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PRODUCING DESIRED
RESULTS THROUGH CHANGE

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CHANGE CREATES A CONFUSED REALITY

by Jean Erickson Walker, EdD, CMF

We're all creatures of habit. We like what we are used to, where we are safe, because we understand ourselves and our place within it. It may be a rut, but it is our rut. Change makes us uncomfortable. It creates uncertainty, confusion and disorientation, for it brings the unknown crashing into current reality and distorts our world.

“Leading Change.” “Managing Through Transition.” “Why Organizations Fail to Create Effective Change.” “Eight (or five...or ten...or even 12?) Steps to Transform Your Organization.” The titles vary; the message is the same. Change is endemic in organizations and people, regardless of their position or level, are struggling to make sense of it all. Equally endemic are the articles, the books, and the strategies to move from point A to point B without destroying yourselves and your organization in the process. Whether it's called restructuring, reengineering, cultural change,

carefully chosen labels like “right-sizing,” or the resounding clarion call of “turnaround!” the issue is the same. Businesses must position themselves to deal with a challenging global marketplace and that means dealing with change.

The question is whether or not the cure is more dangerous than the disease. The fallacy is the assumption that change is outside the norm, that it must be imposed (by force or otherwise) and enforced in order to be effective. The truth is that change is a normal evolution of anything that is living, for nothing that is static can long

exist. Therefore, it is a natural process, one that may need to be nudged or coaxed along, but one that will inevitably evolve, regardless of intent.

There is a basic dichotomy in the concept that change can be boxed, inventoried, and controlled in precise stages. Like a stream rushing down a mountain, it will find its natural course, and continue its descent regardless of impediments in its path. Giving a hand to remove these blocks will certainly shorten the time and smooth the way, but once the course is firmly established, it will inevitably find its own way.

Change Creates A Confused Reality... (cont.)

Leaders are advised to understand that major change may take years to implement. This piece of advice assumes the goal posts will remain in the same place. To the contrary, what seems logical today will inevitably be obsolete tomorrow, or at least irrelevant. The assumption that a series of phases, stages or even steps must be gone through in order to “manage” change is a direct contradiction to the nature of change. It is also misleading to think that missing one of them or even of making a serious mistake at any point is irretrievable. The key to successful change is the ability to move and flow with new realizations.

Attitude is everything. It requires confidence in yourself, your colleagues and your organization to deal with whatever the challenge might be. Create a collaborative environment that celebrates innovation and rewards people who dare to risk and you’ll create a solid foundation for change adaptability. Follow that by consistently communicating your thoughts and reasons for changing direction, policies, or strategies as you work to position your organization at the competitive forefront. It’s surprises that are hard to deal with, that epitomize the most abrasive elements of change. Bring people with you in your thought processes as they evolve and you’ll pave the way for them to

be with you throughout the transition. “Change management” will then be an anachronism you don’t have to worry about. In the meantime, give some thought to basic attitude adjusters that make change a welcome guest rather than an enemy beating down the front gate.

- ▶ Give an award for the “Near Miss” of the month, the idea that could have been a winner. Give a prize to the person or team that took the risk and put their hearts into an idea or project, which had the potential to be a winner. Whether or not it made it over the top, they were a success for trying and the lessons they learned in the process will be bound to have value for them and the company the next time around.
- ▶ Balance brainpower with feelings and intuitions. After all is said and done, most good ideas began as instincts and only later are dressed up with rationalization to make them presentable to the unseeing.
- ▶ When you’re there, be there. Focus on the moment. Listen to the silence. Breathe deeply. Consciously experience yourself in your surroundings. Your ability to deal with external energies is dependent upon serenity and calm within.

- ▶ Take control of your thoughts and beliefs or they will control you. As Mark Twain once said, “Too many people know too many things that just ain’t so.” Begin by asking if it would be a good thing if something could be done; then, ask how to make it happen, rather than the reverse. It’s amazing how often we are stymied by the “how” when if the “why” is powerful enough, the how just seems to fall into place.
- ▶ You are the first step in the process. Like the concentric circles created when a rock falls in a lake, your actions and the confidence and enjoyment you show when you experience change inevitably become reflected in those around you.

It is said that a child learns over 200 things a day, an adult only 12. No wonder children are so much better at dealing with change. Their world is an ever-evolving place full of new experiences. Vow to regain the curiosity of childhood and expect magic to happen.

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