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## The Need for Change (or is it Choice?)

By Richard Hohmann

In an article in the Harvard Business Review (08/08), John P. Kotter and Leonard A. Schlesinger point out that change is inevitable in business, yet it is incredibly difficult to implement, especially when faced with resistance. The four major reasons why people may resist change in their company is **fear** of losing something they value, **misunderstanding** the change and what it means, **believing** the change is not beneficial, and generally **low personal tolerance** for change.

With these reasons, come different ways of dealing with them. Thoroughly educating people on the change is helpful, but with any resister it takes more time and effort. Get the resisters to participate in the planning and execution of the change can make employees more committed to it, but this method is time-consuming and could bring poor results. Negotiation with incentives is an easy way to avoid large conflict, but it can be expensive. Manipulation and coercion can be fast and inexpensive, but can be received negatively and cause more damage in the long run.

In deciding what methods to use, managers must identify the reasons for the resistance and take the entire situation into account to **create a clear strategy** for implementing the change. After this, they must monitor the process as it is carried out to ensure its success.

**The key to a successful change is to determine “what matters most”.** Most of the time, we do not make our employees aware of the need for change. We also do not have a plan to implement the needed changes and in most cases we under-estimate the potential of our people. Last but not least we offer no measurement to demonstrate the results of the change.

I have read several books lately where the authors have started to use the term “comfort zone” and that **leadership must now get people out of their comfort zones and be willing to take some risk.**



David Byrd in his book, The Tripping Point in Leadership, states that the developmental definition of apathy is as follows: A natural, human instinct, common to us all, that constantly encourages us to seek a comfort zone in which nothing ever changes. Choice represents the potential power to overcome apathy. Attitude is a choice, action is a choice, and accountability is a choice. **Leaders need to step up to the plate and make a choice.** Then they must let their people know how they expect their choices to be implemented in the plan that can effect the day to day operation of the company. They must strategically focus on the disease, not the symptom.”

I am concerned that we are not getting the results we need, to meet the difficult conditions presented by the market conditions today, because we are focusing our attention on the symptom and not the disease. Symptoms like indecision, lack of creativity, lack of motivation, lack of productivity, burnout and so on, seem to be getting all of our attention. Although, they are not the real problem or disease, it is apathy. Change and growth occur when you work to correct the problem or disease, not the symptom.

**So, make a choice – growth or decline. Put a plan into action, measure the results and make changes where you’re not getting the results you need.**

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