

12.3: Building Your Change Management Skills

Learning Objective

1. Identify guidelines for overcoming resistance to change.

Overcoming Resistance to Your Proposals

You feel that a change is needed. You have a great idea. But people around you do not seem convinced. They are resisting your great idea. How do you make change happen?

- *Listen to naysayers.* You may think that your idea is great, but listening to those who resist may give you valuable ideas about why it may not work and how to design it more effectively.
- *Is your change revolutionary?* If you are trying to change dramatically the way things are done, you will find that resistance is greater. If your proposal involves incrementally making things better, you may have better luck.
- *Involve those around you in planning the change.* Instead of providing the solutions, make them part of the solution. If they admit that there is a problem and participate in planning a way out, you would have to do less convincing when it is time to implement the change.
- *Assess your credibility.* When trying to persuade people to change their ways, it helps if you have a history of suggesting implementable changes. Otherwise, you may be ignored or met with suspicion. This means you need to establish trust and a history of keeping promises over time before you propose a major change.
- *Present data to your audience.* Be prepared to defend the technical aspects of your ideas and provide evidence that your proposal is likely to work.
- *Appeal to your audience's ideals.* Frame your proposal around the big picture. Are you going to create happier clients? Is this going to lead to a better reputation for the company? Identify the long-term goals you are hoping to accomplish that people would be proud to be a part of.
- *Understand the reasons for resistance.* Is your audience resisting because they fear change? Does the change you propose mean more work for them? Does it affect them in a negative way? Understanding the consequences of your proposal for the parties involved may help you tailor your pitch to your audience (McGoon, 1995; Michelman, 2007; Stanley, 2002).

Key Takeaway

There are several steps you can take to help you overcome resistance to change. Many of them share the common theme of respecting those who are resistant so you can understand and learn from their concerns.

Exercises

1. What do you think are some key reasons why people resist change?
2. Do you think some people are more resistant to change regardless of what it is? Why do you think this is?

References

McGoon, C. (March 1995). Secrets of building influence. *Communication World*, 12(3), 16.

Michelman, P. (July 2007). Overcoming resistance to change. *Harvard Management Update*, 12(7), 3–4.

Stanley, T. L. (January 2002). Change: A common-sense approach. *Supervision*, 63(1), 7–10.

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