Week 4

As we learned in last week's material, being a change agent isn't always just about having great ideas or a clear plan, or even the tacit acceptance of your ideas from senior management. Being a good change agent is the ability to see and understand the aspects that others in the organization will be concerned about the proposed change. One of the ways a successful change agent is able to gather the buy-in and support from those who will be affected by the change is to understand and address the concerns they have about the proposed change.

This can be done in several different ways. For example, talking with one's peers in the organization about the idea is a good way to start identifying the areas of concern peers may have. Often, your peers may discuss things in generalities, which is a great way to start uncovering the deeper concerns that may affect buy-in by various departments and areas. However, you will need details about those concerns in order to be able to address them appropriately.

Another approach is to hold informational sessions with the groups that would be affected by the idea to get their feedback directly on how they perceive what the effects might be of the changes to their current processes. As you know, for most people change is uncomfortable, but it can be downright scary for many others. It should come as no surprise then, that often times the informational meetings that you may hold seem fraught with negativity and reluctance to embrace change. That's perfectly normal, so don't be surprised by the negative comments or attitudes that you may encounter during the sessions.

As a good change agent, you can't be discouraged by those reactions. The point of getting early feedback on a proposed change is to begin to socialize the idea of change, and to identify those areas where individuals have concerns. The first aspect, socializing the change idea, is an important step toward ultimate acceptance of the idea and the need for change. The one thing that most people will tell you they do not like about change is when they have no input or control over how the change affects their daily responsibilities.

Thinking about your own experience with change, you can probably relate to this, right? No one likes to have changed pushed on them without their knowledge -- and to obtain acceptance from the affected parties they have to be made aware of the change. With that in mind, a good champion will be aware of the change curve (Eba, (n.d.); Insights, (n.d.)) and begin to socialize – selling - the idea of change, thereby laying the foundation for future acceptance. And, taking a page from marketing, part of this will be telling folks about WIIFM – 'What's In It For Me?' This is where a good salesperson

(a.k.a. change agent) extols the benefits of the idea for the affected constituents (Levine, 2016). For more details about the change curve and WIIFM concepts check out the resource links included below.

The second aspect is finding out what the areas of concern are about the change idea. Then, be sure to address the concerns directly so the individuals not only feel like they've been heard, but have had their issues considered. This latter aspect is key to a successful implementation of your proposal. Gathering the buy-in from all parties who will be affected by the change is crucial to success.

Indeed, this takes a concerted effort and a lot of legwork upfront to get buy-in from the players; but, it is an essential investment in the end game. It will save you vast amounts of time and energy in time-wasting damage control should a proposal be 'steamrolled' out without giving those who are affected real consideration for their concerns. One only needs to look at the dismal acceptance rate of projects where the constituents were not asked for their input and buy-in. In fact, it's a good bet that you can probably identify at least one instance of this from your own experience with change. Approaching changes in a steamroller fashion is a recipe for abject failure.

References

Eba.(n.d.). The Change Curve – How do we react to change?

(Links to an external site.)

Educational Business Articles.
https://www.educational-business-articles.com/change-curve/

Insights. (n.d.). *Coaching people through the Change Curve*

(Links to an external site.)

. https://www.insights.com/us/resources/coaching-people-through-the-change-curve/

Levine, B. (2016, September 6). WIIFM

(Links to an external site.)

. *Smart Mouth Communications.* http://www.smartmouthcommunications.com/wiifm/