



Management and Performance Associates – Newsletter – November 2007

Changes? What Changes?

They were at the same place, in the same situation, had access to the same information, received the same orders, listened to the same shouting, and nonetheless reacted very differently: Huey resisted change, Louie followed it, and Dewey led it. These three characters were exposed to the constant change in their roles imposed by their coercive boss, with no explanation whatsoever. The boss imposed the use of new, useless and sometimes pathetic tools. Our three characters had no clarity where they were heading to or the reasons for doing so, and were constantly humiliated by pitiable management actions. It seems they were dancing to the inconsistent music played by "senior management." The Manager (a miserable little man) loved what was going on while the assistant manager (in his solitary awareness) asked himself in silence: how is it possible for these guys to live the same situation so differently?

The previous paragraph is not literary fiction. Unfortunately, this is what happens in many situations where change is not properly managed.

We can find a possible explanation to the assistant manager's question if we get into "**attitude**," this strange mix of cognitive and emotional processes that is automatically triggered when we face any external event. **Cognitive**, because each person has different tools and different knowledge to assign meaning to facts that they are facing (unfortunately, some people totally lack them...). **Emotional**, because each person is differently impacted by external events that provoke different emotions, and as a consequence, they react differently. It is not too much to say that most of the time emotions take over our reactions, and then you can imagine how the story ends.

These reactions will become the raw material to be transformed into simple decisions: To react or not to the change? When and how to do it? And why? These decisions, by their turn, will be translated into three observable behaviors: **resisting, following or leading**.

If, when facing a change process, regardless of the quality of its introduction, **you identify with Huey (RESISTANCE)**, there are three strongly recommended urgent and sequential actions:

1. **Recognize that you are resisting** (there is nothing better than self awareness and self knowledge for these moments).
2. **Explore your cognitive tools and ask yourself: why do I resist it?** Search for all information you need, inside and outside, even though people who have answers sound like the Manager and Assistant Manager in the story above. If this is the case, before asking, structure a phrase that includes the behavior that is bothering you and its impact on your performance, very calmly, without accusing or blaming. Objectivity always calms the beast ...
3. **Leave your emotions totally out of the process**, especially the negative ones, and stay with the tools, even though it sounds difficult.

If you identify with Louie (FOLLOW CHANGE), be an ally to who is leading. Support change management by reinforcing the observable behaviors that impact performance and support people so they can change performance. **Make it a continuous learning process, without blaming**.

Finally, if you identify with Dewey (LEADING CHANGE), remember that change is impossible without:



1. A clear and inspiring **VISION** that enchants and aligns people.
2. Intense and constant **COMMUNICATION**, translated into all needed languages to be understood.
3. The needed sensibility to **IDENTIFY OBSTACLES** (yes, they will be there, plenty of them).
4. The ability to **REMOVE OBSTACLES**, so that people can advance by the change path instead of the resistance avenue.

Huey, Louie or Dewey? You decide!

See you next time. We welcome your feedback.

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