“You want me to do what?”

Getting Your Team Ready to Leave the Status Quo

When I was six years old, I received a new AMF Hi-Rise Flameout bike for my birthday. I was the last one on my street to learn how to ride a bike and so eager to ride it. I imagined myself riding down the street, zooming past the other kids. I was finally able to show them that I too had the ability to ride fast, after all, I had been watching them for months now. I launched myself down the street and soon found myself wobbling from side to side and then…CRASH!

A picture containing bicycle, ground, outdoor, transport

Description automatically generatedKnowing how to do something and actually being able to do it are two entirely different things. I knew I needed to peddle, steer and balance on my bike, but when I tried, all I got was a skinned knee and a bruised ego. In short, I needed to improve my ability.

Ability is, in short, how people demonstrate they can perform a task, behavior or skill. Said another way, you are asking people to leave their comfort zone and embrace change. Hmm Change. That shouldn’t be so hard…should it? In a *Forbes* (2016) survey with executives, they believe their teams are less likely to remain in the status quo. In fact, they feel only 37% will remain there. Research shows that leaders often overestimate their team’s willingness to let go of their warm blanket (i.e., the status quo) and embrace the new (i.e., change). In fact, the closer to the front line you go, the less likely people are to let go of the status quo. In contrast, the further up the chain you go the more likely people are willing to change.

What’s the disconnect? Higher level executives create the ideas and frontline workers and managers are left to implement the change which is far more challenging and people in these roles are more change challenged. Interestingly data also shows that executives are more likely to get fired for mismanaged change. Therefore, it’s important for executives to spend time sharing and encouraging the new vision and the risks of not changing.

So now what? You need a strategy. A strategy that successfully demonstrates your ability to overcome the team’s change challenges. Here are three tips (for you and your team) to give you the best chances for change success.

**You**

1. **Find Out Why -** Perform your due diligence to understand why this change is happening. If you don’t know ask your network, colleagues, or the project manager. Be able to share the why in a conversational way. Leave out the business speak.
2. **Translate Change -** Practice being able to translate the change to each team member, so they can see the benefits of the change. Change is an emotional event for people, and they want to be able to see how this change benefits them. Not you. Not the organization.
3. **Talk A Lot -** The average person must hear a message 5-7 times, so make sure you’re talking about the change through a variety of communication channels. A good rule of thumb is if you’re tired of hearing yourself talk about a change then you’ve probably talked about it enough.

**Team**

1. **Provide the Necessary -** It's important you provide the time, resources, and coaching necessary to develop your people’s ability to be successful once the change is implemented. Perhaps this is self-evident, but you’d be surprised how many organizations just implement a change.
2. **Practical Application -** Roleplay, simulations and hands-on work help accelerate learning for change adoption and give people the opportunity to see themselves working in the new environment.
3. **Ask for Feedback -** Ask your team what’s going well and the areas for improvement. Doing this small action will let your team know you care. Next, if needed, be an advocate for your team and communicate your team’s feedback to the people who can help.

There will no doubt be hesitation as people exit their status quo and begin building their ability. Fear, past change experiences, and old habits may also be a factor. Just remember that people are hard-wired to revert to old ways, so a little empathy will go a long way in helping the change be embraced and avoiding skinned knees and bruised egos.

**BIO** – Eric Currie is on a quest to coach leaders on how to maximize their team’s emotional relationship to change. This type of connection creates better results and helps them to make a difference in their organization and team. As a certified change practitioner, Eric wants to utilize his experience to make change easier. To learn more and/or download your complimentary “Ready to Go” change articles visit EricCurrie.com.

**Word Count:** 709

**Article Date:** 02/06/2023

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