

STRATEGIES

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SHOP TALK

Rules of Thumb for Organizational Change From The President's Desk

It is easier to develop a vision for change than to actually get change implemented. Much like New Year's resolutions, the forces for equilibrium are powerful. After all, we've always done it that way!

However, organizations must react to enormous amounts of change in their environment. Market forces, technology, and political environments force change. As they mature, organizations must renew themselves to capitalize on their successes and continue growing.

To make things more difficult, the individuals who must implement change every day

by doing their jobs differently often don't have a clear picture of why change is necessary.

To implement change successfully, there needs to be more compelling reasons supporting the change than resisting the change. This can be accomplished either by removing barriers or by reinforcing the new behaviors and ways of thinking. As consultants, we see companies provide workers with new tools without improved results - Why? The attitudes and skills of the employees to use the tools were not taken into account. In one organization, sophisticated statistical process control (SPC) monitoring was not successful because the attitude on the floor was that the process was more art than science. Veteran workers passed on wisdom informally and were given great respect by the rest of the team. New training and SPC controls threatened this valued practice and the social system. In other organizations, training is provided but a lack of follow-up allows everyone to slip back into the old ways of doing things and, thus, the old results.

Develop A Plan

To effectively implement change, O.E. Strategies emphasizes several key rules of thumb. First, use data to develop a plan. This means studying the forces that support change as well as those that support the status quo. Consider the people, the work, the work environment and the social/political environment. Develop a plan to produce momentum for the change, so that it does not go the way of New Year's resolutions. Focus as much energy on the follow through as on the launch.

Communicate the Vision

The average person doesn't fully absorb information until they have heard it seven times. Consider wrapping messages around a compelling vision, using multiple methods such as memos, newsletters, large town hall style meetings and small group discussions. Frequency and consistency of communication lead to success.

Encourage Participation

Create as much participation in the change implementation as possible, using problem-solving teams, focus groups, hands-on training, suggestion boxes, or opinion polls. Create investment in success by making it personal for everyone. In the SPC example, including veteran workers early and understanding their need to mentor others was critical.

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Supervisor's Corner:

Coaching to Assist Development

As a supervisor, you can continually develop employees so they can do their jobs well.

Tips for coaching include:

- demonstrating your commitment to your staff
- diagnosing development needs
- providing clear goals and good feedback
- use active listening skills
- helping others understand and take responsibility for their development
- creating clear plans for developing each person you lead

Coaching is good for:

- developing long term skills
- building motivation
- preparing for increased responsibility
- improving communication or relationship skills

Coaching and training is an effective way to motivate employees and achieve the results you need. It is a win-win activity because it increases both job satisfaction and performance. Coaching employees is results-oriented, competency-based, and designed to impact specific skills. Coaching begins the first day on the job. By reviewing the job description and its core competencies (skills) with the employee, you can begin to identify the skill areas that need to be developed.

As you coach employees, use one-on-one meetings to help the employee direct their own improvements and skill growth. Jointly determine the gap between employee performance and their potential - and plan how to fill that gap. You and your employee should agree to the desired outcome, and generate an action plan to achieve it. Finally, remember to allow sufficient time for the employee to develop the new skills, arrange for follow-ups, and provide support in the forms of feedback and encouragement.

Some results that coaching will facilitate include: long-term skill development; building motivation; preparing for increased responsibility; improving communication or relationship skills. Coaching closes the gaps and updates skills. By identifying opportunities for improvement, you will find ways to develop your employees. Once you have identified these needs, discuss them with your employee. Many employees will welcome coaching and training; it's an opportunity to improve their employability.

Rules of Thumb for Organizational Change, cont.

Measure Results

Set tangible measures up front that link closely to the vision. Track results to allow celebration of success and improvement along the way, especially since some snags may be inevitable. Use a number of measures so that everyone can see the relationship between behaviors and results. Some real successes can be masked by faulty measures, or ones with large lag times.

With organizational change, there are always surprises and bumps in the road. Changing our companies and ourselves is never easy, but is possible with a well-planned approach.

A Look at Emotional Intelligence

O.E. Strategies consultants recently attended the 15th annual conference for the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP). One symposium at the conference concentrated on a topic that has been gaining in popularity among organizational leaders over the past few years—emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence is divided into two main competency areas.

Personal competence reflects:

- awareness,
- management, and
- motivation

of oneself and one's internal states, preferences, and resources.

Social competence reflects:

- awareness,
- management, and
- motivation

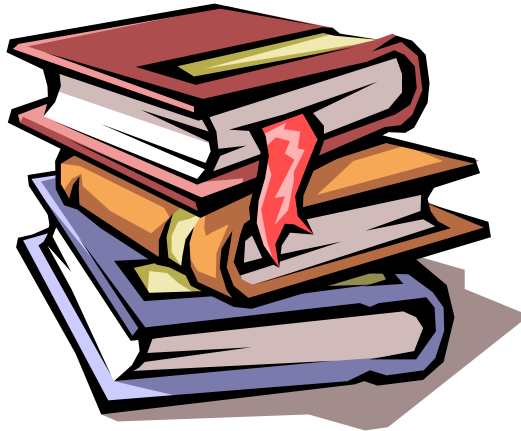
of others' feelings, needs, and resources.

Author Daniel Goleman (*Working with Emotional Intelligence*, 1998, Bantam) suggests that in the current climate of organizational streamlining, globalization, and rapid change, high performers succeed due to competencies that go beyond cognitive intelligence and job expertise. Goleman identified a number of these competencies—such as self-confidence, adaptability, commitment, political awareness, and cooperation—and housed them under a larger category called emotional intelligence. Employees who demonstrate competence in emotional intelligence are better able to work both independently and as a team, and may better meet the needs of internal and external customers.

Psychologists at the SIOP conference raised concerns about the demonstrated usefulness of emotional intelligence, and whether it has been tested with the empirical rigor needed before its widespread acceptance and use by organizations. Many researchers have also concluded that emotional intelligence is little more than a new category name for a subset of well-researched personality dimensions. Undoubtedly there are similarities between emotional intelligence and personality; for example, “conscientiousness” is important in both perspectives. However, the dimensions of emotional intelligence (“service orientation,” “developing others”) seem to more closely resemble behaviorally-based competencies than do traditional personality dimensions (“emotional stability,” “agreeableness”).

Industrial/Organizational psychologists and management consultants can add value to emotional intelligence by examining its relationship to personality, and to the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for jobs. One means to ensure your employees are competent in areas that go beyond job expertise is to clarify what components of personality or emotional intelligence relate to high performance in your company before assessing any job candidates.

Book Reviews



Who Moved My Cheese?

G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1998, ISBN 0-399-14446-3

A short (94-page) parable that illustrates how to deal with change in your work and life, *Who Moved My Cheese?* reveals truths about change. Using two mice (Sniff and Scurry) and two littlepeople (Hem and Haw) as characters, Spencer Johnson illustrates how to succeed in changing times. The maze is where you look for what you want, the cheese is a metaphor for what you want in life, and the characters represent the simple and complex parts of ourselves. Sniff seeks out change, Scurry scurries into action; Hem denies and resents change, and Haw learns to adapt when he sees change leading to something better. As you read the book you will see the "handwriting on the wall" where you will discover how to adapt to and enjoy change.

If you belong to a group whose members would enjoy a lively re-telling of this parable, with a facilitated group discussion on change, call Maryjane Edgar at O.E. Strategies (440-886-6576).



9161 Reichert Road
Cleveland, Ohio 44130