

Successful change of behavior:

“Success comes from the inside and the heart”

Changing habits and behavior of people is in any circumstance complex as it takes them out of their comfort zone into the unknown, and that’s scary. We feel comfortable with what we know, what we have learned, what we do and how we do it. Routine is the single most important factor in our lives. It gives us security and stability. As long as we do things as we know them, we are out of danger.

This very fundamental and strong belief is embedded in our genes. From an anthropological point of view we are “designed” to survive, so why leave the cave and expose ourselves to wild animals, enemy tribes and unpredictable nature if the cave gives us protection and security? In modern live we still get very stressed if we are obliged to step out of our routine, like when we buy a new house, a baby gets born or we have to change work. Anybody can tell that we get very excited and that both positive and negative emotions can play up and sky rocket.

So emotions have something to do with change. They are “indicators” that routine is broken. When we are in a routine mode, our emotions are not playing up and we are pleasantly at work. But as soon as we observe any change in routine, like an angry boss is shouting at us, a machine failure that needs immediate action or a new colleague showing up, our brains and body react to that change in our daily pattern, producing emotions that originally were designed to help us survive. So they can work as blockers or can make us move, taking us beyond routine behavior.

The good news for all managers is that you can learn to recognize and control your emotions as being a “product of the brain” and this is a key success factor for change in your company. You **can teach your team to deliberately create the right mindset for change**, making them understand where beliefs, feelings and thoughts come from and how you can influence them. That sounds easy, but are you the right teacher?

Only trust and faith in you will move your tribe, leaving the cave and following you to (learn) new behaviors.

You need to be a good manager and a better leader and communicator, able to create trust by being transparent and open minded, but above all you need to be able to understand other people’s situation and feelings. So you must also be a very good listener. If you have the empathy to do that, you will be successful in teaching your team to understand what’s going on in their minds and they will trust you to lead them through change to good organizational performance.

The difficulty with empathy is that people can see if it exists or not because they have long antennas to perceive real empathy or faked behavior. If in reality you see yourself at the top of the pile, trying to impose your views and project your interpretations onto people, they will become very unhelpful and your change will fail, as nobody will follow you, even if your vision and strategy are very strong.

On the other hand, you certainly do need authority. Even better, you need to be authorized **and sponsored** because, though people might believe in you, they may not believe in your top management, and clear management support is the third essential success factor for change. Only if **the whole management line is strongly and visibly engaged with the process of change**, do you have a chance of getting it done.

Only 30% of all change projects, measured against original objectives, are successful and they all have in common a deep understanding of the emotional side of change, strong, open and honest leadership and the highest degree of real management involvement.

As CM consultants, we can be involved in the earliest stage of vision and strategy development as well as putting in place methodology, structure, project management, design and execute communications and -training and help stay on track which is all much needed and also key to success, but the real drivers for successful CM come from the inside and the heart.

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