Managing the "I Don't Want To" Mindset

Is there something you say no to? The response is usually, I don’t want to. Allow me to explain.

Two times a week I wake up at 5:15 a.m. so I can go to a group exercise class at the YMCA. To be honest, there are many more mornings of not wanting to go than being excited to go. On the mornings of "not wanting to" I am super proud of myself when I can make it to the car. The class is one of my favorites because I know all the different moves and for the most part, it is predictable. But every six weeks the fitness instructor says the words I never like to hear…"we'll be starting a new workout routine today." While others clap and hoot, I find myself mentally crossing my arms, holding my breath, and thinking "I don't want to".

My feelings experienced at the Y are really no different than someone who just learned about a change that will impact them. In change management the official word to describe this feeling is resistance. Resistance is completely natural and creates psychological and physiological reactions. We as humans are wired to resist. You can thank you fight or flight systems for this.

So how do you, the leader of a change challenged team, work through resistance to achieve your change objective? Prosci, a change management research organization, has identified three types of resistance: **active**, **passive**, and **individual**. Active resistance is experienced when employees are direct, vocal and proactive about the change. In passive resistance, employees are more subtle and display actions like not engaging in the change, avoid training and/or don’t work to create awareness for themselves about a change. Individual resistance relates to the human characteristics of perception, personality and need. In other words, what’s in it for them.

Each type of resistance requires a different approach to overcome it. Here are the best techniques for each one:

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| **Active Resistance Techniques** | **Passive Resistance Techniques** | **Individual Resistance Techniques** |
| 1. Engage key executives to:  * Actively and vocally support the change through early adoption.  1. Communicate proactively via:  * One-on-one conversations. * Sharing feedback with a positive intent.  1. Build your skill in translating the change into the WIIFM (what’s in it for me) for each person or group. | 1. Communicate transparently, openly, and honestly even if you don’t know all the answers or particulars about a change. 2. Identify change advocates and areas where change is going well. 3. Invite key employees to participate in the solution. 4. Enlist executive support to continue beating the drum of “why” change is necessary. | 1. Everyone changes at a different pace. Therefore, begin earlier than you think discussing the change. 2. Enlist executives early in the change process to cast the vision of change and explain what happens if change doesn’t occur. 3. Assess potential areas of resistance by identifying everyone who is impacted by change. |

Now let’s game plan how you go about putting these ideas into action. I call this approach the Base Five because these five steps can be your guide in almost any change:

1. Identify who exactly is being impacted by a change (e.g., immediate team, business unit, etc.).
2. Understand how they are going to be impacted (i.e., Does the change entail a new process, system, mindset, etc.).
3. Identify how their world looks today and how it will look tomorrow once the change is implemented.
4. Make sure you have a clear understanding of the “why” behind the change. If you don’t, then take time to find out more about the change specifics.
5. Anticipate how people are going to react to the change. It’s likely that you’ll have to use strategies for each type of resistance. My two favorite resistance preventors are providing a clear why and translating the change into the WIIFM for a person or team.

One final thought. After I finish the first class of the new routine at the Y, I find myself feeling energized by my accomplishment, which provides me with a positive frame of reference for the next time change comes around. Similarly, employees will have a more positive response to organizational change and have the sense that you care if you work to mitigate resistance early.

**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.

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