

To implement change, appeal to emotions

Change we can believe in? Don't believe it.

That's not a knock on our new president, who based his entire campaign on change. It's simply an acknowledgment of human nature.

We human beings do everything in our power to resist change, even when it's change that's in our best interest.

Don't take my word for it. Check out the book, "Change or Die," by Alan Deutschman. This 2007 groundbreaking best-seller cites numerous examples of how people resist change.

For instance, a Johns Hopkins University study found that of the 600,000 Americans who undergo heart-bypass surgery every year, 90 percent do not change their lifestyles.

"Even though they know they have a very bad disease, and they know they should change their lifestyle, for whatever reason, they can't," the study concluded.

Nor is that an isolated example. Consider the high recidivism rate among prison inmates. A 15-year study by the U.S. Department of Justice found that more than two-thirds of released prisoners were re-arrested within three years. Harsher penalties that lead to permanent incarceration or even the death penalty seem to have little deterrent effect.

Changing people's behavior isn't just a social challenge. It's the most important challenge for businesses competing in a turbulent world, says John Kotter, a Harvard Business School professor who has studied organizations in the midst of upheaval.

"The central issue is never strategy, structure, culture or systems," Kotter says. "The core of the matter is always about changing the behavior of people."

CEOs are supposed to be the prime change agents for their companies,



SUCCESS IN THE WORKPLACE

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but they're often as resistant to change as anyone, Deutschman notes.

Three Fs, three Rs

Why don't people change? A large part of the problem, Deutschman concluded, is how we try to get people to change. Typically, he says, we rely on the three Fs:

- **Facts** — the logical reasons for change;
- **Fear** — the consequences if you don't change;
- **Force** — do it because I said so.

These might be strong motivators in the short run, but they don't lead to long-term change. Facts aren't enough. Fear eventually loses its impact. And force generates resistance.

So what does work? Deutschman suggests the "3R approach":

- **Relate** — Create a strong new relationship that inspires hope and provides support.
- **Repeat** — Practice the skills you need until they become automatic. A teacher or coach can provide guidance, encouragement and direction.
- **Reframe** — Learn new ways to think about a situation. Eventually, you'll look at the world in a way that wouldn't have made any sense to you before you changed.

'Anything is possible'

Deutschman offers a number of examples that demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and the Delancy Street Project, a model program for

rehabilitating convicted felons.

One dramatic example was a study conducted by Dr. Dean Ornish at the University of California at San Francisco. It involved patients who suffered from severely clogged arteries.

Instead of opting for bypass surgery or angioplasties, 194 patients volunteered for a lifestyle-changing program that lasted for one year.

The patients got help to quit smoking and to switch to a healthful diet. They held group meetings twice a week, and they took classes in meditation yoga and aerobic exercise.

Three years later, 77 percent of the patients had stuck with the lifestyle changes, and they avoided the need for heart surgery.

How could Ornish get nearly eight in 10 patients to make these lifestyle changes, where conventional medicine was able to change only one in 10?

"When you find the right relationship," Deutschman says, "anything is possible."

Uncomfortable approach

So why don't more organizations adopt the 3R approach? The main reason is that the 3R approach involves emotion: Addressing people's feelings, not only their intellect.

And most business leaders aren't comfortable dealing with emotion. Emotional persuasion doesn't come naturally to most people, and it isn't taught in business schools.

Fortunately, a number of organizations can show you how to implement change strategies that will transform your organization — make it leaner, more efficient and more profitable.

It's not just a matter of expediency. It's a matter of survival.

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