



by Kathy B. Dempsey, CSP

SEIZE THE POWER OF CHANGE

FIVE PROVEN WAYS TO OVERCOME NEGATIVITY, IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY AND IGNITE PEOPLE TO SHED!

WHY DO 75% OF all change efforts fail? Largely because people feel left out of the process and lack the motivation, skills and knowledge to adapt to the new systems, processes and procedures. According to Gallup's calculations, actively disengaged employees, cost the American economy up to \$350 billion per year in lost productivity. No organization thrives unless their people learn how to SHED. To stay competitive, employers must arm their teams with the necessary skills and positive attitude to SHED for Success™. Negativity, like an infectious virus, siphons precious energy and productivity. Discover how you can seize the power of change in your organization by utilizing the five proven ways to overcome negativity, improve productivity and ignite your people to SHED!

1. Help them attach to something new.

Humans have a natural tendency to attach to familiar people, processes and products. Remember back when you were a child and someone took away your lollipop. You probably screamed and cried and thought your life as a four year old had come to an end. Minutes later, in the heat of your temper tantrum, someone handed you a cuddly teddy bear and immediately your eyes lit up and the crying halted. The lollipop? Who cares? Life was good! You were now attached to your new bear. This strategy works similar for work teams. How can you get people excited about the change (the cuddly new teddy bear) so they SHED their attachment to their current "lollipop" quickly? Help them attach to what they will gain from the change? Time? Efficiency? A new skill? Watch resistance to change magically evaporate as you uncover ways to help people attach to something new.

2. Shrink the change.

Dan & Chip Heath discuss this in their book, *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard*. Too much, too fast or too big of a change will overwhelm and paralyze a workforce. If the purposed change is perceived as insurmountable, people will shut down and give up before you even get out of the gate. Shrink the change down to bite-size digestible pieces by providing a more achievable goal. If your target is to improve productivity by 50% this year, consider the more realistic goal of 5% monthly. To keep peak motivation, don't forget to publically recognize and celebrate short term wins! Momentum is vital for sustainable results.

3. Give the goal with choices.

My mom was not in executive leadership but she knew the value of this strategy extremely well. Her goal: A clean house. Choices? "Kathy, do you want to take out the trash or do the dishes?" I didn't want to do either but somehow I was more motivated because I had a choice in my household chores. Likewise, employees' motivation soars if they're given more control over a situation. Peter Bragman, from Harvard Business Review, offers another slant on this tip. Give the desired outcome, and then suggest the path. Allow people to reject the path as long as they chose an alternate route to the same destination.

4. Eliminate the fear.

While working at a health care system years ago, the CEO announced to all 4000 employees that we were going through tremendous change. He said that anyone who came up with an innovative idea to save time or money, even if it changed or eliminated their job, would have a place

to work somewhere in the system. What a brilliant idea! The CEO eliminated the employees' fear of losing their jobs. It's a staggering statistic that 95% of people say fear is the #1 barrier holding them back at work and in life. You might not be able to guarantee 100% job security, but how can you build strategies that eliminate as much fear as possible?

5. Create a sense of urgency.

The dictionary defines urgency as "something that compels immediate action or attention." John Kotter, the leadership guru, claims, "Without an organization-wide sense of urgency, it's like trying to build a pyramid on a foundation of empty shoeboxes." How are you creating a sense of urgency with your employees? Spark motivation for change with open and honest communication. Talk about what's happening in your industry and with your competition. Discuss the trends, the facts, and the consequences for team members and the organization if change doesn't occur. Without cooperation or buy-in your change efforts will fail. By stimulating people to talk and think, you'll propel them to move out of denial or anger. Urgency provides the fire to ignite teams to get on board with the exciting possibilities! ■

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