Getting Your Employees to Embrace Change

INTRODUCTION

Companies today expect their employees to acclimate swiftly to organizational change and highly value those managers who facilitate this adaptation. Managers must understand that they are integral to implementing change within an organization. Employees’ adaptation and acceptance to change does not “happen” by virtue of upper leadership’s words, meetings and charts. It is the first and second level managers within an organization who actually train, coach and motivate their employees to become committed stakeholders during periods of organizational change. In order to accomplish this, managers must become receptive to organizational change themselves.

Managers holding a certain mind set are best able to convince their direct reports to adapt, survive and thrive during periods of change. This article examines the elements of this mindset and how managers can achieve it to manage change effectively.

Attitude –

A receptive and positive attitude towards direct reports is key during periods of change. Employees reflect their leaders’ shadows. By “walking the talk” and accepting change themselves, managers demonstrate they too are stakeholders in the process.

How can you improve your attitude? Ask yourself: “How do I react to change?” You now are beginning to explore and assess your own attitudes and realize these are also on view by your employees. Attaining a positive attitude requires you to be honest and committed to shifting your own mind set and becoming comfortable with ambiguity. Realize that all change places us in unchartered waters which is uncomfortable. By taking ownership and being connected to your team during your company’s transformation, you eventually bond with your team and help them accept and embrace change.

Positive Workplace –
How we perceive ourselves determines not only who we are, but also how we perceive the world around us. Perceptions often become reality and influence our and our employees’ work environments. Often our perceptions about work and leadership are reflected by our employees. How we engage the outside world reflects how that world engages with us. Having a positive outlook and creating a positive work environment for others is essential to being an effective manager.

To accomplish this, a manager must take all steps to mitigate or avoid toxic, non-productive work practices for employees and instead focus on encouraging mutual trust, support and security for the team. Management should meet regularly with direct reports to share the organization’s leaders’ vision for the future—once per week is optimal. Doing that engages employees in positive mindsets and minimizes distractions.

Civility –

If employees view themselves as integral to the overall transformation, they become committed stakeholders in it as well. Relationships based on fear and disrespect yield minimal returns, if any, and are generally outweighed by workplace distractions.

Civility towards others is integral to any transformation. Encourage your employees to ask questions and raise concerns without being fearful of being chastised or negatively judged by you or others. Your employees will want to go beyond their regular work load when they perceive themselves as an integral part of a bigger purpose. The better your relationships with your direct reports, the more productive they will become for you because your positive relationship with them engages them in the business and transformation. This is win win—for you, the employees and the business.

Espirit de Corps –

This refers to how managers encourage teambuilding. Transmitting “change energy,” into the workplace culture means influencing your employees’ established assumptions about you, the workplace and others in the group so those instead reflect a shared sense of identity and mutual respect for one another. As a manager, you can accomplish
this by assessing your team’s strengths and weaknesses against where transformation requires you and the team to be, and then identify the training, support, tools and resources needed to fill that gap. Spend sufficient time explaining what transformation means and requires from all of you in order to obtain successful “buy-in” from your team. Don’t take shortcuts in this regard. Your employees will appreciate and support you for establishing common ground with them.

Conclusion –

As a manager, you are the catalyst through which change happens. All employees need to know that they are valued and that you are committed to see them succeed. Accept that you have the knowledge and empathy to guide your employees to thrive. Validate your own worth as a manager each day through your daily experiences with your employees’ successes; the returns will be greater than imagined.

If you are interested in learning more about what you can do to help employees embrace change log onto www.anthem.com/eap/verizon to find articles and resources to improve your workplace environment and your experience as a manager. You can also call the Anthem toll free number 888-441-8674 to access manager consultations for assistance in becoming a more effective manager.

If you would like to schedule a workshop that offers more in-depth information pertinent to change management, check out the Anthem EAP Training Catalogue found on the Anthem web site under Manager Tools, or speak with your Human Resources Business Partner to schedule a workshop.

Anthem workshops are available to help managers become better managers. Here is an example of a class that discusses this month’s topic in greater detail:

**Dynamics of Change Management**
Change is stressful and learning how to manage and cope with change is crucial to our well being in this ever-changing world. Although the stress of change is unavoidable you can learn how to deal effectively with change in the workplace and in your personal life. In this seminar, participants will learn effective ways to cope with change as well as
learn how to take charge of those aspects that can be controlled. Core concepts related to stress and the emotional and physical responses to change are discussed along with effective stress management strategies.

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