



Managing Myself (*and my team*) Through Change

As a leader, you probably chuckled over Article # 1 and discovering the number 1 stressor for leaders is “trying to do more with fewer resources and do it faster”. Perhaps your organization is downsizing, or under pretty stringent budget cuts. Perhaps that open job position you had, suddenly was taken away, and on hold indefinitely. Oh well, you say. I guess we will have to figure out how to “do without”.



As a leader, not only do you need to manage change from a business perspective...you also have to manage the reactions of your staff *going through the change*. Certainly, a complex set of expectations.

Firstly, Put On Your Own Oxygen Mask

As we have heard so many times, while preparing to take off on a flight, we need to put our oxygen mask on first, before attempting to help others. The oxygen mask involves taking care of your *own* concerns through private discussions with trusted friends, family and advisors. Do I know how I feel about this change? Am I supportive of it? Confused? Threatened?

Leveling with yourself and bouncing concerns off others is a very healthy start.

“Stress is simply the adaptation of our bodies and minds to change; and change, as we noted, is about the only constant left in the workplace.” Peter G. Hanson, M.D.

Step Up Your Communication With Your Staff

This is the easiest, hardest thing to do. *Didn't we just say we are going to do more with less? I don't have time for much of anything, let alone wandering around to talk to staff.*

The issue is, there probably is not better place to be than discussing, sharing ideas, and keeping the channels of communication open and authentic during change. Start with one on one discussions, “How are you feeling about this latest change? “ Do you have any ideas on how we might pull together on this one?” Is there a better way to organize our work to deal with this resource?

issue?" etc. etc. can yield hugely helpful ideas that just may bring the team to new levels of trust and cohesion.

Make it a regular part of doing business to talk about change at staff meetings, and create a culture with your group that discusses the "what we do, with the how we do it".

Emphasize That With Change... Learning Happens

Stay vigilant with your staff on the importance of learning through all the change. Ask them to keep a "learning diary" to record *all* the new situations that the change evokes, and what new skills, strategies or process improvements occurred as a result of dealing with the change. Short term you might get some skepticism, but 6 months from now, the new learning's become very evident.

Encourage your staff to consider what type of development they could use to meet new job duties or tasks. If budgets are tight, think creatively on how the development might happen. Job sharing? Rotation? Find a mentor? On the job classes by a resident expert? On line learning?

The most beneficial outcome of rapid change is that it *forces* us to deal with new situations. Change masters are aware of this and learn from the experience.

Make it a point to ensure each staff member has learning or professional development goals included in their performance plan. The more energy spent on developing through the change...the better.

Take Time...to Take a Break

We all need time to pause and refresh...even if it is busy. Create some "time-outs" like pizza once a month on a Friday or "bagels on Monday's". Create a loose agenda that serves more to just use the time to catch up with one another. Early in my career, a neighboring supervisor (not my own) regularly brought in baked goods for his staff. Coffee breaks were enjoyed with these goodies, and this simple gesture was admired and envied by surrounding departments. Who would ever think that something so simple would be this long remembered?

In times of change, it is comforting to know that "we" have some rituals, and "we" can stand together and meet any challenge. The best change masters create teams that stick together during good times and bad.

Call me for more information on managing change and building stronger teams.