

Managing Change with Staff or Clients

I BELIEVE ONE OF MY GREATEST BUSINESS strengths is a healthy fear of chronic emotional pain coupled with a willingness to do that which is necessary to avoid it. Certainly, there is nothing unique about me that I voice a disdain for pain -- doesn't everyone? On the other hand, I find it is one of the most puzzling aspects of human behavior that some people who claim to dislike pain will repeatedly make leadership decisions or take actions that time and time again have proven to bring pain to themselves and their company. After years of pondering this quandary, I have identified two underlying qualities that often lead to such self-sabotaging behavior in leaders:

1. Lack of the discipline known as delay of gratification.
2. Lack of self-esteem and the subconscious need to prove one's worthlessness.

Certainly, these are bitter pills to consider, much less swallow, but this is necessary medicine if one seeks to avoid the emotional pain that results from poor leadership practices.

A few years ago, a friend gave me a mug engraved with the quote, "If you keep doing

the same things you have always done, you will always get what you have always got." To state it another way, "If you are banging your head against the wall and it hurts, stop." That gift helped me realize that my (lack of) leadership skills were contributing to my employees' general poor performance such as: irresponsibility; lack of reliability; lack of concern for the financial health of the company; and the attitude of "it ain't my job." You get the idea.

I began to identify certain patterns of pain, and one of them was that every time I needed to implement change, I got resistance from employees and/or clients (can you believe that?). I truly used to think there was some unique "rebelliousness gene" in my employees when in fact their behavior was nothing more than human nature — a fact of life. With that new mindset, I decided to "quit banging my head against the wall of human nature" and identify a model to help me sell change. This model has five steps, the same five steps I use today and teach to Kids First department leaders. Admittedly, implementing the model takes time, but the time you invest on the front end saves time and stress on the back end, in multiples.

5 Steps to Selling a Potentially Unpopular Idea:

1. Clearly identify and articulate the problem. Just this much separates you from most leaders.
2. Identify the alternatives. This demonstrates thoroughness.
3. List the pros and cons of each solution, including the disadvantages of the one you chose. This demonstrates the rare and desirable quality of objectivity, a willingness to share perspectives.
4. Announce your decision and why.
5. Confidently and assertively ask for the support of your decision. Assertively and confidently verbalizing your need for the support of your constituents sends powerful messages about your leadership skills; conversely, a failure to do this sends powerful negative messages.

Roll this model around in your mind and you will begin to see that there are countless applications from selling a new health care plan to selling a price hike.

Make it a great month!

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