

Focus on the Human Side of Change Efforts

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For senior managers and project managers managing change takes on many challenges. Certainly it is obvious to everyone that technology continues to change at a rapid pace which creates hundreds of challenges to every level of the organization. The key area needing the most significant focus is on the human side of change.

As a consultant I have the opportunity to assist many of the Fortune 100 companies with changes in the technical support help desks and with their Customer Contact Centers. Putting a project plan together to implement the technology and the processes is no less a challenge but the reason we see the greatest failures or complications is due to ineffective communication and a lack of involvement of the people. I like to refer to it as applying the *"high touch"* model.

As Timothy J. Galpin says in his book titled *The Human Side of Change*, "even the most carefully planned organizational changes can fail if *individuals* are not taken into consideration." His book teaches a nine step process that shows how to effectively combine the people side and the technical side of change. His book offers a cookbook approach for change management that details key focus areas such as; how to establish an improvement team infrastructure, map a communication strategy, integration of the change process into the culture of the organization, set goals for change implementation and more.

The focus area that I feel can benefit from a great deal more attention is around the leadership of leading the change effort. Many tasks of a project can be delegated but this is one area that should not be delegated. The leadership must come from the senior level with demonstrable support to the project.

We see projects that are unreasonably elongated due to ineffective leadership because it was delegated to people without the proper skills or responsibility. As well, many projects are done without the customers ever having any input. Many imported leaders are not comfortable with their role and therefore fear asking the customers or management for their input. It is easier to function in an introverted manner and prepare the final project, as opposed to getting input along the way.

Another reason for the failures are due to the issue of *position power* versus *relationship power*. The key leaders must have ownership of the project and stay involved but not to impose their position of power to the project but instead emphasize their relationship power providing their skills and support. It is about using their relationship power to move a project along effectively. Involving the customers, the employees, the key people who will be impacted by the project and having the full support of the key management team will guarantee a greater likelihood for success.

This approach creates a more committed workforce, eliciting a stronger loyalty from their people and creates a more motivated and high performance team that strives to reach its goals and achieve the desired results. The behavior of the leaders can make or break a change initiative. And their recognition of the team and rewards for high performance and successful deliverables is equally key to a winning project.

Timothy J. Galpin identifies the key attributes for leading change as: creativity, team orientation, listening skills, coaching skills, accountability, and appreciativeness. A strong leader will put equal focus on all of these areas while utilizing their relationship power to ensure the success of their change efforts. Nordstrom's utilized many of these principles that I refer to here and made it imperative that their Information Technology staff each read this book and apply the principles universally. They found this to increase their likelihood for success. I hope you find this article inspiring to look deeper into your efforts to focus more on the human side of your change efforts.

I would love to hear from you and learn of your success stories where you put more focus on the human side of change.

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