



Management and Performance Associates | March 2013

Initiate changes....and enjoy it

Reflect upon a recent past situation where you initiated a change.

Let's exclude external changes such as your company moving its corporate office from downtown to the suburbs and focus on changes where you were the author, director and protagonist of something that you had to change, i.e. tired of bad results, you decided to replace the current catering service from a contracted company to a cooperative organized by employees. Let's reflect on the change.

What were the triggers?

Had you just had enough of poor results? Was it a strong desire to align the task with your motivational profile (in other words did you make it more fun)? Was it the conviction that things can and should be done in a different way? Or was it the result of an unambiguous satisfaction survey you initiated?

How did you feel during the process?

Changes provoke moments of reward and skepticism, regardless of who initiated the process. It is important to recognize that both are real, and to explore the feelings that are provoked.

What have you learned from the process?

Change is hard, even change started by ourselves. Change is complex, it impacts economies and emotions, but it can also lead to growth if we take the opportunity to learn from it. The more people we affect, the larger the concerns will become, but with that also comes a learning opportunity. Don't miss the learning opportunity presented by each change.

How do you feel now?

Keep momentum, even if the change doesn't feel as great as you thought it would. Reflect

upon any adjustments that might be needed to arrive at your original goal.

You may remember a time where your company decided to combine two areas in order to obtain synergy. We've all seen areas being merged and others closed. We've seen our jobs change and even disappear. We've seen colleagues and bosses transferred to far away countries, sometimes without a clue it was going to happen. We've seen happy and sad faces. We've seen gossip through the informal chain of communication, some contradicting the previous gossip. We've been witness and protagonist to power struggles. We've communicated a lot, a little, or not at all, and we haven't received any information in return. Nothing is what it once was; the world changes and we are all impacted by the change.

Sometimes people associate change with an external trigger or event. That isn't necessarily true. The day-to-day routine, both in our personal and professional lives, provides a great starting point for change. Just look around and observe the *status quo*, something that does not change, and seems etched in stone, regardless of whether it's useful. What about the sacred cows—those untouchables that are there because they have always been there, in spite the fact that nobody can give an explanation as to why?

Isn't it time to – at least – try to change the status quo?

Let's examine some guidelines:

1 | Change has two legs

If we have the intention to create a positive effect on others, please do not forget to move ahead with two legs when starting a change process:



The rational leg:

Change must be well communicated, and even over communicated. People need to know the “Why” and the “How.” Do not assume that it is understood and accepted. Ask, clarify, and then ask again.

The emotional leg:

Change always affects people emotionally (including ourselves). A lot of empathy is needed. Do not assume that the other person is willing and able to do it. Stay close. Ask. Involve. Listen. Monitor. Be sure they are able.

2 | Change has a cost

There will always be a cost to you and/or to others—material, emotional or interpersonal. Every change reminds us of the double entry method in accounting: there is a debit for each credit. Understand how the change you propose affects people’s feelings. Observe, question, and analyze what works and what doesn’t. Are there unintended consequences? What are the material and emotional costs? Stay close to people and listen to them. Most of the time, they have their own solution.

3 | There is a reason for changing

Change has a reason to be put in place. It may not be evident and it may not be easy to explain, therefore your challenge is to:

- A | Identify the “why.”
- B | Communicate it.
- C | Ensure understanding.

People cannot go through a change process without understanding its rationale.

Remember that when the rationale for change is not clearly communicated, the status quo will quickly return to its original position.

4 | Change is renovation

Positive modifications to the status quo will bring a generalized feeling of wellbeing. The status quo is extremely rigid and respected. Don’t be afraid to rock the boat and initiate the needed changes, but you should expect distress in others. Allow yourself to innovate and think differently. If you’re not sure about the “what” or “how,” check the environment, talk to your team, to your boss, and your clients. Don’t think that because you have designed the current status quo it doesn’t need adaptation. Enjoy designing and implementing change. It will be a breath of fresh air.

5 | There is no change without risk

We all know the three types. Some will resist change, whining about whoever started it, undervaluing what was gained and overvaluing what was lost. Some will follow, just waiting to see what happens. Some will lead. Obviously it is naive to think that everybody will be part of the last group. Your challenge is to assume the risk of questioning the status quo and ensure that others follow the process, until you reach success. Seth Goden is a marketing guru who recently wrote the book, “The Icarus Deception”, He states that *“If your new business plan disrupts an industry or pisses a lot of people off, there’s a good chance you’re on to something good. You should worry more when nobody’s talking.”*

6 | Humor challenges the status quo

The New Yorker magazine only illustrates its articles with cartoons. One of its great cartoonists is Liza Donnelly. In a short 6.43 minute Ted Talk Liza explains how humor uses tradition and reality to get information, and then twists it to provoke a laugh. She invites us to use humor to challenge the status quo and to trigger change. Her presentation demonstrates how humor may empower women to change the expectations



we have about them. Please click on the link on the left to watch the video:

- http://www.ted.com/talks/liza_donnelly_drawing_upon_humor_for_change.html

**What about you? What are you waiting for?
Challenge your situation.**

**See you next time. We welcome your
feedback.**

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