

Trafton International Management Consulting Group

How To Overcome Employee Resistance To Organizational Change Initiatives



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Employee resistance to change is something management should expect. Resistance is inevitable especially when the initiated change affects employees' emotional well-being and can lead to mistrust of management.

Organizations cannot stay resting on past successes to survive and hence change is unavoidable especially when companies have to face reality of competing in the new global economy. There are substantial reasons why organizations will initiate changes and some of these reasons could be financial realities and budget constraints, competition, obsolete or archaic technology, environmental and political pressure, obtaining relevancy, outdated structure and resources realignment, and perhaps when current business model is no longer sustainable with present realities.

In spite of all good intentions, most employees will still complain and resist change initiatives. Each organization is different and implementations of strategies are also different. There are steps management can take to reduce or minimize the level of resistance when new initiatives are implemented.

Step 1: Communication Strategy

Management need to create a good communication strategy to inform employees about impending new change initiatives that can affect their work to include how the change is going to impact them in a positive or negative way, why management is initiating the change, the process the change is going to take place, and who are the key management personnel that will provide timely updates. It is important to provide timely updates to employees in order to minimize rumors and uncertainties.

Step 2: Participation and Involvement

I believe it can be a misguided strategy for management to force change on employees rather than encouraging participation and involvement. Management should engage teams/groups in dialog about the organizational change, opportunities, ideas and solutions for the identified

challenges. They should set up focus teams to explore different ideas and make recommendations to management and it is important to incorporate some of their ideas and suggestions where appropriate. Organizations will achieve superior results from their change initiatives when employees are trustier of management and they are fully engaged.

Step 3: Build Alliance

Building alliances is very important in implementing change initiatives. Select employees, customers, and stakeholders as key change agents to help manage the planning and implementation of the change initiatives. Ensure to formulate a diverse group of people with different backgrounds, skills, talents, enthusiasms and common purpose. These are the folks that can take information back to their various departments and provide feedbacks that can enhance successful implementation of the change initiatives.

Step 4: Training

It is critical for management to provide the necessary resources, training, and support to implement the change initiatives. One of the training that is highly recommended is “group facilitation” which when conducted right can yield substantial dividends of full participation and involvement. In addition, ensure that all ideas are heard and everybody is treated with ultimate respect and dignity at all meetings.

Step 5: Set Key Milestones and Deliverables

Set some key milestones, deliverables and goals to measure success of the change initiatives. Start with deliverables that people can understand and follow. Create small wins with realistic achievable goals and most importantly disseminate performance report regularly and openly to all.

Step 6: Celebrate Success

It is essential that an organization that has successfully implemented their change initiative expresses sincere gratitude and appreciation in various ways of their choosing. Celebrate the implementation success with each employee who contributed to the success by acknowledging their contributions in front of their peers/entire staff, give them awards and tangible souvenir of success when budget allows, and financial reward if permitted by your organization.

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