



Change Notes

*A quarterly newsletter
on leading and
communicating change*

Increasing Need for Change-Able Organizations

New data from the 2010 Accenture High-Performance Workforce Study suggests that organizations are not equipped to meet the changing needs of their customers, the marketplace, and a difficult economy.

Forty-eight percent of executives surveyed are not confident that their organizations can quickly mobilize to serve new markets and customers. Fifty percent do not believe their culture is adaptive enough to respond positively to change. Forty-four percent aren't sure their workforces are prepared to adapt to and manage change.

Read the study results and Accenture's recommendations at:
<http://www.accenture.com>.



this issue

- Explore Resistance P.1
- Resistance/Support Assessment P.2
- Two Book Reviews P.2
- Listening Tours Build Trust P.3
- Technique to Surface Resistance P.4

Don't Overcome Resistance, Explore It

If you are leading any sort of change in your organization, you will encounter resistance. Many change leaders get frustrated by the roadblocks and speed bumps they encounter, and they attempt to steamroll over anyone who resists their change initiative. In reality, overpowering resistance doesn't reduce problems, it simply hides them. And hidden problems are like bombs just waiting to explode and destroy all the work that has gone into your change effort.

Instead of attempting to overcome resistance, change experts advocate reframing resistance so that you see it as energy. Rick Maurer, author of *Beyond the Wall of Resistance*, writes "If you think of resistance as energy, you can see that the only way to use it productively is to let it surface."

Letting Resistance Surface

Use personal contact with employees and stakeholders to launch intensive and meaningful conversations that are specifically designed to draw out resistance. In his book, Maurer recaps a simple yet effective technique for bringing resistance to the surface called "Glad, Mad, Add." To try this technique, present a straw man proposal for a change and then ask others to identify what makes them glad, what makes them mad, and what they would add. Be careful not to defend your proposal, but rather delve into people's positive and negative energy and work together to come up with solutions.

Another powerful technique for bringing resistance out involves inviting people to channel their inner skeptics. My colleagues and I recently used this technique when facilitating management training sessions around a new compensation system that our client was implementing. In these workshops, my colleagues and I stopped delivering content about 30 minutes into the session and asked what questions people had. Usually we got one or two mild questions. We then asked people to share what rumors and concerns they were hearing. Managers started to open up and discuss the harder aspects of the change. Finally we asked managers to "channel their inner skeptics" and ask everything they knew their most cynical employees would ask. In some cases the managers would say, "Really ... are you sure?" Often one would test the waters and when we listened, acknowledged, and openly discussed the concern, the floodgates would open and the questions would flow.

In summary, this main point is counter-intuitive but essential: Our natural tendency to overcome resistance forces concerns underground. Once suppressed, resistance grows stronger and becomes harder to resolve. It is important for change leaders and communicators to welcome, acknowledge, and explore resistance in order for it to dissipate. When you find out what is not working, what concerns people have, and where the problems may be and when you respect, appreciate and stay open to being influenced yourself, you'll find that you are far more likely to generate commitment and solutions.

Special Book Recommendation

Beyond the Wall of Resistance: Newly Revised!

Change expert Rick Maurer recently revised and re-released his best-selling book, *Beyond the Wall of Resistance*, and it is a must-read for anyone involved in leading change at any level of an organization. Maurer reminds leaders that people resist change for good reasons. He points out that resistance is energy that can be used to support change, but that is currently tied up in reactions against it. He goes on to assert that knowing what resistance is allows you to find ways to convert it into support.

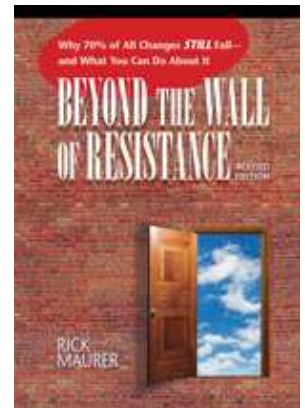
According to Maurer, there are three levels of resistance or support.

- Level 1: “I don’t understand it.”
- Level 2: “I don’t like it.”
- Level 3: “I don’t like you.”

Level 1 resistance involves information: facts, figures, and ideas. It is the world of thinking and rational action, presentations, diagrams, and logical arguments. Level 1 resistance may come from a lack of information, disagreement with data, or confusion over what it means. Many leaders make the mistake of treating all resistance as if it were Level 1. They hold more meetings and make more PowerPoint presentations when, in fact, piling on the rational arguments won’t address levels 2 and 3.

Converting Level 2 resistance into support requires connecting with people on a human, emotional level. It means acknowledging and empathizing with loss and supporting people so they can overcome fears. Level 3 resistance can only be resolved when you prove that you have a person’s best interest at heart by demonstrating genuine concern and keeping your commitments.

Want to learn more? Listen to my podcast interview with Rick Maurer at www.wendymack.com/authorinterviews.



BOOK Recommendations



According to Peter Bregman, author of *Point B: A Short Guide to Leading a Big Change*, most resistance is a by-product of the way we try to change people and of flawed strategies for gaining buy-in.

Early in his book, Bregman mentions that people don’t resist change — they resist being changed. *Point B* describes how to genuinely collaborate with others to achieve change.

Much of this book is based on Bregman’s own experiences as a consultant to CEOs and leaders of large corporations. Unlike many consultants, Bregman doesn’t overcomplicate things. He provides simple step-by-step guidance, practical advice, and a few models that are elegant in their simplicity and utility.

Some of my favorite takeaways include: “What buy-in? Roll out imperfect plans.” and “Any small change you ask others to make is a big change.”

Tool for Assessing Support and Resistance

To help you understand, appreciate, and address resistance, take a few moments now to think of a specific change you are leading. Who seems to be resisting your idea? How would you answer the following questions with regard to that person?

- Does this person trust me and the other people leading the change?
- Does this person recognize the problem that prompted change?
- Does this person feel a sense of urgency to address the problem?
- Does this person understand the solution being proposed?
- Does this person agree the solution being proposed makes sense for the organization?
- Does this person believe the people leading the change have a well-thought-out plan?
- Does this person believe he or she will play a meaningful part in implementing the change?
- Does this person accept the personal loss that accompanies the change?
- Does this person believe the plan is working?

Once you have finished, take a look at your answers. Do you have a lot of question marks? That’s not unusual. In fact, often change leaders who are encountering resistance have not had enough meaningful conversations to gauge the root of the resistance. Low scores may seem discouraging, but they are actually helpful clues. Once you know what may be the root of resistance, you can take the appropriate action to communicate with others in a way that can lead to shared understanding and support.

Listening Tours Build Trust and Increase Support

Most leaders know that listening is an important skill. Yet in nationwide surveys, employees indicate that their leaders don't actually listen to them. What's going on? Is the problem that leaders don't listen or that they don't show that they listen?

In reality, it is likely that you have every intention of listening to your people. Like Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, your own leadership mantra might be "listen, learn, and lead." Yet hectic schedules, demands on your time, and pressing decisions might reduce the time you get to spend listening. It takes conscious effort and the implementation of some specific tactics to ensure that your listening activities don't get shortchanged.

One way to be sure you are both listening and demonstrating your interest in others in a visible manner is to conduct a listening tour.

Conduct a Listening Tour

In mid-January, Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper conducted a statewide tour to promote his economic development plan. His eight stops included public town hall meetings in Fruita, Durango, Loveland, and Colorado Springs. While the press called Hickenlooper's tour a promotion, he didn't spend his time talking or pitching his ideas. In fact, the governor spent approximately 50 percent of the time soliciting input and listening to members of the community.

As an organization's leader, you can also conduct a listening tour. Make it a point to get out to each factory or office location. Pull people together in an auditorium or cafeteria and, if needed, in a video conference. Say a few words and then ask for questions, comments, and ideas. Most importantly, don't feel like you have to have an answer for everything. Your job is to listen.

A good example of an executive engaging in a listening tour comes from former KeySpan Chairman and CEO Robert B. Catell. In the book, *The CEO and the Monk: One Company's Journey to Profit and Purpose*, Catell tells the story of KeySpan's dramatic growth from \$1 billion to \$6 billion in revenues. During a chaotic period when KeySpan was in the midst of mergers and acquisitions and tripling its workforce, Kenny Moore, the human resources director (and former monk) set up a series of site visits for Catell. In city after city, Catell sat on a stool and invited input and ideas from his staff. Moore insisted that Catell respond to every point with only the words, "Thank you." Catell reports having been amazed at how many of his employees thanked him for the meetings. More than once he heard his people say "This was the best company meeting I ever attended."

Remember Why You are Listening

There are many long-term benefits of listening. Ultimately, when leaders listen to employees the result is more trust in management, higher employee engagement, increased support for ideas and initiatives, higher productivity, and a positive impact on the bottom line. In addition to all of these factors, there are three concrete benefits you will gain by listening to your employees using the structured format of a tour:

1. Listening demonstrates respect. Henry David Thoreau once wrote, "The greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when one asked me what I thought, and attended to my answer." When you make the time and effort to genuinely pay attention to your people's thoughts, they feel respected and their respect for you increases in return.
2. Listening helps you see things from the perspective of your frontline. Michael Abrashoff, past captain of the U.S. Navy's *USS Benfold* argues that, "The most important thing a captain can do is to see the ship from the eyes of the crew." This belief helped Abrashoff lead 311 sailors through one of the greatest turnaround stories of the modern military. As a leader at any level, it is critical that you understand your organization from the point of view of the people on your frontline.
3. Listening can uncover great ideas. A 2007 study by Watson Wyatt found that companies that listen to and act on employee feedback realize, on average, a 2.3 percent gain in market value. Companies that saw the highest gains did not just rely on employee surveys for feedback. Rather, they provided opportunities for employees to provide meaningful input into decisions that affected them as well as suggestions for business improvements.

Every listening tour may not result in a million-dollar idea, but every minute you spend showing your people that you are listening will pay enormous dividends.

QUOTES of the Quarter

"Resistance is not the primary reason why changes fail. The real problem is that leaders plan and instigate major changes in ways that create inertia, apathy, and opposition."

—Rick Maurer, author of *Beyond the Wall of Resistance*

"What leaders interpret as 'resistance' is really employees expressing concern about impacts that the leaders may not see."

— Dr. Dawn Turner, chair of the International Council on Organizational Change

FOR FUN Resistance

"It is a terrible thing to look over your shoulder when you are trying to lead — and find no one there."

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

"Whatever it is — I'm against it."

Groucho Marx

Featured Program: Transforming Anxiety into Energy

The Key to Leading in Turbulent Times

In today's economic environment, employees are overwhelmed with anxiety. Just when you need your team members to be action-oriented and focused on the business at hand, they are engaged in unfocused frenetic activity or hunkered down in a bunker mentality that ultimately slows progress on critical company goals. In this timely presentation, Wendy Mack addresses the pervasive sense of fear and anxiety in the workplace today — and its terrible toll on productivity.

Participants hail this presentation as an honest and upbeat approach to a difficult topic. Your audience members will leave feeling inspired, energized, and equipped to lead in turbulent times!

In this program, participants learn how to:

- Help your organization not just survive, but thrive on change.
- Address the emotions that prevent people from being productive.
- Focus your organization on action.
- Take steps to harness your team's energy to move forward in a cohesive way.

Perfect for: Leaders at all levels: supervisors, managers, directors, and executives

Leaders Rave!

“I loved your talk about energizing employees during times of anxiety. I plan to share your *energized alignment* concept at our improvement team meeting this week.”

“The information and videos you shared were entertaining and appropriate given the current workload, issues, and initiatives affecting our organization.”

“I had to write after seeing Wendy present *Transforming Anxiety into Energy*. The content was excellent and she engaged the group with her passion for leadership, high-energy delivery, and impressive use of technology.”

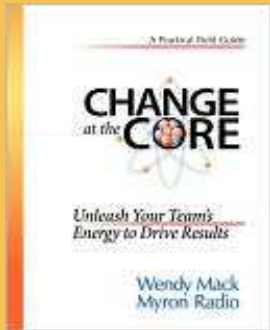


Change Notes is written and published by Wendy Mack.

719.687.8561

Wendy@WendyMack.com

www.WendyMack.com



Change Notes Issue 07 Spring 2011

Use the “I Wish I Knew” Technique to Surface Concerns

Unexpressed fears and concerns are often closely connected with resistance. If people feel that a change violates or jeopardizes what matters most to them, they will respond with resistance. If not addressed head-on, resistance can derail our change initiatives. One of the most effective ways to proactively surface concerns is to use the “I wish I knew...” (IWIK) technique early in the change communication process. Here's how it works.

After announcing a change initiative and explaining all the reasons for moving in this new direction, ask your audience: (1) “What do you LIKE about this change?” This elicits the audience's view on the benefits of the change. Do not move forward until you have at least a few benefits, no matter how draconian the change might seem. Don't worry. In a broad audience, someone will see some benefits to the new approach. (2) Ask the audience, “What questions or concerns do you have about this change? You can say anything you'd like as long as you begin your statement with the words, ‘I wish I knew...’.”

The IWIK technique allows the audience members to express their points of view — to get their emotional concerns off their chests and out into the open where they can be dealt with more rationally. Using the words, “I wish I knew...” transforms the emotion or “gripe” into a problem statement. As a change leader, it gives you a heads-up on the underlying concerns within the organization and a pathway for moving forward. If you can address the concerns, the change initiative will move faster and smoother. And don't worry if you don't have answers to all of the questions. Post or chart the questions and provide answers as they become available.

If you are on the receiving end of a change, the IWIK statement gives you an elegant way of expressing your concern without it sounding overly critical or judgmental. As such, it protects both the messenger and receiver.