a long process, with the end only coming when the change is part of the daily routine. By saying you're done too soon you risk not making the change part of the routine and therefore not sticking.
- ***Not making the change a part of your daily routine-*** Until new behaviors are firmly rooted in the daily routine of your team, they are always open to rejection. A leader must show their followers how change has been positive. Leaders must also make sure that new people to the team or group also embrace the change.

Consequences of the Eight Common Errors

We learn early on that all actions have consequences. All of the actions that are listed above have consequences as well. When a leader recognizes possible consequences, they are prepared so that they don't commit the errors in the first place. Remember, this list can not include all of the consequences that could happen when instituting change; these are some of the more common for which a leader can look out.

- New plans are not put into place fully or completely
- Gaining new situations or positions don't get you the expected results
- Restructuring or creating change takes too much time and too much money
- Limiting man power doesn't assist with the spending limitations you have

- Strong programming for staff don't address the goals you had in mind

Eight Strategies For Successful Change

We have talked about the eight common errors of change. We have talked about some possible consequences of change. However, it is also important that we talk about how to deliver change successfully.

- ***Make people believe that change is important and needed soon-*** By knowing what the daily routine is within your group, who the leaders are, who the followers are, you will be able to see current issues, areas of challenges and places where opportunities are for change. As a leader then, you can begin discussions about how important making changes are.
- ***Build a strong group that will help you implement change-*** A leader should put together a group made up of individuals with enough power that making change could happen. But beyond that, once made up, the leader should do all that they can to make sure that the group works together as an effective team.
- ***Develop a Vision and Strategy-*** A leader should create a positive vision of where change will take the group; the opportunities that change will bring and the hopeful future that is being created. However, more than that, the leader must also develop a plan for getting to the destination you have talked about.
- ***Talk about the new vision-*** Once the vision is created and a plan made, a leader must use every resource possible to always discuss those new visions and plans. They must also have the power group act as role models for the behaviors of the followers.
- ***Encourage action among all of your followers-*** A leader must work hard to get rid of obstacles (both actual and perceived). They must change systems that block change. Finally, leaders need to encourage followers to take logical risks, think outside of the box and use non-traditional ideas, activities and actions.
- ***Create small steps where people can feel successful throughout the process-*** Change is a long term process, a leader must figure out a way to plan for improvements in the organizations. Leaders should create small steps where people can have successes. Once those opportunities for success are created, the leader must reward the people who achieve the goals.
- ***Put together your small steps and successes to show change-*** A leader should use their credibility to change all of the policies that no longer fit the new vision. A leader must hire and promote individuals with the talents to make the change real.
- ***Make sure that the change becomes a part of the daily routine in your group-*** Leaders of change must make sure that the change becomes a part of the daily routine of their organizations. They can do this by making sure that policies and incentives match the change.

Reflection Questions

- Discuss a time that you went through change?
- Is change easy for you? Why or why not?
- Discuss a time where you experienced change that did not become a part of the routine. Why did that change fail? What would you have done differently in that situation?

References

Kotter, J.P. (1996). *Leading change*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.