

THE ART OF SELLING CHANGE



*"All is connected ...
no one thing can change by itself."*

--Paul Hawken, "Natural Capitalism"

There is a popular product on the market sold by Frito Lay named *Smart Food*. The original developer of *Smart Food*, Ken Meyers, once said the following in a speech on managing:

"I don't care who you are or what you do, but each of you in this room is a salesperson—whether you like it or not. You're selling to both your external and internal customers. And in order for people to "change" their way of thinking and buy what you're selling, it is imperative that you listen with understanding to what they want and give them what they need!!"

Too often, we as leaders (or salespeople) are so set in our thinking that we "tell" rather than "sell" to our prospective audience. What we fail to do, is listen - really listen - to their concerns and their wants. We need to take the time to understand what will motivate the affected parties to "buy into" the new way of doing things. If we don't don the hat of the salesperson, we will lose the sale and be forced to implement change on unwilling customers!!

People frequently resist change, not because they don't want to change, but because no one has taken the time to communicate with them and help them to understand how the change will happen and what it will do. There will always be the naysayers and the pessimists, but people treated with respect for their intelligence and work ethic often surprise their leaders with their ability to help the change process be successful.

Companies pay for the minds and expertise of their employees. The employees throw in their hearts and souls for free when they are motivated to participate in a common cause that will benefit them and their fellow workers.

It's communication and planning that will help transition from "old" to "new", from the established way of doing things to the "new and improved" approach. What's often created in this process is a chasm, a gap, between the initiators and implementers of change.

To create successful organizational change, it is important to "walk a mile in the shoes" of the implementers—the customers of the change process. To do this, we must listen to their concerns, their ideas and their thoughts and through effective communication and questioning, we must identify their needs and provide them with the "best" scenario to help them "change" the way they currently do things.

Then we must "close the deal" by having them implement the change. The sales process ends when the customer "buys the change". The next phase is "customer service" - when the implementers are supported and reinforced in their efforts to change. This, too, requires a sales approach.

So you see, we are all salespeople whether we like it or not. The key is to understand what people are concerned about and what their needs are to accomplish the change.

“Consider how hard it is to change yourself, and you’ll understand what little chance you have of trying to change others.” The key is in the planning and approach. As one wag has noted: lack of planning on *your* part, does not constitute an emergency on *my* part.

Change is not the “spice of life”, but life itself. When biological systems are in stasis, there is no change and they are dead. We must seek out and embrace change to stay fully alive.

If you want to successfully implement change in your organization, you must understand the concepts set forth above and have an objective method for managing the behavioral needs of all involved. PI® and Augur Inc. can help you be successful with your change initiatives. To find out how, give us a no obligation call.

Take heart. Change is not a recent human problem as can be seen from the following:

“Panta rei” (Everything flows), that is, you cannot step into the same river twice, for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you.”

--Heraclitus, 500 B.C.

However, we are better equipped today to understand and objectively manage the process successfully.

Authored by:
Kathleen Frank, President