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How to get colleagues to accept Change

At this time of economic turmoil, businesses need to challenge the way they work in order to survive. This includes a move towards *Supply Chain Thinking* which affects everyone in different ways. So how should companies deal with resistance to change? How do you convince colleagues when you are challenging something as fundamental as the company culture?

Pole Star Consulting is a group of experienced facilitators who work with organisations going through change. Pole Star focuses on the group as well as individual mindsets and behaviours. They help people make the shift to fall in line with their company's new vision and direction.

Françoise Emery is Managing Partner of Pole Star Consulting. In this interview, she gives us some useful insights into the world of Change Management. Read on for some tips and thought provoking comments on how best to tackle resistance...

Trying to convince colleagues to *think Supply Chain* is partly about evolving the company culture. So where do you start?

“Whilst defining the culture of a company can be somewhat abstract, the resulting behaviours are much easier to measure. When the values of both individual and organisation are aligned, the behaviours of people will support the company’s goals. So the starting point is to identify the values required in order to achieve the company’s goals. The shared values of the people in the company are the foundation of its culture. They need to be clearly defined.”

Why do people sometimes resist change, even when it makes sense for the business?

“When people’s fears and needs are acknowledged, they are more inclined to move with the company. It has to do with people’s previous experiences and their current needs. These will either lead to resistance or motivation.

Take the example of changing the office layout. You physically re-organise the desks and then you find, after two weeks, that people are gradually shifting things back. They are obviously struggling with the change. The real question to me is: how do you demonstrate that the company’s needs will also satisfy the individual needs. What is getting in the way? If you validate those needs, acknowledge them and involve the people, you will overcome the resistance.

In the example of the office layout, it may be that people needed privacy or light. Maybe they liked to be near the door. If you can show them how the new layout will continue to meet their needs, then it will work. Without a structured approach which takes into consideration the above, your task will not be enviable.”

So what should you do and what should you avoid at all costs?

“First, you need to identify where you are now and then where you want to go. An external facilitator will help you challenge and stretch those goals. Define the organisation’s needs and put them into the context of the ever changing business environment. You may well need a different set of skills to manage through those changes.

In our experience it is imperative to have a willing and able sponsor who will act as your compass and drive forward the change. The sponsor is ideally on the Board with sufficient authority and resources to make it happen.

The 3 key things to avoid are:

- Don't put your head in the sand
- Don't keep chopping and changing your plans once you have started
- Don't make change for change's sake"

How do you manage conflicting KPIs in something like Sales and Operation Planning?

"The underlying question is: how do you create a community with a common goal that transcends individual functions? These two sides of the business are driven by different results. So you need to go back to the idea of the common goal. Sales are driven by volume and margin. Operations are driven by capacity and costs. They are almost in opposition. But you need to find a way to demonstrate to Sales how working with Operations will increase volumes... and the other way round.

The reality is that you do need to challenge the measures and ask how the individual's KPIs support the overall business goals. Also do not base your KPIs on last year's outcome! Base them on next year's growth, potential and new goals. We often work with organisations to review their KPIs and provide an external perspective. It's vital to include the individuals in the process of developing the KPIs."

Businesses need more cross-functional collaboration and planning to optimise profit. How do you create this collaborative ethos?

"Have a clear purpose and set a direction. Stick to the strategy and remain flexible to adjust your tactics. The key to this successful change is the ability to INFLUENCE WITHOUT AUTHORITY. Again, to do this well, you need to understand the individual needs and align them with those of the organisation.

You may need new skills to do this. You may need to challenge more than you think. This is where an external facilitator can bring real benefits. But above all, to avoid a knee-jerk reaction, it is imperative to have everyone on board."

Hughenden would like to **thank** Françoise Emery
for sharing her experience and advice

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