
6 Dynamics Of Change

In almost every setting, when working with either individuals or companies, the first thing I communicate are several ideas that will help them get the most out of the time we spend together.

Probably the most important is; accepting change. Why? Two reasons; first, most people's first reaction to the idea of changing something about themselves or their organization is, to say the least, negative. I sometimes wish that I would have been keeping track over the years of how many times someone said, "We don't do things like that around here.", "That might work in other industries, but we're different.", "We tried that years ago, those kind of ideas don't work here.", or my favorite "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." I think it was Tom Peters that responded to that last one by saying, "If it ain't broke, you haven't looked at it lately." Nevertheless, I suspect that the negative responses to the idea of change would number in the thousands in just my little sphere of experience. I suspect you can relate.

The second reason we emphasize treating change as an ally? It is ONLY through change that there is any hope of improving results. Einstein said, "The only true definition of insanity is expecting different results while continuing to do the same things." If we want different (better) results, we must either do things differently, or do different things. Either way, the common element is change. Change your behavior, change your actions, or change your attitudes... nothing changes in the results you achieve unless something changes in how you think and what you do..

The universal aversion to change is fascinating, given the fact that the only thing that we can depend on in our lives is that everything constantly changes! You would think we would eventually get used to the idea. I don't have time to delve into all the behavioral or psychological research here... but I can share six important dynamics that are at work when change happens.



The 1st Dynamic of Change: People want to know what the change is all about.

The sixth Prime Law of Organizations states, “The majority of people, when presented with the same information will, given time, come to very similar conclusions.”

The key with this dynamic is *communication*. It is leadership’s responsibility to communicate the what, who, when, where, why, how, and how much that is impacted by the change... BEFORE the change happens. Your communication needs to be two-way, note the key word in prime organizational law No. 5 is “self-discover”. Your most important role is providing mechanisms that get people involved with understanding the change. Everyone affected must have the opportunity to see, hear, or experience all the information that will help them move towards the conclusion that the change is beneficial.

The 2nd Dynamic of Change: People will dwell on what they have to give up.

Every change that takes place engenders, at some level, a sense of loss. Remember, one of the most powerful of human needs is the ‘need to be right’. People will go to almost any length to prove that they are right. When change comes along, people internalize that, if change is necessary, it must mean that I must have doing something wrong. Underestimate the power of the need to be right at your own peril. The fifth Prime Law of Organizations states, “Most people are willing to change when they *self-discover* ‘What’s In It For Me.’” Helping people discover for themselves what the benefits that the change will bring goes a long way in helping them get past their need to be right and embrace the idea.

The 3rd Dynamic of Change: People will feel they have to make the change all by themselves.

Since you were two years old you loath being told what to do... especially being told to do something different than what you want, or different from what you are accustomed doing. This is especially true if you feel like you are the only one being asked to change. So it is with everyone. It is much easier for people to accept and embrace change when they feel like everyone is going to be impacted and go through it together. Develop support networks to help people deal with the change.



The 4th Dynamic of Change: People will get overwhelmed if there is too much change too soon.

Since you already understand that given the same information and time to process it, most people will come to a very similar conclusion, you can appreciate that changing everything at once is a recipe for calamity. That doesn't mean that change should be an exercise in plodding execution. After all, in some cases, you are better off ripping the band-aid off in one quick motion, figuratively speaking. My experience with facilitating substantial change over the last thirty-plus years demonstrates that, even in large organizations, a step-change in performance can be accomplished in as little as six months. The key is prioritizing the changes and communicating the implementation plan over time. Extra time and effort BEFORE the change happens pays rich dividends when it comes time to execute the plan. Prime Organizational Law No. 7 states, "In routine day-to-day operations, leadership under-communicates by a factor of ten. During times of change, that factor increases exponentially."

The 5th Dynamic of Change: People will be at different levels of accepting change.

Don't be tempted to label people. Each individual has their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences that will impact their willingness and the speed they are able to buy-in to change. With that realization comes your responsibility to create communication and involvement mechanisms that provide your people with the time and opportunity to be part of the change.

The 6th Dynamic of Change: People will revert back to the old way of doing things when the pressure is off.

You and I are creatures of habit, and so is everyone else. If change is implemented without the support of appropriate revision of systems, processes, standards, measures, and rewards, it will be nearly impossible to sustain the change. Managing change is a continuous journey. Just as your current results are a function of the structures and systems you have had in place in the past, your future success is based on the changes you make today.

