

PEOPLE POINTS

August, 2003

CHANGE MANAGEMENT Turning a 'dud' into a smart bomb!

Change permeates our lives! Home, work, social activities are constantly challenging us to make changes. Old ideas are being exploded creating huge craters for us to navigate around.

"We've decided to institute a new inventory system. You and your team will need to make the appropriate changes with implementation in 90 days." Does this sound familiar? Can you recall something similar to this occurring to you or your organization?

For many organizations, undertaking new processes and incorporating new methods of conducting business is a necessity for remaining competitive.

Having worked with numerous organizations undergoing change from

downsizing of work staff to the implementation of new technology; we have seen the explosive side of changes.

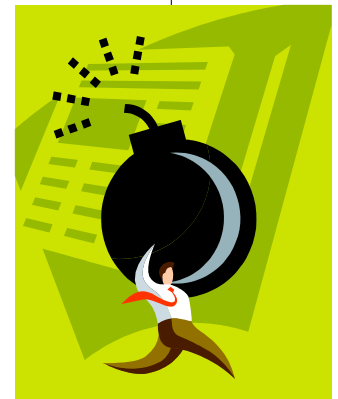
- For those overcoming the loss of jobs and starting new careers, the change is substantial.
- For the ones 'left behind' trying to cope with the loss of work partners plus the reality of taking on additionally responsibilities can result in despair, stress and extreme personal change.
- Organizations struggling to integrate new processes typically set high expectations for the workforce placing enormous pressures on both staff and management.

Frequently we are asked

after the initiation of a company's change process to 'fix' the situation because as one manager said "our employees are not buying-in and they don't seem to be working as a team!"

Common complaints are:

- Employees who are being outplaced say things like, "They never helped me learn and understand the change then let me go." BOOM!
- Others involved in an organizational change process say things like, "How do they expect me to change when they keep me in the dark and continuously spring new ideas on me?" BOOM!
- Managers echo similar remarks, "They tell me to change, but still keep



**People
-
the most
critical
determinate
for
successfull
change!**



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my numbers up and customers satisfied. How do I accomplish all of this? No sooner do I struggle through one change and they drop another one on me! When does it end?" BOOM!

We have seen too many managers who possess superb technical skills leave a wake of disgruntled employees or customers behind because of their frustration and lack of insight into effectively working with people.

The old analogy, "Employees are like mushrooms" applies here. Mushrooms are kept in the dark, covered with manure and expected to grow without uttering a word!

After spending considerable amounts of money with reorganization studies, selecting and investing in expensive new equipment, and spending thousands of dollars in training on technology without the



promised improvements, companies throw up their arms in frustration or change yet again!

Change has accelerated over the years. In earlier generations change came gradually, with clear purpose and a logical end in sight. Simply stated, "It made sense." Today change occurs rapidly, without warning or preparation; it is left to those immersed in the change process to figure out why the change is happening and often it makes 'no sense' to those involved.

By nature, people do not like change, however gradually and over-time people grow to accept change especially if they can see the need and the end in sight.

If we start from the premise that most people do not like change (key words—most people) then why do so many companies fail to incorporate people in the change process? Helping people understand change, involving them in the decisions, encouraging their input and assisting them in understanding how their individual styles influence their receptivity to change is critical to managing change. Short term it may take a little longer; yet the resultant impact is typically greater effectiveness.

Here are a **few tips** for defusing the people side of change before it blows up in your face!

- Seek input and communicate regularly with the group most impacted by the change. Incorporate discussion concerning critical areas such as cooperation, teamwork, customer service, leadership, goal setting in addition to the technical aspects.
- Have the various 'stakeholders', those who are served by the section or group provide input as to their perceptions of the group's cooperative spirit, teamwork, leadership, etc.
- Analyze the differences and identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- Undertake the change initiative being sensitive to individual reactions.
- Establish follow up and on-going communication to support the effectiveness of the process.
- Allow for mistakes, lighten up, smile more.

