

SIX LAYERS OF RESISTANCE: THE KEY TO UNLOCKING RAPID AND SUSTAINABLE CHANGE WITH PEOPLE

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Change within an organisation is difficult, time consuming and often fails. Often there is a failure to work through the change process and progress the personal thinking of the individuals involved.

Layer 0. Why change?

"If you want enemies, try to change something." – Woodrow Wilson

It is very easy to get people into the lifeboats if they can see the ship is sinking. It is somewhat harder to get them to pay attention and practice the manoeuvre when the weather is clear and the bar is open.

The most basic question anyone asks themselves and others when they are faced with the prospect of change is: "Why change?" Individuals will not involve themselves in moving away from their current situation unless there is a compelling reason to do so. These reasons will vary from person to person. One person may be sufficiently inspired or concerned so as to agree that there is a need for change, whereas the person next to them can hear the same explanation but, due to their different experiences and motivational needs, arrives at an entirely different conclusion.

If a person does not see that there is a need to change, it is basically impossible and a waste of time to proceed any further down the path of introducing change or discussing what the change(s) could be. Likewise, with a group there must be a minimum critical mass of opinion leaders who have come to the conclusion that a change away from the current situation is desirable. The conversation will need to continue until agreement is reached that there is a need to change. Thus Layer 0 has been passed through.

Layer 1. Disagreeing on the nature of the problem

"When both logic and intuition agree, you are always right." – unknown

Agreement has been reached that the current situation cannot continue. The next stage of resistance to be faced is to gain a consensus and agreement on the nature of the problem that is causing the current situation to exist and persist. Most people will have experienced a variety of negative effects due to the current situation and have an equally diverse set of opinions as to the causes of the problems.

One organisation I lead had definitely agreed that the situation had to change. The sales organisation saw the problem as being the manufacturing group. The manufacturing group saw the problem as being poor

analysis with the group is the methodology to build buy-in and support to help people move through Layer 1.

Layer 2. Disagreeing on the nature of a solution

"It is more important to know where you are going than to get there quickly. Don't mistake activity for achievement." – unknown

Just as there are many opinions as to the problem that is being experienced, there are usually just as many opinions as to what should be done about it. If Layer 1. has been transited successfully, the range of opinions about the solution will have narrowed substantially. There will still be many characteristics of a good

solution that different people desire. The objective of this phase of the analysis is to improve the solution as it stands, so that it increases the number of desirable features that will be delivered by its implementation. This builds buy-in for the solution amongst the people involved and affected.

Layer 3. The proposed solution has undesirable side-effects

"The chief cause of problems is solutions." – Severeid's Law

Layer 3. is the domain of the cynic, the saboteur, the disillusioned and the disenfranchised. By this stage you have agreed that change is necessary, you have agreed on the problem, and on a solution that will solve that problem. From the back of the room a voice is raised. The long-serving and quiet icon of the department gains everyone's attention. They have survived numerous administrations and change programs. Everyone turns to listen to them and they speak 'That's all very well, BUT.....' and out comes a side-effect of your solution that is so damaging that it will kill the solution that has been developed and cuts down all of the great work that has been done so far.

But no! Layer 3 thrives on the input of the naysayer and the sceptic. We need their sceptic



sales forecasting and procurement policies. The purchasing group was usually blamed by everyone. Engineering thought the problem was a lack of people to develop new models and the inability of marketing to make a decision in a timely manner.

This is just a snapshot of the generalised disagreement amongst the group. The skills required to perform an analysis of the situation with the group is a special skill.

The outcome is either the discovery of a root cause of the major symptoms that people are experiencing, or the exposing of a conflict between well-intentioned people who are forced to behave in such a way as to cause problems within the organisation. Building this

ticism to save us from our enthusiasm. The surfacing of the negative side effects of our solution needs to be encouraged and supported, not suppressed. Suppression will split the group and may well mean that valid concerns are not expressed and dealt with.

Our objective here is to have everyone express the things that can go wrong with the solution and then be actively involved in finding additional activities that can occur to eliminate the possible negative side effects.

By doing this, we strengthen the solution and build continued buy-in by all the people involved. Examining these issues whilst it is all still theoretical is very powerful as it is easier to deal with problems when they are abstract rather than when you are under pressure halfway through an implementation. Layer 3. is passed through.

Layer 4. There are obstacles to implementing the proposed solution

“Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off the goal.” – Hanna More

In Layer 4, we are now turning towards the

implementation of the solution. We may all agree and support what needs to be done, however, there can be barriers from external sources or other areas that we perceive as preventing the implementation of our solution. Once again, we want to encourage everyone in the group to raise any possible obstacle to implementation and for the group to design a solution to the obstacle. Our goal is to have the group so confident in the complete and detailed solution plan that they can't wait to implement.

A group I worked with was prevented from implementing a solution because of the way their performance was measured. The performance measures that were in place forced them to do the exact opposite of what was agreed upon as the best solution for the business. This was raised as an obstacle and the performance measures (that were outside their control) were changed. Buy-in was achieved and the solution progressed.

Layer 5. Un-verbalised fear

“It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare. It is because we do not dare they are difficult.” – Seneca

Layer 5 is a complex layer and not always

encountered. Sometimes there remains a fear or concern that has not been verbalised. Reconnecting with the individual involved and stepping through the layers of resistance once more to surface where the un-verbalised fear is lying and to help the person express it and then deal with that concern is necessary.

True buy-in

Ownership is the essential transition point for a solution to move from interesting to having complete buy-in by the individuals and groups involved. All throughout the analysis and discussion to explore and move through the layers of resistance we are progressively building buy-in and at some point the people move to owning the solution.

Implementation becomes much easier and faster the greater the level of buy-in from the people affected.

This article is an expansion on the concepts first developed by the late Eli Goldrat and his work called the ‘Theory of Constraints’. Jason Furness is the CEO of TheManufacturingMentor.com. For more information call 1300 226 121, email Jason@TheManufacturingMentor.com or visit www.TheManufacturingMentor.com. mhd



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