



Change Process

As a business coach, you may be engaged to help a business leader create change in his company, organization or unit. Often change meets with resistance for a variety of reasons. Most managers, when confronted with resistance in those they supervise will jump to #4 without ever assessing the first three areas. Your job as a business coach is to help them consider the first three reasons and then to take responsibility for their part if #4 turns out to be the actual reason.

Often when someone is requesting a change and they meet with resistance it is one of the following issues:

1. Do people know *what* they are being asked to do?
2. Do people know *how* to do it?
3. Does the *environment* support the changes being asked?
4. Do people *want* to do it?

When managers believe their people are resisting just because they don't want to do something, the response is very different than if they are more generous in their assessment.

What:

Many times employees are told what to do and it seems very clear to the person doing the telling but it isn't always so clear to the people who are supposed to implement the change. Yes, employees have a responsibility to ask clarifying questions until they understand but they aren't always comfortable doing so. They may be reluctant to appear "stupid." They may fear backlash from management. They may think they understand but really don't.

At any rate, if your client determines his or her employees are not complying with change because they don't understand what they are being asked to do, then the response needs to be further explanation, demonstration, training or a combination.

How:

Understanding what to do doesn't always mean you know how to do it. I may take my car to the mechanic for an oil change and he may tell me, "You just need an oil change. You could probably do that yourself." Well, I clearly understand *what* an oil change is but I am very unclear about the *how*.

This can happen with employees, despite management's best efforts. Training and/or mentoring can help with the *how*. Make sure employees are shown how to do what's being asked instead of told how to do it. Demonstrations are much more effective. If your client doesn't know how to show the employees how to do what he wants, then he should get someone who does.

Environment:

There are times a company is asking for a change from employees but the environment does not support the change. I was once working with a refuse trucking company that asked their employees to no longer cross the road to pick up garbage cans. They were instructed to drive down one side picking up the cans on that side of the road, then to turn around and pick up the cans on the opposite side of the road. The decision was made for safety and everyone agreed it was a good idea. But then management also added the stipulation that they were to do so within the same timeframe it currently took to complete the job. That was impossible! The environment did not support the requested change.

Want:

When your client has determined the employees know what to do, how to do it and environment will support the change, then the only explanation left is they don't want to do it. It's easy at this point to start pointing the finger at the employees and thinking of firing them. However, a manager must first look in the mirror to determine if he or she bears any fault in the situation.

It is a manager's responsibility to help employees to understand what's in it for them. Employees need to know the goals and benefits of making the change. It must make sense to them. The manager may want to revisit this conversation to be sure the employees understand the why and the benefits of the requested change. That may be all that's necessary to get compliance.

If after all options have been exhausted, the employee still is refusing to comply, it is time for the manager to look at a transfer or termination. A manager cannot have a person deliberately undermining their authority in the workplace.

Skills Practice:

In order to understand the impact of the above questions for the change process to happen, you will need to do some skills practice. You will need to find a partner and set up a 30-minute time slot on the Academy of Choice conference line to discuss the above questions in regards to the scenario below.

Scenario:

You have been called into an organization to help a manager who is having difficulty with an employee in his sales department to increase his sales. For the past six months this employee's sales have been the same or lower than normal. He used to be the organization's top sales person, but ever since your client was hired from outside the company to manage the sales department six months ago, this sales person's numbers began to decline.

Record your conversation. For 10 minutes discuss the scenario and come up with possible answers. For the next 10 minutes, please think of the above scenario and discuss how you would intervene if the answer to the above questions were "no." Start with the first question and work your way all the way through to the last question. When finished send an email to Denise@academyofchoice.com letting her know there is a recording and give her your name and the name of your partner.