

Communicating Change

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The Change Adventure

Change is happening---and the pace of change is accelerating.

Change is an adventure---a journey filled with uncertainty, emotional angst, operational turmoil and painful surprises. Anticipating those changes and responding with enthusiasm can be---with the right “change mindset”--- a joy for the management team. Change Leaders---those who see change coming, who love the opportunities change offers and who “create the future”---will flourish.

But change is all about uncertainty and uncertainty is scary for those who are being impacted by the change. Change and the possibility of change make The Impacted cautious, twitchy, negative and combative. The Impacted cling to *What Is* because they know “what is”, have adjusted to “what is” and have accepted that “what is” is effortless, pain free and good enough.

The challenge for Changers is to make The Impacted receptive to change and to make the changes made---STICK.

And Job One of “doing change right” is understanding the five parts of the Change Journey.....

The Change Journey

Managers and Boards who’ve done change right appreciate that every change involves a five step process.

Step One---Identify and Prioritize Change Possibilities. Change leaders know lots of things need changing. They identify the change possibilities, prioritize and communicate the list and the priorities---and listen for feedback.

Step Two---Approve the Change. Feedback is collected, pondering takes place and the changes are approved---and the what, why, why not and how are communicated and feedback is collected.

Step Three---Make the Change. The changes are undertaken, the process is communicated---and feedback is collected.

Step Four---Debrief the Changes. Input is collected and ponder gets done---and insights are communicated and feedback is collected.

Step Five---Changing the Changes. After doing the debrief and pondering the feedback, the changes are “tweaked” as needed---and the what, why, why not, how and when of “the tweaks are communicated and feedback is collected.

To be effective, each of these steps needs to be properly communicated.

Here’s how.

Start With---A Philosophy

People need to know what needs changing, why it’s needed, why it’s NOT needed, how it’ll happen and what’ll be done if the change doesn’t work. These people---The Impacted---want info.

THEREFORE---A philosophy of “change communication” is needed. Simple. Easy to remember. Easy to explain. Easy to publish. Easy to follow. Here’s a powerful “first principle” when a change is considered, approved, executed, debriefed or modified---
Because those who are impacted by a change in operations, policy, administration or governance (The Impacted) are entitled to KNOW, to be HEARD and to be ANSWERED, those who make the changes (The Changers) will tell lots of people, LOTS, early and often, encourage feedback and will change The Change if more change is needed.

A communications philosophy is a “must have” BEFORE Changers start making changes. It’s the roadmap needed to ensure RECEPTIVITY and STICK.

Who Does the Communicating

Spokesmen are needed to communicate the changes and to engage The Impacted in reasoned conversation. There are Formal Spokesmen---those “insiders” who speak for The Club---including the G.M., Supervisors, the Board of Directors and every member of every Committee. And there are Informal Spokesmen---members and staffers who are key influencers, the Alpha Dogs and Queen Bees of the club community, who are outside the formal chain of command but are visible, listened to and believed by the general membership.

All of these spokesmen need to be educated in “right communications” and energized to deliver The Message with enthusiasm and conviction. They need to KNOW the whats, whys, why nots, hows and whens of the changes being made. They need to have ANSWERS to all the questions that might get asked. They need to be practiced in the art of “verbal repartee”, armed to defend themselves when The “Impassioned Impacted” get agitated. And they need to be BUZZED about the future those changes will help create.

Identifying and educating The Spokesmen needs to be done consciously and methodically. Doing “spokesmen” right is the foundation of change communications.

Who Needs to Hear “What’s Happening”

Everyone impacted by the change---directly or indirectly---needs to hear The Message. These people, The Impacted, include ALL the committees, ALL the members and their families (their Support Network), ALL the staff and their families (their Support Network) and all the neighbors who’ll be impacted by the change.

CAUTION---because each of these stakeholders “hears” differently, the tactics for delivering The Change Message need to be customized and personalized for each of these stakeholder groups.

And.....if there’s EVER a question about who is or is not one of The Impacted, The Changers need to err on the side of caution and assume that the “questionable” are in fact Stakeholders in the change adventure. Too many who “know the facts” is far better than too few!!!

Why The Impacted Aren’t Hearing

Changers often say that The Impacted aren’t listening to the message they’re delivering. Knowing “why” they’re not receptive will help The Changers create tactics for over-coming the “No-Hear” mindset.

For Example-----They don’t care about what’s happening. They don’t want to hear what’s being said. They’re hearing what they fear and have wax in their ears. They’re too busy to listen closely. The wrong messaging medium’s being used. The message is confusing, needlessly complex or misleading. Bad “change experiences” in the past have made the Stakeholders suspicious. They don’t like the people proposing the changes. Or---they’re just curmudgeonly negative types who’ll never say ‘yes’ because NO feels better.

It’s critical that Changers know why The Impacted aren’t listening---and consciously develop strategies and tactics for capturing their engagement.

Big Wants of The Impacted

The Impacted have wants when it comes to Change Communications.

The Impacted want INSIGHT. They want to know the What, the Why, the Why Not, the When and the How of the changes being considered and they want it all explained clearly and simply. They want to be convinced that the changes are important, needed and timely and that the pain they'll experience and the angst they'll feel is worth the trauma they'll experience. They want The Changers to be up front and honest about possible downsides to the changes and they want to be told what'll be done if those changes go negative. And they want The Changers to communicate enthusiasm and emotion for the changes they're pursuing.

The Impacted want INPUT. They want to be heard during each step of the change journey. They *hunger* for two way communications, for an interactive exchange of ideas and comments. The Impacted want to hear from The Changers directly---eye-to-eye, in the hallways, on the first tee, in the bar, in locker room and in the parking lot. They want to see that their ideas have been communicated to others. And they want to know that their input has been digested by The Changers.

The Impacted want INSIGHTS and INPUT. Tactics are needed.

Here are a few.....

The Communications Package

Change receptivity---the "softening" of opposition---requires communication. A package of tactics is needed for use during each of the five stages of The Change Journey. This communications Package consists of The Yap, The Scribble and The Visual.

The Yap: The Yap is about spoken, interactive, verbal communications. Here are a few Yap opportunities.

- Walking and Talking.
- Committee meetings.
- Board meetings.
- Staff meetings.
- Member Forums.
- Member Round Tables.
- Staff Round Tables.
- The visible, accessible and inviting office.
- Weekly meetings with The Prez.
- Monthly meetings with The Chairs.
- Manager / President "Open Table" Lunch.

What's said is fleeting---talk is a vapor. The spoken word is powerful and emotional but it's local and open to misinterpretation.

The Scribble is needed.

The Scribble: The Scribble is about written communications. Here are a few of scribble opportunities.

- Explanatory letters from the board and / or the manager to The Impacted.
- The Suggestion Box.
- White Papers.
- Weekly Board Update.
- Board / Committee Annotated Agendas.
- Newsletters.
- Personal letters / notes / emails from The Board and Manager.
- Written response to comments made---the “Complaint Cycle”.
- Social Media.

The Scribble is forever, can be distributed and is an opportunity for REASONED “discussion.”

But the Scribble lacks fire. For “fire” the Visual is needed.

The Visual: The Visual is about “seen” communications and what’s seen has emotional power connecting The Impacted in a special way to the changes made. Here are a couple of visual opportunities,

- Changer “inter-active” presence throughout the club.
- Photography and Graphics---online and in-house.
- Videos---online and in-house.

The visual---particularly when combined with words and music---have high emotional impact, are easy to understand and are quick to absorb. And.....futurists tell us that videos are the communications “wave of the future.”

Communicate The Change

Change is happening---and will continue to happen. People will be scared. Communications are needed to improve “change receptivity” and to ensure that the changes made---stick.

Change leaders are needed to identify change, communicate change, execute change and to modify the changes made.

Those who do change right and have mastered change communications, will flourish.

And those who flourish will feel The Buzz and are guaranteed to.....

Enjoy The Journey!!!