

"Resistance to Change? Not in my Company!"

Dear Small Business Owner:

This month we'll tackle one of those recurring challenges in business--trying to implement change in our companies.

Have you ever tried to implement change in your organization and encountered heavy resistance? You felt like the people resisting were just doing it to slow progress, to keep things the same? Generally, the reaction is to blame the people who are resisting.

Below I will offer some alternative ways to approach roadblocks that are encountered when trying to implement something new.¹

1. Increase Communication about What and Why.

As the leader, you may have processed over and over what you want to change. But, the rest of your company needs to hear in detail what is being considered and also why things are being changed. People's jobs may be affected in ways that you never considered. Discussion that involves complaints or very "charged" discussion is good because it keeps the conversation flowing.



Be open to hearing their feedback and see it as knowing the issues before they happen.

2. Adjust the Change.

Even though it may be frustrating, resistance can lead to better results. People who are outspoken about their objections are often those who genuinely care about getting things right and can recognize a plan's pitfalls. When you delve into objections,



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you may realize that there is another way to solve the issue without as radical a change as was originally planned.

3. Work for Buy-in.

When you initially meet with staff to talk about potential changes, take careful note of everyone's pushback. Be careful not to dismiss any feedback, realizing it gives you valuable information. Categorize these items into a) concerns and b) ideas. Research the issues that were raised and bring them back to the staff in follow-up meetings with suggested work-arounds. This will foster cooperation with your employees when they realize they were heard and their objections considered.



4. Consider Historical Baggage.

As employees listen to new proposals, they remember previous experiences that may not have gone well. People expect history to repeat itself. Failures in past change efforts may have created ill will, questionable situations, or other negative perceptions in employees' minds. Beware that things you don't know about may impact your plans even though they have nothing to do with it. You may have to fix old problems first!



Be careful not to read all resistance to change as a problem. Show a receptiveness to feedback that will model a productive reaction to resistance. This will go a long way in helping your staff learn how to work better together as they improve the company.

Happy changing!

Sincerely,
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ⁱ Some content taken from *Harvard Business Review*, April 2009