

Unified effort the way for organisations to move forward

Debbie Nicol

August 31, 2014 Updated: August 31, 2014 02:44 PM



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In the western world of politics, decisions are made based on a democratic process. A vote is called and whoever wins is deemed to be the ruler. This is based on a presupposition that when the ruler speaks, others will listen, an ideal that worked some decades back yet does not suit the current and evolving world. Wherever one party wins the other will lose, with the resulting separation fuelling difference, contentious behaviour and revengeful intention.

Organisations can look to the political arena for dynamic case studies of how not to manage a workplace and other business environments. Organisations often find themselves in a similar situation where a new policy is handed down with force and expected to be "accepted". This method is no longer viable. When change is required in workplace practices and behaviours, forced introduction will yield resistance and separation, nurturing an "us" versus "them" culture, putting positive outcomes in jeopardy. To move towards unity throughout periods of transformation, substitute the "either or" mindset with one that has its roots in "not only but also". Here are some suggestions:

• Always provide reasons for change

Reasons provide substance to any request or explanation. Without reasons, there can be no understanding. Ask: is the reason to reduce the workforce for future efficiencies, thereby guaranteeing that operations can stay afloat through a difficult period?

Throughout a merger, when one company's HR department is integrated into the other, what good will be achieved from this? Could it capitalise on the efficiency of systems each company has and bring new solutions for the combined entity? How does the benefit outweigh the loss that will occur?

When the processes we apply need to be updated, how will the new process align to the customer's need? How will it make the work easier and less administrative?

A leader can maximise reasoning by using value-added words. For example, not only is the reason for the automation to minimise wasted resources, but also to offer greater convenience for customers.

• Long-term reasons demonstrate long-term perspectives

Reasons or rationale are part of a strategic change plan and will always have a "use by" date. If the world around is changing, it's logical to assume so too are the reasons for the need to change. Visions are anchors in business, and to reach them there will always be the need to tweak any

chosen path towards it in the event of unexpected factors impacting from outside. Therefore, reasons should be revisited to determine their continued relevance.

When sharing reasons, always find ways to link them to cause and effect, and consequences against the desired outcome. With one cause, a following effect will occur, which is really simply a consequence. How would a specific consequence either positively or negatively affect the realisation of the change itself? If the change is hindered, will the movement towards the vision be hindered?

Change is a process. The current state stops serving. Inputs are added. Progress is observed. Expectations are realigned. Improvements are made. Reasons influence. Outputs are measured. A new state is achieved.

For example, a leader may need to explain that the processes have changed not only for cost efficiency now, but also to become aligned with the new laws that will take effect a year from now and also the investors' long-term financial goals. By making this change now, it will be easier to keep an eye on the vision as you progress.

- **All hands on deck; everyone brings something to change**

Nobody can lead alone. As change is a leadership function, all hands must be on deck, in alignment and rowing the same way.

Methods to get this level of involvement may start with reasons, yet need much more to reach full engagement. Activities rooted in “exclusion” (policy announcement as blanket statements, evaluations with no two-way input, directives from above with no follow-up meeting) no longer facilitate engagement.

A leader should keep an eye open for resistance and interpret it as a probable barrier to change outcomes. Welcome it, understand it and manage it; don't seek to eradicate it. The resistance has been around much longer than the change itself; the change simply stimulated it to become more visible. Keep all eyes on the goal with a mindset of “not only” at the hands of the leadership, “but also” in the hands of all.

In summary, the attitude of ‘my way or the highway’ still exists in many corporate environments, yet has reached diminishing returns and succeeds less frequently in today's workplace. W Edwards Deming, a leadership guru, states that survival is a choice. Nothing or no one can survive in business in isolation, change included.

Debbie Nicol, the managing director of Dubai-based business en motion, is a consultant working with strategic change, leadership and organisational development. Email her at debbie.nicol@businessenmotion.com for thoughts about your corporate change initiative.

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