

"Ask the Leadership Consultant" *

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Question:

"I have been involved in a number of organizations that have suddenly instituted some new ideas and strategies over the past few years. However, there is always great resistance and most of them fail to produce positive results. What is the problem here?"

Answer: The first thing to understand is that it is *human* to resist change. Because some change is good and some can be very negative, most of us are leery of change. But you used a key word here that is at the core of your organization's problems. You said, "suddenly instituted"...

It happens a hundred times every day. An executive or management team discovers or formulates a new initiative. They devise, and then implement the idea thinking, "wow...is this a great strategy." When it is finally introduced, they wonder why it is not welcomed or enthusiastically accepted. They question why there is reluctance, resistance and negative thinking about what is potentially a sound idea or new program. They feel a need to resort to threats, intimidation or financial incentives to get everyone to "buy-in" and promote the new concept. But what they fail to understand is that the problem isn't with the people, the problem is with their dysfunctional management methods. By lacking modern leadership skills, they brought this reaction upon *themselves* and only have themselves to blame!

In autocratic organizations the leader(s) can suddenly announce a new idea or concept and push it through by sheer force or intimidation. Of course the price that autocratic organizations pay is that there is constant turnover, executives must be overpaid to remain, and over time about ½ of the customers or followers leave so there must be constant recruitment of new people. For as many people who enter the front door of the organization, an equal number are leaving through the back door because they are discouraged or disgusted. Thankfully autocratic organizations are in decline because of what I just described.

Most organizations today are more committee and team-based as part of their structure. But many of them still *retain* an autocratic approach to implementing powerful new ideas or a new strategy. When these are "suddenly" announced to a team-based structure they automatically produce massive resistance. Here is why. In our Western culture today leaders must get everyone involved at the *earliest* stage possible. The earlier you get everyone involved the greater the "buy-in" you will receive.

When a new strategy or idea is *suddenly* announced after being constructed behind closed doors by an elite few, those who will be asked to make it happen are naturally shocked and alienated. What happened to the concept of teamwork? Why wasn't greater input from more people respected enough to be involved in the process?

It is also interesting to note that after a new strategy or idea is suddenly announced that *teamwork* and *commitment* is also suddenly of vast importance to those who created it. Those who don't

immediately embrace the change are labeled as not being “team players” and resisting a great new concept. But where was the *commitment to teamwork* earlier in the formulation of the idea? Those who are expected to make the change happen have a wealth of ideas and experience. They are usually closer to the needs of the customer or the service you provide. They will be able to point out flaws in the original concept so it can avoid becoming destructive. Their input at the *earliest* stages will make the new idea or strategy stronger, better and more successful!

The bottom line is that if you claim to be a team-based organization, you need to get more people involved from the very beginning. You need to *stop* creating and instituting dramatic change from behind closed doors and introducing it suddenly. If you really want success for a new idea or strategy you must be transparent, inclusive and informative from the earliest stages. If not... you can expect constant tension and resistance that will eventually lead to the erosion of trust toward the leadership.

If you have a challenging question you would like our consultant to discuss, please email your question [here](#). We will be happy to keep your question anonymously.

*** The advice and counsel offered by the consultant is based on the limited information provided by the questioner. No two situations are exactly the same, and the consultant makes every effort to provide helpful and educational counsel based on the information supplied.**

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