

Title:

The Cold Shoulder

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Summary:

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Article Body:

Back in the good old days, companies that were persistently conservative and resisted change were handsomely rewarded. Stalwarts like General Motors, Procter and Gamble and Sears Roebuck were empires unto themselves; they tapped their resources to ward off change or to avoid it altogether. This strategy used to work.

Not anymore.

Change - like death and taxes - is a reality that most companies must face and embrace or else be pushed towards oblivion. Not being part of the change movement is like dying a slow death. No matter how turbo-charged your resistance to change is, change will happen. Period.

Are you the kind of manager that tells everyone in the organization that change is good, yet you're actually afraid of it and fight it in an underhanded manner?

"I Dislike Change. Can you Tell?"

There are signs. Resistance to change can be active or passive, and the manager who attempts to disrupt the transition to change is doing a profound disservice to the organization. Let's discuss a few of these signs:

- You're the first to fire off a memo to management saying that change can be executed internally without the need for outsiders. As soon as you learn

that something is brewing among upper management, you argue that change is better if managed in-house. You use the confidentiality and proprietary issue and imbue distrust. You say things like, "how do we know these consultants are not sharing sensitive information with our competitors?" or "the best change comes from within, we know this company like the back of our hand. No one else does."

- You usher in change but don't adopt new approaches or new technologies. You're blending the new with old. What results is a pureed version of the change because your intentions and motivations are half-hearted and insincere.
- You hug the status quo by not taking on new challenges. Under the pretext of responsible delegation, you hand out new assignments to others instead. Performing a new function makes you uncomfortable. You fear that your abilities may not make the grade.
- You're addicted to analysis. You like to scrutinize every detail, question every activity, and engage in lengthy debates. You may not know it but you're setting yourself up as a barrier to change. Instead of being the "go-to" person, you stall the decision-making process intentionally.
- You spend your time and precious energy controlling things that are out of your control. If management wants to form alliances and partnerships to make distribution channels more efficient, you go the other direction. Partnerships are inevitable when a company experiences growth. No organization is an island, and just like individuals need to network, so do organizations. Why try to contain the company when it's bursting at the seams and could benefit from support systems?
- You react immaturely when change does occur. Instead of enthusiasm, you prefer to be the wallflower in the group. You preach doom and gloom and ready to articulate on the "I told you so" pitch. You'd rather retreat in the background and watch the change with no desire to contribute to its success.
- You've turned into a wait-and-see type of spectator. Instead of taking the bull by the horns, you like to play safe by seeing the outcome first instead of creating the outcome yourself.
- You begin to look for other jobs. In fact, every time a major change is contemplated, your reaction is to find another organization to work for. The star complex creeps in, and before you know it, the persecution complex overcomes you ("management wants to change the way my department operates - it's their way of getting rid of me eventually").

Management Needs You

A manager who is physically and mentally prepared for constant organizational changes has a better chance of dealing with crisis. Frequent managing of change hones one's skills, increases flexibility and greatly improves career prospects. Employees often feel threatened when changes are announced and take these changes personally when the changes are in their department. "What have I done wrong?" is a common reaction among employees.

Managers are expected to help employees through the transition process and to ensure that the message is communicated clearly. Good managers must know where their loyalties lie. Even if they know that the change could generate negative consequences, they must support the decisions of management, not openly agree with employees who think that changes will have a disastrous effect.

It is your job, as manager, to win people over and make them accept change, because management is counting on you as a solid and participating change agent.