

## Workplace Change Made (More) Easily Facing Employee Resistance Head On

A preponderance of managers and supervisors are overly familiar with long sighs and disheartened groans from their employees when they introduce *yet another* organizational change or a new initiative. Amid the exasperation of this business reality, there is light at the end of the tunnel. While supervisors may not have the authority to reject or the power to deflect organizational change, you do have the opportunity (and, I believe, the specific responsibility) to clearly communicate about the change; consequently, you can ease the hefty load of natural resistance employees have toward it.

Similar to a solid ole' stool with three simple legs, three easy steps can greatly assist management in creating a sound platform for transition during periods of change:

1. Management needs to ascertain that the change *is indeed* in best service. For example, the change is either opportunistic or required to ensure ongoing business viability and success. By focusing on what is needed, the options to create it (including an examination of risks or exposure) and the intended results from it, you will determine what change needs to happen, why, how it will occur (strategically, not tactical details yet) and the value.
2. Next, management needs to understand the change experience through the lens of their employees. Employees will be more open and willing to support change when they are given information that clearly addresses fundamental questions. To help you do so, your management team must agree on an accurate, forthright and unified response to the following five questions.
  - A. What (specifically) is the change?
  - B. How the decision made (including who made it)?
  - C. Who it impacts, and what does it mean to them?
  - D. What is the value (benefits or effects) of the change to the organization and the employees?
  - E. What are the next steps (roles and actions)?
3. Lastly, management needs to establish sufficient means for sharing this information with employees, ideally through multiple methods. For example, if there are individual employees who will be impacted more than others (particularly if there are perceived negative implications), general courtesy and good ethic implies you meet first with these folks, sharing the same information but specific to them and their position. Soon (if not immediately) after, hold departmental meetings. Smaller, team-style meetings provide a more open and comfortable environment for questions and discussion. All-staff meetings are also an option, (1) depending on the size of the organization (such as those with less than 50 employees) and (2) assuming that your message is not laden with "bad-news" to specific employees or groups whom have not yet heard the message (in which a meeting will quickly sour). It is also helpful to consistently communicate the message of *change as an opportunity*, through written format, such as a company memo or newsletter, assuming the message is clear, straight-forward, and focused on the value of the change (benefits) or the sincere effort to prevail (i.e., a legitimate downsizing or layoff) in times of challenge.

One thing is certain: Success in today's global market calls for responsiveness, and therein lies change, whether it requires rapid response or long-term strategy. To eliminate the "withdraw and retreat" tendency of, "I'd rather quit or die than make that change" (yes, in some cases, the former may be a suitable option for certain employees), management can effectively use the change process to reengage their employees.

Change provides opportunity - whether the value is apparent or you are required to look deeper for it. Help your employees embrace a new paradigm of change as an opportunity versus the widely held and limiting perspective of change as an unsolicited and undesirable mandate.

Through keeping employees well-informed and, here's the key—engaging them in step one (including them in critical decisions, which often smack of change)--you will foster a climate of resiliency and build momentum to advance your organization.