Module 13

Read Ahead

Positive Change Management
Module 13: Positive Change Management

Objectives

After attending the training in Module 13, participants will be able to:

1) know that leaders must exemplify the characteristics and actions they want in their employees
2) understand how organizational culture affects employee behavior
3) identify the stages of positive personal changes
4) be aware of techniques to promote personal change
5) understand that leaders are the key element in producing positive changes in organizational culture
6) understand the factors that promote or retard change

Introduction

Most people entering leadership do not suspect that creating positive change will be an important part of their jobs. Those who are already leaders may wish their organizations would change but have no idea how to go about making that change.

Humans resist change because it is hard to accomplish. Some of us have deep-seated beliefs that people cannot change much, if at all. Some feel that we can change but will invariably revert to our former, more comfortable habits. Some feel that we can change, but the level of difficulty might not be worth the effort. Our culture even has clichés that support the difficulty of making a personal change. Examples include “A leopard cannot change its spots.” or “You can’t teach an old dog a new trick.” In reality, changes can be made by dedicated people with proper motivation. The reasons cited above for not making changes are really only excuses for not taking responsibility for our lives, the direction we are headed, and the person we are becoming.

This module is about making two types of positive change. The first type involves changes to our lives to eliminate bad habits or weaker personality traits. The second type involves making positive changes in our work places and our organizations. Both types may be hard to accomplish, but the chances of success increase if you know how to make a change.

Stages in Making Personal Changes

Embracing change does not come naturally to human beings. But there is good news—accepting change is a learned behavior that can become second nature when practiced over time. James Hunter (How to Become a Servant Leader) outlines four stages that we go through to enact a major personal change. Once we are aware of the stages and see that we are in Stage I or Stage II, the following stages become easier to accomplish.
Stage I: Suffering (or Friction)
Most of us need some friction, pain, or discomfort to force us out of our comfort zones. If we are not feeling pain, there is rarely enough motivation for us to change. Pain does not need to be harsh but something that simply entices us to move forward.

Stage II: Insight
This is when we begin to see that change is possible because we see glimpses of how things may become better for us. We understand that we can choose to make the change.

Stage III: Having the Will
“Having the will” can be defined as combining our intentions with our actions. This is the point when we firmly commit to make changes and are willing to make the effort to align intentions with concrete actions. The opposite of “having the will” is knowing what is right but not doing what is right.

Stage IV: Change
When behaviors are practiced consistently over time, real and lasting change can occur. The reality is that lasting change usually comes incrementally. This reality is true for both good and bad habits.

A paraphrase of Hunter’s theory is that people change when they
• hurt enough that they have to change
• learn enough that they want to change
• gain the will and courage to do what is best for themselves and their organizations

Suggestions for Making Positive Personal Changes

In order to overcome the challenge of making a serious change in our lives, we need deep commitment and good knowledge of ways to make the change. Amy Simpson, with Real Simple magazine, offers the following practical tips for making a difficult personal challenge:

• “Find something or someone that makes change worth it.” The motivation must be more important than your habit, something you can think about when the going gets tough.

• “Make a firm decision to change and stick to it.” The decision must come from deep within you.

• “Change your friends and surroundings.” You must get away from those things that influence and encourage you in the wrong direction.

• “Change is gradual, be patient.” People who are patient and forgiving of themselves are more likely to break bad habits and addictions. They learn from their mistakes and move on.

• “Do not think you can do it by yourself; seek help.” To make drastic changes, you need encouragement, ideas, and support from family, loved ones, and friends.
• "A little success brings renewed hope." After a strong commitment to change, expect positive (not negative) things to begin to happen. They will give you a renewed sense of hope.

• "Help others get free from their bad habits." Investing time in others can help reinforce your new habits and give you a sense of purpose.

Making Positive Changes in Organizations

Harris Coaching (Sunday, June 6, 2010) provides a good overview of how leaders shape and enhance organizational performance. Most commonly, the organizational change initiative is directed at culture, where culture is defined as beliefs, values, and attitudes—what an organization and its employees believe in and accept as the norm. A change in culture is a primary way to change employee behavior. Leaders drive cultural change and are essential to it. They shape behavior through their values and through the decisions, priorities, and promotions they make. In other words, their values and priorities are directly tied to the rewards or punishments employees receive.

Leadership style is the most significant factor in employee behavior. The key to employee performance and job engagement is the frequency and quality of their interaction with a supervisor. This means leaders can become more effective and better managers if they learn how organizational culture, systems, processes, and communications influence employee behavior. Positive change efforts addressed at culture take a long time to become effective, but they are the best way to improve employee performance and enhance organization production.

Creating a Culture for Organizational Change

Scott Adams’ cartoon character “Dilbert” says: “Change is good, you go first.” This humorous statement underscores a key point--people do not resist change, they resist “being changed.” An important element in creating positive organizational change is changing the culture so individuals feel encouraged to change. The following list provides example strategies leaders can follow to lead change in an organization:

• Understand the history of the organization.
• Make personal changes before asking others to change.
• Develop trust with people in the organization.
• Solicit the support of “influencers” before the change is announced. Place the influencers in leadership positions.
• Announce the change with a well-planned meeting agenda.
• Encourage influencers to influence others informally. Show people how the change will benefit them. Give people ownership of the change.
• Periodically check the level of support.
Reasons People Resist Change

The leadership strategies in the previous paragraph are important in making a positive change, but it is important to remember that human nature resists such change. Understanding this resistance allows leaders to anticipate it and to prepare methods to cope with it. The following list provides examples of why resistance might occur:

- The followers do not respect the leader.
- If the leader is susceptible to personal criticism, positive change rarely results.
- Tradition may be a barrier to change.
- The purpose of the change is not clear.
- Change requires additional commitment.
- The followers’ comfortable, normal routine is disrupted.
- Change creates fear of the unknown.
- Change creates fear of failure or loss of something.
- The rewards do not match the required effort.
- Negative thinking prevents change from happening.
- Narrow-mindedness thwarts acceptance of new ideas.

Categories of Acceptance of Change in Organizations

When organizational change occurs, there are varying levels of acceptance. The following table shows the categories of acceptance and how those in each category typically react. Knowledge of the categories allows leaders to anticipate reactions and plan how to deal with them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Typical Reaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Innovators (dreamers)</td>
<td>They are the originators of new ideas but are not generally acknowledged as leaders or policy makers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early adopters (know a good idea when they see it)</td>
<td>Their opinions are respected in the organization. Even though they didn’t develop the change, they will try to convince others to accept it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Adopters (the majority)</td>
<td>They respond to the opinions of others. Generally, they are reasonable in analyzing new ideas but inclined to maintain the status quo. They are easily influenced by positive and negative influences in the organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Adopters (last group to endorse)</td>
<td>They often speak against proposed changes and may never verbally acknowledge acceptance. Generally, they will adopt changes if the majority demonstrates support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laggards (always against change)</td>
<td>Their commitment is to the status quo and the past. Often, they try to create division within the organization.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Leaders in Trouble

A leader who ignores human nature does not understand the role of organizational culture and prefers an authoritative, top-down management style that is likely to create frustration. This type of leader is easy to spot because she or he exhibits several of the twelve indicators listed below. Note that five of them (marked with asterisks) involve a lack of willingness to deal with change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lacks imagination</th>
<th>Does not understand people</th>
<th>Will not take risks*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feels secure and satisfied*</td>
<td>Flies into rages</td>
<td>Is insecure and defensive*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is totally inflexible*</td>
<td>Has no team spirit</td>
<td>Is not organized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passes the buck</td>
<td>Has personal problems</td>
<td>Fights change*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Change Quotes

“We must become the change we want to see.” -- **Mahatma Gandhi**

“A year from now you may wish you had started today.” -- **Karen Lamb**

“When in doubt, choose change.” -- **Lily Leung**

“You miss 100 percent of the shots you don’t take.” -- **Wayne Gretzky**

“Should you find yourself in a chronically leaking boat, energy devoted to changing vessels is likely to be more productive than energy devoted to patching leaks.” -- **Warren Buffett**

“Don’t say you don’t have enough time. You have exactly the same number of hours per day that were given to Helen Keller, Pasteur, Michelangelo, Mother Teresa, Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas Jefferson, and Albert Einstein.” -- **H. Jackson Brown, Jr. Life’s Little Instruction Book**

“By changing nothing, nothing changes.” -- **Tony Robbins**

“Today is the first day of the rest of your life.” Anonymous

“All great changes are preceded by chaos.” Deepak Chopra

“If you always do what you always did, you always get what you always got.” Anonymous
References


Maxwell, John, *How Successful People Think: Change Your Thinking, Change Your Life*. Center Street (Hachette Brook Group), 2009.
