

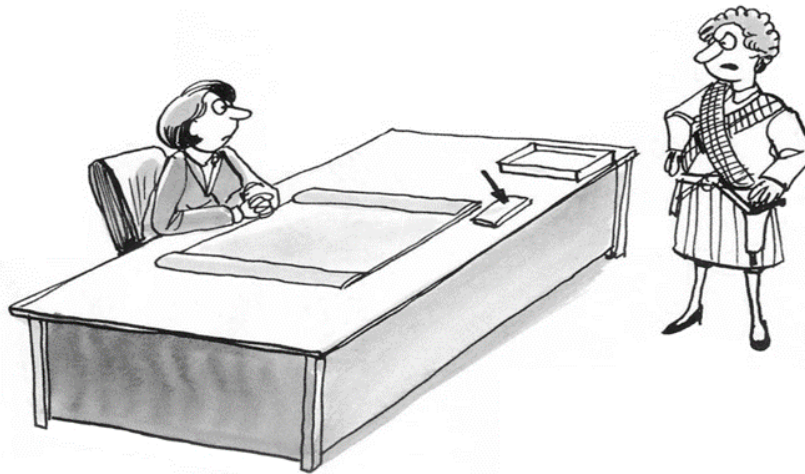
INTERSECTIONS

INSIGHTS

Fourteenth Edition

Can There be Change if There is no Trust?

That question can be answered with a very cautious yes BUT...



“My approach tends to be revolutionary.”

Because trust is an essential ingredient in any long-term relationship; personal, professional or political, the use of revolutionary instead of evolutionary means to coerce and manipulate change, means that extended-term success is jeopardized. In the short-term, for an organizational change management program that has limited internal scope and needs to happen quickly, the lack of trust can be overcome with a few elements in place such as the following:

- The change is very specific, has a short-term focus and affects a small number of internal staff
 - The sponsors of change have a great deal of control and power over the outcome
 - The sponsors of change can use both explicit and implicit coercion effectively

If the three criteria listed above are present, change without trust may appear to be successful in the short-run. However, even then, be assured that without trust and time for the changes to root, there will be issues and subversive resistance tactics that emerge and may adversely affect the longer-term success of the change project. If the change affects a number of different stakeholders, including clients, trust is essential.

Can There be Change if There is no Trust?

I believe that to increase the effectiveness of longer-term transformational change; trust is a critical ingredient. Don't come out with both guns blazing and expect the staff to dance to the tune of your bullets and not see backlash.

What is trust and how is it manifested? One Google definition of trust that resonates with me is “a firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something.” A measure of trust, designed by Charles H. Green, called the [trust quotient \(TQ\)](#) is a formula that uses some of these same concepts and is comparable to the idea of the [net promoter score](#); giving a quantitative score to qualitative measurements. The TQ can be used as a benchmark to define trustworthiness. I like thinking about this formula when managing change as it puts the most important elements for a successful organizational change front and center.

The Trust Equation has one variable in the denominator, self-orientation and three in the numerator; credibility, reliability and intimacy (feeling safe). Increasing the value of the factors in the numerator increases the value of trust. Increasing the value of the denominator — self-orientation — decreases the value of trust. The most heavily weighted factor here is self-orientation. The self-knowledge of the change manager and sponsors is critical for gaining and keeping trust in a change management project. The type of self-orientation that works the best to increase trustworthiness is one that puts others first, does the right thing, in the right way and compensates for weaknesses. The change managers and sponsors' ego should be sublimated to the staffs' needs so that the trust factor increases, as does the likelihood for the success of the desired change.

From my perspective, there are five polarities to keep in mind that can help to develop trust and achieve a positive change experience:

- Communicating is better than dictating
- Education is better than intimidation
- Visibility is better than obfuscation
- Coaching/ Training is better than neglect, forget and hope
- Negotiation is better than altercation

In today's corporate world where change is constant and community, negotiation and collaboration are essential; try garnering trust before initiating a change. Keep your guns in their holster and you can expect the staff to dance to a tune that reverberates with them and supports a positive longer-term transformational change experience.

Let me know your thoughts on change!

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