

Welcoming Change Management Engage Staff with the Right Information

“The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown.” H.P. Lovecraft

Change, by definition, is to make or become different. Sometimes by plan and sometimes by external influences, change is the one word that strikes fear in the most stalwart employee. It can damage their expectations of the future and lessen a sense of control in their work environment, causing anxiety and resistance. Although often a complex and difficult process— change is inevitable and frequently leads to progress.

Ideally your corporate values and vision of innovation are demonstrated in the day-to-day operation. But for change to be successful, your staff must support and participate in the plan, so the best thing is to be honest, transparent, and fair.

The right leadership reaction to anxiety and resistance is to listen with empathy

- People feel they are no longer able to operate as they had expected, and it's uncomfortable.
- Drastic or sudden change can impact the ability to process information. Some data indicates that attention spans shrink to just 12 minutes or less, and people only retain three main ideas.
- During your planning process, be aware that evolution in the workplace may be preceded by a sense that it is harmful to staff. Many will feel a sense of loss of control, culture, routine, predictability ... their comfort zone.

Lead with a combination of purpose and authenticity

- Break down changes into a series of simple steps and timetables.
- Keep messages concise and clear. Think about using graphics, visual aids, and analogies which can improve retention by more than 50%.
- Remind people of their role as an important part of the plan and wherever possible keep things familiar.
- Consider holding one-on-one or group meetings for feedback and to address concerns.
- Keep staff updated and clear up rumors. Know that other departments may also be experiencing disruptions.
- Show employees you appreciate their cooperation.
- Communicate, communicate, communicate

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