

Leading Change in Organizations

Part Five



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Until and unless the change leader and the team members have a full support from the organization's management, the change initiative will not achieve the desired results.

The management has to create and facilitate a readiness for change culture among its employees. It has to strive in order to create this culture not only for the readiness to change, but also for accepting it and thriving in it.

In order to do so (besides the support elements necessary for the change to be successful mentioned in the previous article) the management has to provide the right and imperative conditions in the organization which will make the change emerge naturally.

First, employees must understand the aspects of the organization's business. They have to understand the context of their work, what their company is trying to accomplish, what are the customers' needs, what their competitors are doing, and what is going on in the industry. Hence, they will be able to comprehend the situation and see the need for a specific change and accept it.

In addition, employees must understand how their work and performance affect the operation, customers' satisfaction and loyalty, and the financial status of the

organization. Consequently, they will be able to understand how a change in their daily activities and performance affect the customers' experience, profitability, and the organization as a whole.

Secondly, for employees to initiate change for improvement on their own, they must be allowed to do so. Employees should feel they have permission to make the daily decisions necessary to improve themselves, the customer experience, the operational efficiency, and the financial results.

Many researchers have concluded that "Employees are more likely to suggest change and feel responsible for carrying out the change if they know they have the authority to make changes. Further, changes will be more rapid if employees have the necessary autonomy, and do not have to wait for permission to act".

One very important skill of leadership is creating boundaries and encouraging freedom to act within those boundaries; and the more specific and understandable the boundaries, the better.

Thirdly, employees must feel comfortable and that they are important and their ideas are listened to in an accepting, open environment. Employees are more likely to embrace change and be part of a change if they feel they can voice out their concerns and disagreements. However, this like many other issues is difficult for managers to accept.

In many organizations the management believes that employees cannot and should not challenge what the management has decided. However, Leslie W. Rue and others insist that "Allowing this type of open environment gives employees a sense of ownership in the process and also may trigger fresh, creative ideas from those who are closest to the customer or to the operations of the business".