

Team Building

Teams and Change

- **Organizational Change**

As organizations discover the benefits of having people at all levels work together in teams, organizational cultures are undergoing a change from only valuing individual contributions to valuing both individual and team contributions.

Most teamwork involves change, and change is seldom easy. It is unlikely that anyone will figure out how to change an organization without asking its people to change as well. Therefore we must all be sensitive to the problems that people will have with any change that affects them.

1. **Keep in mind some of the “laws” of organizational change:**

People don’t resist change; they resist being changed

- The best way to get people to dig in their heels is to give them an arbitrary mandate to change
- To ensure their cooperation, it is vital to involve people in every step of a change effort: clearly identifying the need for a change, planning and implementing the change, monitoring and acting on the results
- Ask for their opinions
- What do they fear?
- What do they hope will happen?
- What suggestions can they make to ensure the success of the effort?

2. Things are the way they are simply because they got that way

- Somebody, sometime, had to write the outdated policy or create the problem-plagued methods that you are working with.
- Remember that there were probably good reasons for doing things that way when the system was established.
- Therefore, it helps to understand the history behind any problem before you attempt to change it.

3. Unless things change, they are likely to remain the same

- As long as people continue to do things the way they've always done them, you'll continue to get the results you've always gotten.
- If you want improvement, people will need to change the way they work.
- An exception to this law is that things left unattended or unimproved will change – for the worse.
- However, do not mistake attention and improvement with tampering. Are you improving a process or are you just tampering?
- Tampering is worse than inattention.
- Pay attention to systems; improve them, but don't tamper with them. If it isn't broken, be careful about fixing it!

4. Change would be easy if it weren't for all the people.

- There are other versions of this law: “management would be easy if it weren't for all the employees,” and “Business would be easy if it weren't for all the customers.”
- The message in the irony of these statements is that people are the organization; and the organization is there for the customers.
- Therefore: Pay attention to the people as well as the systems.
- Listen to them.
- Listening to employees and customers before problems arise makes any change go more smoothly.

- **Break Down Barriers**

There are several common problems you will run into when attempting to change an organization. People will often be afraid of having their security or position put at risk. The following guidelines will help you surface, identify, and overcome these barriers as the process unfolds.

1. Identify informal networks

- Imagine your company as a small town
- Along with its official work system, it has a social system – a loose network of small groups of people.
- These groups offer their members support and friendship.
- Loyalty to these groups may be stronger than loyalty to the company.
- Informal groups have their own leaders and “rules” that can determine, for example, the pace of work or the relationship with the boss.
- If the informal organization and its leaders accept a proposed change, events will proceed more smoothly; if they are opposed, change may be nearly impossible.
- Identify the informal leaders.
- Get to know them.
- Spend time listening to them.
- When you understand their needs and concerns, you will understand how the changes you seek might be fashioned.

2. Build a Critical mass

- To get any idea rolling, you need to build understanding and enthusiasm.
- When the idea is supported by a sufficient number of diverse people, it reaches a “critical mass.”
- It takes off under its own steam, giving the impression of a growing movement and a sense of momentum.
- The size of the critical mass can vary from just a few key people to the whole company.
- In the early stages of change, the critical mass builds as key opinion leaders shift from neutral positions to more supportive ones, or form resistance to neutrality.

- When planning a change, identify these key opinion leaders – both in the formal and informal networks.
- Find out how you can sway their opinions: What are their concerns?
- If they see a risk, what is the source of the risk?
- Find out what their needs are, and how their needs can be met and incorporated into the implementation plan.
- Do they need to see an idea in action?
- Do they need to see data you have already collected?
- Do they need to talk to the people involved in the change?

3. Create emotional acceptance

- Since people resist being changed, any organizational change is a campaign for their hearts as well as their minds.
- Even when there is a lot of detailed planning and communication, very little actually happens as a result of a solely rational, logical process.
- Change happens because people as a group commit to it.
- You will need creative, thinking people to successfully implement a major change.
- Talk to the people who will be involved in or affected by a change.
- Include them in decisions about the change whenever possible.
- Help them to understand the need the change.
- They need a clear picture of what the future will be like, and an answer to the question: “How will work be different?”
- Listen and respond to their needs, fears, desires, and concerns about change.
- Make accommodations as necessary.

4. Treat change like a courtship

- Approach any change as you would a courtship, slowly and with a sense of surprise.
- “Woo” the people.
- Listen to them.
- Be responsive to their concerns.
- When change represents a new lifestyle for people, they need time to warm up to and experiment with it.
- Permit them to be inelegant and to make mistakes.
- Help the organization stretch itself, but not too much at a time.
- An idea approached as an experiment may be accepted more readily than one imposed as a permanent change.

5. Anchor the change

- The individuals or groups on the cutting edge of change will often feel isolated or inadequate.
- Combat such feelings by providing support and guidance.
- Help them feel anchored to the direction and mainstream activities of the company.
- With a well-connected network of activity, the people implementing change will become part of a common effort to learn and change.
- If a group falters, let it know that help is at hand.

Onion Patch Strategy

What do you do if no one will listen, if you're having trouble getting the attention of the people on high, feeling like a “lonely little petunia in an onion patch”?

Our advice: Think big but stay close to your roots.

Select change efforts within your control. Make certain they will capture the attention of people at least two links up the chain of command. Look for opportunities with big dollar implications, such as reduced waste or increased revenue. Focus on getting results that others, even skeptics, will respect. Involve fellow workers in your

efforts, sharing credit for a successful job. Slowly build a network of supporters.

Be patient. Be persistent. When someone expresses interest, be prepared to provide more information and detail about the implications. Identify the most common question or objections and have the answers at hand. Communicate success stories.

Note: The above discussion about organizational change relates directly to business organizations. However, many of the basic premises apply to Lions Volunteer activities and team building challenges.