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Train To Change The Way To Change

Ever wondered why conventional organizational change fails so frequently? Is it that employees cannot see the need for change? Do they not realize that repeated failure to change will make the organization less competitive? Meaning they will lose profits, market share, jobs and eventually go out of business? Can they not see all this? Probably not. Employees have a different way of looking at things.

Is it all about conditioning?

Managements across the world believe that employees are paid to perform a task so they should do what they are told. This belief stems from the fact that they are conditioned to doing what someone else decides (right from school).

When they move into their work places they are made to believe that managers and trainers are the ones to impose skills, knowledge and expectations. Given such conditioning, it is natural to assume that to train and motivate employees to change what they do, all that is needed is telling them.

However, this approach to training employees for change seldom works. Employees today have a different perspective. They seldom take the senior word as the gospel truth!

Traditional wrongs

The traditional approach to imposing change is based on the assumptions that:

- An individual's personal goals and needs are naturally and wholly aligned with those of the organization. Some organizations even fail to recognize the need for such alignment
- When informed about the organization's priorities, employees will push their own onto the backburner and become engrossed in the development or change that the organization thinks is necessary for them.

These assumptions no longer hold true for the following reasons.

One: The fact that employees will never align their life goals with vested organizational goals.

Employees can see through executive greed, false promises, environmental damage, inequality and exploitation. While they are under no illusion that the prime requirement is to do what their managers assign they know for a fact that because of their efforts managers earn fat rewards and shareholders huge dividends.

An employee will play along this arrangement as long as management goals are comprehensible. But the minute these goals turn purely vested, this would be the typical reaction to training- "So you want me to train and adjust to your changes so that I can make more money for you. Thank you very much, but I have better things to do!" It is

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easier to put up with such in-your-face resistance. Managers find it difficult to deal with employees who simply nod in acceptance and then do nothing about training.

Decent, hardworking employees are put off when the organization assumes that their aims and wishes are aligned with those of the organization, simply because they work there. Unless an organization reassesses and realigns its goals with the total life needs of its workforce, the latter will continue to resist training designed to change what they do.

Two: The fact that employees will not learn new skills just because their managers ask them to.

An employee will not drop everything on hand merely because the manager has asked him to enroll for some training. Even if an employee wants to learn new skills or 'change', his work schedules are so streamlined and stringent that training is the least of his concerns.

An employee is bound to ask, "So you want me to attend this training course so that I can make more money for the organization. But when I come back from the workshop will my workload magically disappear?" When an organization does nothing to reduce an employee's workload while he trains, the employee is bound to treat training as unpaid, over-time.

While most organizations think nothing of consulting employees before getting into 'training for change,' this in fact, is a good idea. Consulting gives both the organization and its workforce the chance to understand the importance, feasibility and implications of changes that need to be incorporated.

Additionally, consulting helps employees see both sides of the coin. Besides appreciating the need for change, they also welcome the fact that the management thinks them important enough for such discussions. At times, employees have even suggested more plausible ideas, than the management ever could, for doing things better.

Three: The fact that organizations are trying to avoid reassessing and realigning their goals.

It is common practice for organizations to say that they cannot find time to realign their goals and consult with employees because they are on the verge of a crisis. "Well, whose fault is that?" asks a training expert. Such situations can be attributed to the fact that they ignore the importance of:

- Realigning their goals with the aims and needs of its workforce
- Consulting with people

In other words, an organization finds itself in crisis only because it pays no attention to the first two facts. While organizations use crisis as an excuse to compromise upon standards and integrity, this could be the best time to reassess and realign goals and consult employees.



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During any crisis the things that come under the scanner are the organization's goals. Therefore, a critical situation should serve as a wake-up call for the organization to change its goals and not its people!

The sensible way to change

Whatever way an organization looks at change, it never is as simple as putting together a plan and then telling or persuading employees to go along with it. Those who intend to succeed in their change initiatives should start by reassessing their goals.

It is equally important to know what the organization actually seeks to do by changing. Who will benefit most by changing is the question. Is the organization ready for the implications and what its employees feel about the way the organization trains for change?