

Creating a Climate for Change

Human behavior studies show that people do not basically resist change; they resist “being changed.” This section will emphasize how to create an atmosphere that will encourage others to be changed. Unless people are changed, change will not happen.

1. The leader must develop a trust with people.

It is wonderful when the people believe in the leader. It is more wonderful when the leader believes in the people. When both are a reality, trust is the result. The more people trust the leader, the more willing they will be to accept the leader’s proposed changes. Warren Bennis and Bert Nanus say that “trust is the emotional glue that binds followers and leaders together.” Abraham Lincoln said, “If you would win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his true friend. Next, probe to discover what he wants to accomplish.

2. The leader must make personal changes before asking other to change.

Andrew Carnegie said, “As I grow older, I pay less attention to what men say. I just watch what they do.” Great leaders not only say what should be done, they show it.

3. Good leaders understand the history of the organization.

G.K. Chesterton suggests, “Don’t take the fence down until you the reason it was put up.” It is important to know what happened in the past before making changes for the future.

4. Place influencers in leadership positions.

Leaders have two characteristics. First they are going somewhere; and second they are able to persuade other people to with them.

5. Check the “change in your pocket.”

Every leader is given a certain amount of “change” (emotional support in the form of bargaining chips) at the beginning of a relationship. If the relationship weakens, the leader gives up “change” until it is possible for him to become bankrupt with the organization. If the relationship strengthens, the leader receives “change” until it is possible for him to become rich with the organization. Always remember: *It takes “change” to make change.* The more “change” in the

pocket of the leader, the more changes that can be made in the lives of the people. Sadly, the opposite is also true.

6. Good leaders solicit the support of the influencers before the change is made public.

The ten-item checklist below includes all the steps a good leader will go through in soliciting support for a change from the major influencers in his/her organization:

- List the major influencer(s) of the major groups within your organization.
- How many will be affected directly by this change? (These people are the most important group.)
- How many will be affected indirectly by this change?
- How many will probably be positive?
- How many will probably be negative?
- Which group is the most influential?
- If the positive group is stronger, bring the influencers together for a discussion.
- If the negative group is stronger, meet with the influencers individually.
- Know the “key” to each influencer.

7. Develop a meeting agenda that will assist change.

Every new idea goes through three phases: It will not work; it will cost too much; and I thought it was a good idea all along.

A wise leader, understanding that people change through a process, will develop a meeting agenda to enhance this process. One that I have used for fifteen years has proved quite effective.

Information Items: Items of interest to those attending the meeting; positive items that boost morale. (This starts the meeting off on a high level.)

Study Items: Issues to be discussed but not voted on. (This allows the sharing of ideas without pressure to represent a particular point of view.)

Action Items: Issues to be voted on that have previously been study items. (This allows discussion to be made that has already been processed. If major change is required, keep the issue in the study category until it has been allowed time for acceptance.)

8. Encourage the influencers to influence others informally.

Major changes should not surprise people. A “leadership leak” done properly will prepare the people for the formal meeting.

Leadership leaks should be planned and positive, preparing the people for the meeting where the change will be formally presented.

9. Show the people how the change will benefit them.

Assumption: The proposed change is what best for the people, not the leader. The people must be first. Too often leaders of an organization tend to think and lead from the company’s perspective, not the people’s.

10. Give the people ownership of change.

Openness by the leader paves the way for ownership by the people. Without ownership, changes will be short-term. The following are ways to offer ownership of change to others:

- Inform people in advance so they’ll have time to think about the implications of the change and how it will affect them.
- Explain the overall objectives of the change – the reasons for it and how and when it will occur.
- Show people the change will benefit them. Be honest with the employees who lose out as a result of the change. Alert them early and provide assistance to help them find another job if necessary.
- Ask those who will be affected by the change to participate in all stages of the change process.
- Keep communication channels open. Provide opportunities for employees to discuss the change. Encourage questions, comments, and other feedback.
- Be flexible and adaptable throughout the change process. Admit mistakes and make changes where appropriate.

- Constantly demonstrate your belief in and commitment to the change. Indicate your confidence in their ability to implement the change.
- Provide enthusiasm, assistance, appreciation, and recognition to those implementing the change.

11. Change will happen.

The question should be “Will we ever change?” but “When and how much will we change?”

Charles Exley, CEO of NCR Corporation, said, “I’ve been in the business thirty-six years. I’ve learned a lot and most of it doesn’t apply anymore.

12. It’s never too late to change.

Max Deprea said, “In the end, it is important to remember that we cannot become what we need to be by remaining what we are” It’s a fact that when you you’re through changing, you’re through.

The above information comes from John Maxwell’s book *Developing the Leader Within You*.