



Change

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RESISTANCE TO CHANGE- THE ROOT PROBLEM

Dear Members and Friends of ASTD,

We hope that you will join us on September 8th for the chapter's next meeting. More information will be on the horizon!

See you there and be sure to invite a friend.

RESISTANCE TO CHANGE-THE ROOT PROBLEM

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The marketplace is replete with articles and books about change. Much that has already been written about change management is extremely valid and useful. I wonder, however, if at times we focus too much on the symptoms and fail to identify and deal with the real problem. Consider the following two illustrations:

A family files a lawsuit against the nursing home because mom has a bedsore. Is the bedsore the problem or the symptom? The family has watched as mom gets her dinner every night and it is cold; the water pitcher is never filled; the bed sheets don't seem to be changed regularly? The stale chocolate cake offered for dessert one night triggers an angry response. Neither the chocolate cake or, in this case the bedsore, are the real problem. What is happening is that a precious family member is not being valued by an organization the family has entrusted with her care.

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You make a visit to your local home improvement store. You scan your items in the self-checkout line. The scanner doesn't show your second item as being scanned. You try again. You're getting frustrated but it is still quicker than standing in the line behind 10 people who all have 50 items or more. You even have the patience to go to the assistant because your total shows you paid twice for the same item - the one that you scanned twice because it didn't show on the screen. But when the assistant, under her breath, states: "Well, you scanned it, I didn't," that's when steam starts flowing from both nostrils.

At the root of these examples is the same issue: someone isn't valued (respected, appreciated, significant, cared for). Isn't this same principle true in the workplace? For example, imagine an organization where ideas passed down from the CEO are not welcomed or embraced. How long would a top executive stay? Or, have you ever been part of an organization where the management team is not kept in the loop; communication is stifled; authority is given in title only-there is no power to influence or enforce? How does it work out if the pervasive perception among staff is that you are no more than part of the machine? Do your job! Words of thanks and appreciation are few and far between. There is no joy in getting up in the morning and going to work, that's for sure!

Now imagine an organization, where both horizontally and vertically, people are told specifically how their role is critical to the organization reaching its goals. New ideas are welcomed and failure is just another opportunity to learn. Problems are heard and resolutions are fair and guaranteed to occur. There is time for work but some time for fun as well. When there are personal struggles, there is a measure of grace and understanding given. In essence, there is a healthy system at work. People feel valued. When change occurs in this type of environment, how much resistance is likely to occur? When the overall employee experience is one in which each person input is welcomed, taken seriously, and considered at every point of implementation, most often change is not threatening or intimidating.

All of the good change management principles we all know are important. We don't want to discard them, but rather make certain we are attending to what may be even more critical: valuing the persons involved in the change. If change consistently causes disruption and employee dissatisfaction, evaluating whether or the individuals involved perceive that they are valued and making necessary changes in your approach may be the cure for your change management problems. As you consider your environment, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is resistance to change really the problem, or is it a symptom?
- Are there 'people issues' that need improvement that when corrected, will

enable change to flow more smoothly and successfully?

- Do you have the right people in the right places to analyze and effectively address areas of vulnerability?

In the world of work, people are our greatest asset. If this philosophy is communicated effectively, change can become fun for all (well, for most folks anyway).

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