

Dealing with Change Positively

“
*To improve is to change, so to be perfect is to have changed
often.*”

—Winston Churchill

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A New Paradigm

The human being is really a change artist. Scientists say that every cell in a human body is replaced every five to seven years. Literally, a person is a different individual numerous times in life. If we tried to eliminate this process of change we would die.

Following are a few experiments that illustrate how most people handle change. Try these for yourself:

- Clasp your hands together. Notice which thumb is on top. Now clasp your hands with the other thumb on top. How does it feel?
- Fold your arms in front of your chest. Notice which arm is tucked in. Now fold the arms with the other arm tucked in. How does it feel?
- Write your name somewhere on this page, as if you were signing a check. Now write your name again with your other hand. How does it look?

Most people handle change by resisting it. Did you try the three experiments? In the first two situations the change probably felt uncomfortable or weird. In the third situation, it was probably hard to write your name with the opposite hand. These are not unusual results. However, in the last scenario, if you no longer had your first hand, could you learn to write your name better with the other one? You could! Why? Because you would have no choice. You would have to learn.

In Part 4 we discussed the changing playing field. We outlined four forces that are driving change in our business environments. These forces are designing a new paradigm for the business world. They are creating a fast-paced interdependent dynamic marketplace. Organizations and people have to change to keep up. Change is the name of the game.

The four forces:

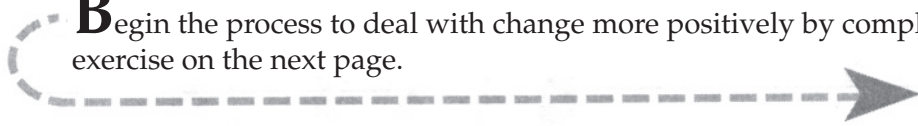
- Emergence of the information age
- Greater competition
- Increasing customer demands
- Volatile workforces

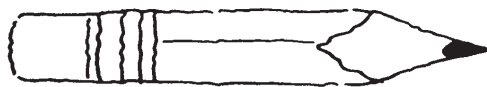
Charles Darwin said, “It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.” How responsive or resistant are you to change? Do you see change as a problem or a possibility? There are two basic ways to change:

- **Proactive:** make a deliberate choice and plan to change
- **Reactive:** be forced to change

We can’t control everything that happens to us, so at times we will need to react to changes. However, we can always control how we respond to changes and determine proactive steps to accelerate the positive effect of the changes we will experience.

Begin the process to deal with change more positively by completing the exercise on the next page.





THE REALITIES OF CHANGE

Think of a situation you have experienced or observed that featured the realities of our changing world and respond to these questions.

1. What was the situation? _____

2. What changed? Why? _____

3. How did people react? Why? _____

4. What were the solutions? _____

5. How did things work out? Then? Today? _____

6. What can you learn or relearn from this experience? _____

Organizational Change

Our rapidly changing world creates tremendous pressure for companies to improve. Economist Joseph A. Schumpeler called the process of change in the economy “creative destruction.” Old jobs fade away to new ones. Old companies change or give way to new ones. Nearly half of all the Fortune 500 companies of the 1980s are gone today. In order to survive, organizations have to adapt. Companies have used a variety of approaches to change organizationally. Put a check (✓) next to any of the following initiatives and changes you have experienced:

- ☐ Participative management
- ☐ Action teams
- ☐ Self-directed teams
- ☐ Total Quality Management
- ☐ Re-engineering
- ☐ Creating a vision
- ☐ The Learning Company
- ☐ Restructuring
- ☐ Decentralization/centralization
- ☐ Employee involvement
- ☐ Downsizing
- ☐ New technology
- ☐ Mergers/acquisitions
- ☐ Company policy/benefit revisions
- ☐ Reorganization
- ☐ New product introductions
- ☐ Relocation of offices/plants
- ☐ New leadership
- ☐ Strategic alliances
- ☐ New performance standards
- ☐ Layoffs
- ☐ Other _____

The Impact of Change

During change processes, employees usually experience one or more of these effects:

- Lower morale
- Higher stress levels
- More conflicts/problems
- Decrease in productivity
- Decrease service or quality
- Poorer attitudes

As a supervisor, your challenge is to counteract these negative reactions. Your job is to lead employees through their resistance to higher performance levels. The rest of this chapter will explore four tools or techniques for handling change more positively:

Four Techniques:

- Communicating change effectively
- Change-management skills
- Brainstorming
- Problem solving

In order to use these tools well, you may need to change your perceptions of employee potential and your approach to getting things done.

Communicating Change Effectively

A supervisory group had to deliver some good and bad news to a large manufacturing company. The good news: business was growing and orders increasing. The bad news: production needed to increase to meet demand, yet expenses had to be managed due to rising costs. In response to these pressures, management made a decision to change its policy of not requiring overtime in the summer. Temporary employees would be used where possible to minimize the impact to vacations plans, but the company had to hold the line on expenses. Therefore, some overtime would result and some vacations would be cut short. Supervisors had to tell employees of this switch in policy just before the summer vacation season started.

One supervisor held a brief meeting and told employees of the policy change. She explained she didn't like it but she had to follow it. So, she said didn't want any whining and presented the new schedule.

Another supervisor held a meeting and explained the change in policy. He empathized and listened to the employees' concerns. He gave details on why the company made the decision. He led the group in brainstorming how to implement the decision as fairly as possible. He acknowledged the late notice and recognized people for their contributions to their plan.

Which employee group do you suppose handled the change better? Obviously it was the second group. Why? The supervisor communicated change effectively. On the next page are some guidelines to help.



Ten Commandments for Implementing Change

1. Communicate specifics early and follow-up information regularly
2. Include others ideas for the change if possible
3. Describe changes in as much detail as you can
4. Offer training to help with new skills or to overcome obstacles
5. Listen to and acknowledge people's feelings and concerns
6. Get all people involved in some way to be accountable for the success of the change
7. Brainstorm and focus on the "possibilities" of change
8. Facilitate creative problem solving and planning
9. Pay particular attention to those who have a difficult time with change
10. Recognize and reward progress in implementation

Techniques for Communicating Change

In all change, communicate beforehand, communicate during execution, and communicate about results. You need to do this in the following ways. The first two points were described in earlier chapters. The next three will be outlined in the coming pages.

- Hold department meetings
- Conduct one-on-one sessions
- Use change-management skills
- Get people involved through brainstorming
- Do group problem solving

Change-Management Skills

During times of change you need to be aware of how individuals perform and also how everyone works together. You need to communicate more, not less, during times of change. In Part 3: Communicating with Others, you were introduced to the acronym TEAM Communication. It is a key to effective change management. TEAM also refers to strategies for managing change:

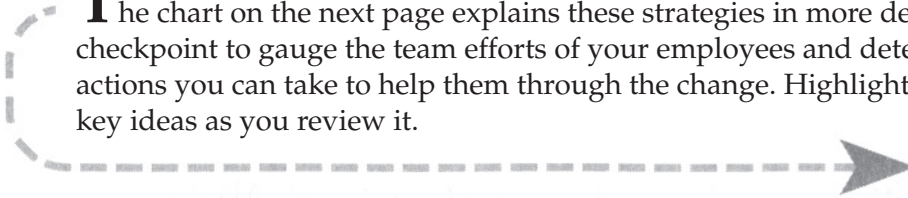
Together focus on a purpose of the change.

Empower others to participate positively in adjusting to the change,

Aim for consensus on how to achieve the goals of the change.

Manage the process to track more effective results.

The chart on the next page explains these strategies in more detail. Use it as a checkpoint to gauge the team efforts of your employees and determine what actions you can take to help them through the change. Highlight or underline key ideas as you review it.



CHANGE-MANAGEMENT SKILLS

TEAM PROCESS	EMPLOYEE NEEDS	SUPERVISOR BEHAVIOR	EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOR
Together focus on a purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common goals • Attention to content • Leadership support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret company goals • Facilitate team's establishment of and buy-in to goals • Evaluate and track progress toward goals • Hold department meetings and one-on-one sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify boundaries • Ask questions to test own understanding • Participate in making things better • Help leader track and evaluate progress toward goals
Empower others to participate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of involvement/communication • Empathy • Maintenance of self-esteem • Leadership support • Respect for differences • Trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions • Listen to concerns/resistance • Show understanding • Summarize feelings about the situation • Encourage people to move forward • Encourage and support others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute ideas • Build on others' ideas • Consider others' ideas • Think creatively
Aim for consensus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constructive conflict resolution • Power within group to be involved in decisions • Leadership support • Trust • Pride and self-satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use group-process techniques (brainstorm, problem solving) • Ask questions • Listen • Seek common interests • Summarize • Confront in constructive way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on common interests and goals • Encourage others to talk • Listen to and consider others' ideas • Make own needs known • Disagree in a constructive way • Summarize points
Manage the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention to process • Leadership support • Trust • Recognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give clear directions • Intervene to keep everyone on track • Read group and adjust • Be positive • Suggest alternative • Communicate results • Provide training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen • Keep purpose • Stay focused on objective • Use own energy and enthusiasm to help process along • Perform well

Brainstorming Change Ideas

An effective tool for gaining employee input, buy-in, and involvement in a change or an improvement process is brainstorming. Brainstorming means you ask others to share ideas related to a task, goal, or change.

Guidelines for Brainstorming

- Go for quantity rather than quality, to keep ideas flowing
- Absolutely no criticism is allowed
- Everyone's participation is encouraged
 - Give people a few minutes to write individual notes
 - Share one idea at a time through a round robin or two
- Build on each other's ideas
- Move quickly
- Creative or weird ideas are helpful

The Brainstorming Process

1. Set a predetermined time limit for sharing (5–15 minutes).
2. Pose a question such as: How can we implement this change positively?
3. Write all ideas on a flip chart or whiteboard (use the speaker's words).
4. Read the list of ideas.
5. Ask, what can we learn from this exercise?
6. Ask everyone to identify individually the top five to seven ideas.
7. Record votes for each idea. Identify the top ideas.
8. Review ways to implement various ideas.
9. Create plans to follow through.

Uses of Brainstorming

Brainstorming can be used in other ways also. Here is a list; put a check (✓) next to one area you can apply it to, or add your own area.

- ☐ Improve a procedure
 - ☐ Increase quality/service
 - ☐ Build teamwork
 - ☐ Increase productivity
 - ☐ Other:_____
-

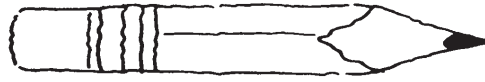
Problem-Solving Techniques

Someone once said, “The more problems you have the more alive you are.” Without problems there would be no need for supervisors. When confronted with problems you need a problem-solving process.

The Problem-Solving Process

1. Clearly and specifically identify the problem.
2. Outline three to five obstacles that get in the way of success.
3. Outline three to five forces that will help your success.
4. Identify three alternative solutions and the possible outcomes.
5. Decide on a course of action. (You may need to explore the other solutions later.)
6. Create a specific plan to implement the solution. Add timelines.

A sales supervisor had a new product to sell. After a couple of weeks results were poor. Because of the fast rollout of the product, minimal training was provided beforehand. After listening to some calls and talking to her reps, the supervisor used the problem-solving process to deal with the issue. Reps were divided into three groups to receive three short training sessions over a two-week period. The training focused on product knowledge and handling objections. Results improved dramatically.



PROBLEM-SOLVING PRACTICE

Identify a problem you are facing and use the Problem-Solving Process on the previous page as a guide to help you improve. Whether you are faced with change or not, this process can help you keep a positive attitude. In this era of fast-paced change, if you aren't getting better, you are getting worse. Always have goals and plans to move forward.

Problem Statement:

Obstacles:

Support:

Alternative Solutions:

A.

B.

C.

Recommended solution:

Action Steps

A.

B.

C.

CASE STUDY 1

Read the case situations below and circle which change strategy the supervisors should use with employees to help deal with the process. Check (✓) all that apply.

1. Business has been great for five years at a delivery company. Recently it slowed down considerably. The company was concerned. How could a marketing supervisor help?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Department meeting | <input type="checkbox"/> One-on-ones |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brainstorming | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem solving |

2. A high-tech company in a large metropolitan area was expanding rapidly through acquisitions. As new products came on line the order department always had system problems to deal with. How could the supervisor handle this difficult situation?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Department meeting | <input type="checkbox"/> One-on-ones |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brainstorming | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem solving |

3. A car dealership was receiving numerous complaints and poor survey ratings about its cars' cleanliness upon delivery. How could the vehicle-prep supervisor work through his employees to improve?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Department meeting | <input type="checkbox"/> One-on-ones |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brainstorming | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem solving |

4. A manufacturing company completed an employee-attitude survey. The production department's ratings indicated negative attitudes from employees about the areas of communication and leadership. The production manager held a meeting with the supervisors to review results. What do the supervisors need to do?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Department meeting | <input type="checkbox"/> One-on-ones |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brainstorming | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem solving |

5. A marketing company significantly changed its incentive plan for customers to counteract competition. While customer feedback was great, response time to customer calls and requests became unacceptably slow. How should the customer-service manager respond?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Department meeting | <input type="checkbox"/> One-on-ones |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brainstorming | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem solving |

6. A national industrial company was experiencing new and intense competition in a market it dominated. In an effort to keep business, local offices implemented a customer-loyalty campaign. Area supervisors were charged with improving the sales and service of all service representatives. How should the supervisors follow through?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Department meeting | <input type="checkbox"/> One-on-ones |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brainstorming | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem solving |

Compare your responses to the author's suggestions in the back of the book.

Strategies for Managing Change

Review the strategies for managing change and put a check (✓) next to the ones you will try and add these to your action plans.

- ☐ **Communicate changes positively.** As a supervisor, you won't always be on the front end of organizational changes. Your job will often be to implement changes. Sometimes it won't be pleasant because it may mean procedural changes, downsizing, layoffs, or cost controls. However, you can always communicate and demonstrate empathy. Use meetings and one-on-one sessions to gain ideas or allow people to vent feelings. The Ten Commandments for Implementing Change remind you of how to make transitions more smoothly in your area. While upper management may not always do this, you can! What two or three of the commandments do you feel you can do well? What two or three commandments do you need to remember to do better? Are you in the midst of change now? Which commandments do you need to practice?
- ☐ **Apply change-management skills.** The TEAM chart shows you the behaviors you need to demonstrate, the needs of employees, and the involvement you want from employees. Where can you apply this today?
- ☐ **Conduct a brainstorming session.** Follow the process and follow up to use the ideas. Whether you are in the midst of massive change or not, use these techniques to gain employee ideas and commitment to improve results. Remember, most employees today want to feel a part of something—a team, cause, or purpose. You need their heads and hands, but also their hearts.
- ☐ **Implement the problem-solving process.** In Part 1: Getting Started, you created an action plan to prepare to win. How have things gone for you? What has worked well? What hasn't worked well? What will you do better or differently? Chances are you have some problems to solve. What's your biggest problem? Or, if things are going really well, where can you apply the continuous-improvement approach? Use it and you'll make more progress.