

/// Yes...It Really Is All About You!

In these times of economic unrest it is extremely difficult to maintain status quo in your business processes and still positively impact the bottom line. Doing nothing to improve the business of doing business can be the quickest way to bankruptcy. You need to do something to change things! The really scary part is that the entire success or failure of the change implementation may be all about you.

So, you have made a decision that something has to change to keep your program from being cancelled or your business from going under. You've read the books, been through a couple of classes, and have made a decision to implement some kind of continuous improvement program. You also recognize that the hardest issue you face is the culture of your own program/company. By its very nature that culture is a product of your past successes and many employees won't immediately see the necessity for change.

Section One: Change is not comfortable

There are stages of change that most all of us, including innovators and early adopters go through. Those stages are:

1. Awareness that change is coming
2. Interest in seeing change happen
3. Personal evaluation of the change
4. The decision to try it out in one small area
5. Adoption of the change

Anyone who is trying to make wide-scale change happen must address these concerns prior to beginning the implementation in order to minimize some of the resistance. Resistance will happen. In order to be successful in spite of employees' natural resistance to change you will need to understand the four levels of resistance and how to handle each level (adapted from Maurer's *Why Don't You Want What I Want* (2002).

- 1) Level One: "I don't understand" – this is a true request for more information. The questions you'll receive at this level sound like, "Would you say more about..." "Have you thought about....." "Did you consider....." and this is the only level where a power point presentation is going to help. You may want to be prepared to say the same thing several different ways to suit the many adult learning styles.
- 2) Level Two: "I understand, but I don't like it" – Interestingly enough, the questions you get at this level sound like, "Would you say more about..." "Have you thought about....." "Did you consider.....". Only this time, they are only interested in learning more in order to find ways to stop the change from happening.
- 3) Level Three: "I understand, but I don't like you!" It's very unusual for all personalities in an organization to meld together without stress and disagreements, so you may not be everyone's best friend. This one is much harder to deal with, but as a leader of change you've got to successfully handle this group as well. What you need to understand is that the questions you get from this level sound amazingly the same as the first two levels, "Would you say more about..." "Have you thought about....." "Did you consider.....".

- 4) Level Four: This is a level we seem to be discovering more and more in industry – “I understand it, but you’re evil”! Whether it’s due to politics, union labor vs. management, ethnic background, etc., there seems to be a small (thankfully) subset of employees in companies that just refuse to understand and/or believe what leadership is saying. The bad news is this is covert resistance. This group will nod their heads and seem to understand and agree with you – until they get out of the room and can start an underground resistance movement.

Section Two: Planning for Change

In order to be able to handle all of the types of resistance, get the early adopters and natural leaders working towards implementation and get the program off the ground, here are six questions you need to ask yourself:

1. Does my Leadership/Staff understand the program and the reason for implementing it?
2. Is there a high-quality communication plan in place to let the entire program/business know the details?
3. Are there well defined strategic and tactical plans on how the implementation of the program will happen?
4. Is there a plan to get middle management involved early and often?
5. Are there clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the implementation?
6. Is there a well-thought out metrics plan in place with milestones and consequences for not meeting goals?

Once those questions are answered successfully, it all comes down to you and your leadership style and making it happen.

Does my Leadership/Staff understand the program and the reason for implementing it? It is imperative that you have your immediate staff at the top level of the organization on board. Remember, they haven’t had the time to think about it, understand it, or ask questions, so expecting them to blindly follow your great idea could drive them right into the cycle of resistance (Maurer 2002). They may not have done the studies or participated in the classes you have, so some amount of information dissemination is critical. This is usually a one to two day overview, and it should be a high level understanding of the principles and some level of practice with the tools you are going to use during the implementation, with time at the end for them to develop a tactical plan their organization.

Is there a high-quality communication plan in place to let the entire program/business know the details?

Communicate, communicate, communicate – you can never over-communicate. Some of the pieces of the communication plan should be:

- a. What we’re doing,
- b. Why we’re doing it,
- c. What will happen if we don’t,
- d. What’s expected at each level,
- e. What’s in it for each of them (WIIFM)

with the last one being the focus of all. So, tell them what they can expect if it works, and what they can expect if it doesn’t. Also, be sure to tell them in as many different mediums as possible; company newsletters, staff notes, company videos, signs on bulletin boards and doors into and out of the buildings, snail mail to their homes and emails to their office. It takes all of these and any other ideas you can garner to make sure the people who are going to be involved in the change hear the real story – directly from you.

Are there well defined strategic and tactical plans on how the implementation of the program will happen? Just as with any change in the direction of the business, once you have decided on the strategy you

will use you need to define the tactics employed to make it happen. Are you going to select one area as a pilot? Will it be a program-wide/company-wide all on nothing? Or, should you select more than one pilot – maybe one on the factory floor, one in the Business organization and one in Engineering? It's your decision, but the plan needs to have milestones identified that will lead you to a total implementation.

Is there a plan to get middle management involved early and often? This sounds like such a no brainer once it's said, but many of the companies with which I work have stated their number one implementation lesson learned as, "We knew we had support from the top down – the Leadership of the company was on board from the start. We could also tell how involved the employees at the bottom were – they could see the impact the improvements had on their own jobs and wanted more. What we totally forgot was to include the very people who owned most of the processes we were changing as well as the employees we were using to make the changes. They have to know the why, how and who in order to get their support."

Are there clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the implementation? Almost as important as having a tactical plan is who is going to make that plan happen. You can't possibly do all that needs to be done yourself, so think about who you can tap for each role in the implementation. You are looking for the natural leaders in your organization, if possible. These are the people everyone turns to when there is a problem that needs to be solved. This is not the place use those in the organization managers can afford to let go of. If these people are going to save the business, you want someone you can trust to make the right decisions. If the person isn't busy enough in their job, there's usually a reason having to do with trust in their ability. If you can't trust them to do the job they were hired in for, will you trust them to lead a huge culture change?

Is there a well-thought out metrics plan in place with milestones and consequences for not meeting goals? How are you going to measure success? Don't fall into the trap of equating activity with success! Just because people are busy doesn't mean the bottom line is being impacted. Implementation success should be measured much like rolled throughput yield. Each project or event should be held to the same standards, and then the yield percentage of successful sustainment of each project/event should be multiplied to create an overarching sustainment percentage for the implementation.

The final part of Question #6 involves consequences, a/k/a accountability. This, for today's change leader, is where the buck stops. Carefully consider, before the beginning of the implementation, what you're going to do to enforce the goals and objectives you've decided are the right ones. There will be resistance, most likely from all levels, so how are you going to handle it? Will you treat resistance from your staff the same as you do resistance from an hourly employee? If a team really tries, but doesn't make the goals for the event, what will your response be?

Section Three: Tools to Sustain Change

Here are a couple of tools that can help:

1. **Performance Evaluations:** Put specific, measureable goals for implementation on everyone's performance evaluations.
 - a. This, of course, let's each employee know that you are serious as well as sending them the message of involvement and accountability.
2. **S.M.A.R.T. Goals:** For each and every project and/or event, make sure the goals are stretch. It has been my experience that a team will strive for the goals they are given. So, if you give them a goal for cycle time improvement of 20%, they will typically reach about 22% and quit. However, if you give them a goal of 80% - and explain that you know it is a stretch goal – but that you have confidence in them getting there, they will usually reach the 80% \pm 8%. So, even if they didn't make 80% - only 72% - they've done some great stuff!

Section Four: Conclusion

Having participated or led more than 52 full organizational implementations of change, I can confidently state in conclusion, the entire success or failure of the change implementation is all about you:

YOU decide what needs to be done

YOU ensure the Considerations Before Change can be answered affirmatively

YOU make (or at least approve) the plan

YOU communicate the plan

YOU pick the players

YOU measure the success

YOU ensure accountability, and through it all,

YOU handle the resistance to change, after which,

YOU are the hero(ine) that saved the program/company!

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