Accepting Change

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Whether change in the workplace is welcomed or not, most would agree that it is inevitable. Admittedly, it could be disruptive and painful for *both* employees and managers.

Leaving our comfort zones can be anxiety producing and disruptive, especially in the short term. But change can also lead to personal growth and greater job satisfaction for both employees and managers.

If change is welcomed, employees become engaged and even excited to move forward as they implement a new strategy and meet the shared goals ahead.

If change is not welcomed, employees will express their anxiety in several ways, such as:

- We do not like the change, and we miss the old ways;
- We are not sure why the change is taking place; or
- This change makes us feel insecure as we do not know how it will impact us.

Then after a period of adjustment, employees often come around to express acceptance, although perhaps reluctantly:

- We are finally beginning to understand the need for change;
- We like our job so maybe we can accept the change;
- We will do the best we can;
- We now understand how our contributions remain critical to the reorganization; or
- We wish we could have known earlier what we now know and seen the positives sooner.

Managers can be very focused as they begin to launch and implement the new strategy and may innocently overlook certain necessary steps during the organizational change. One of these forgotten steps is acknowledging and addressing the anxiety of the employees. Managers could benefit from first acknowledging the potential for disruption and the deep concerns employees may have. Managers can justify and defend change, but only after expressing sensitivity to the impact it may have on employees. Empathy goes a long way to gain the trust and engagement of employees. It can play a key role in implementing change effectively. Here are some suggestions for managers to facilitate the change they desire:

- Encourage communication and be sincere in wanting to learn and understand employees' concerns;
- Consider sharing one of *your* concerns about the change and engage them in helping address all concerns, including yours. This could play a key role in engaging them and securing their trust;
- Communicate clearly the specific changes and how they will impact them;

- Share your vision and strategy;
- Solicit and incorporate their suggestions;
- Reassure them that this is a joint effort. Their success is your success and vice-versa; and
- Highlight and praise their past successes and accomplishments.

Employees can easily jump to the conclusion that change will be painful and negative. Before jumping to that conclusion,

- Understand the reason for the change

    Why did the change occur?
    What advantages may result from the change?

- Focus on your job and responsibilities.

    Do you still enjoy your job?
    Is your job the same?
    What impact do the changes have on your responsibilities? Have they changed?
    How will change alter your ability to perform your job?
    Are there certain aspects of the change that you can control? If so, can they
        positively impact your group/department, and/or its goals?
    Does the change affect your level of motivation?
    Do you understand and agree with the success metrics? If you are not sure of the
        desired outcomes or the success metrics, have the confidence to ask
        questions in a constructive manner to clarify.

- Focus on your past successes

    What made you succeed?
    How have you adapted to prior changes?
    What tools helped you adapt to change in the past?
    Can you think of a situation where you were initially disappointed in
        a change but were pleasantly surprised after a period of adjustment?

    You have adapted and succeeded in the past. You can and you will again. Change is inevitable and it is up to you to decide to accept, adapt and succeed!

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