

CHANGE

One of the paradoxes of new millennium business seems to be that the only constant is change.

Change today is bigger and more frequent than ever before. This has created a genuine need for organisations to become more agile and adaptive to change.

Traditionally, organisational change has occurred in a relatively predictable manner.

Change is usually initiated by some event at the top of the organisation or a major shift in the industry. In response to this the organisation brings in consultants. The consultants usually go and speak to some employees. Rarely will anybody know which employees they speak to or where they are from. These consultants come armed with some sort of plan or framework that describes exactly what the change needs to look like and a prescription for how to go about it such as Kotter's 8 steps for change.

Then there will be a PMO that needs to go about instituting this change in the organisation. This creation of a special team typically results in an "us and them" mentality between those that are involved in the project and those that aren't. Furthermore, as resources are required for the change initiative, teams are pulled apart and people are distracted from their day to day work. Resistance to the change becomes apparent very quickly.

In an attempt to support people through the change, leaders send out monthly or fortnightly emails if you're lucky. The CEO will send a monthly email, the head of the division will send a monthly email, middle managers will send a monthly email. Typically these emails contain just reiterations of the vision again and again and again. Meanwhile, tribes have been pulled

apart and people are busy wondering if they still have a job. The last thing they want to hear about is an idealistic future they don't know if they will be a part of. Resistance grows.

All the while, the organisation is not only expected to change, but they are also expected to still deliver on their KPIs, stakeholder demands, provide customer service, safety, profit, share price etc. And it is usually those frontline teams who are actually doing the work, facing the customers, selling the products, providing the services that are least in touch with what is going on in relation to the change. They have the least idea about where they are heading and why they are heading there. Performance declines, resistance grows.

In our experience it is the disruption to the teams that has the biggest detrimental impact and thus the source of greatest resistance. By strengthening team climate both prior to, and as you move through the change, you are creating an environment that is more capable of responding well to change. It is through teams with a healthy climate that you build the resilience to weather the change storm. Strengthening team climate creates reassurance in the team and offers the ability to keep control of their own destiny. People may feel threatened individually during change, but a strong team climate offers them a sense of security within their tribe.

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