Successful Change Management

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Author Note: Jerusha Myrick, General Manager of Laser Precision Cutting, Inc. in Weaverville, NC, is a 2009 UNC-Asheville graduate with a B.S. degree in Industrial Engineering Management. Mrs. Myrick, a senior member of ASQ, is an ASQ Certified Manager of Quality/Organizational Excellence and an ASQ Certified Quality Auditor. In 2000, Jerusha was recognized by YWCA as a TWIN (Tribute to Women In Industry) Honoree. Mrs. Myrick plans to pursue a MS in Project Management beginning this fall. Robert Yearout, Professor of Industrial Engineering Management, University of North Carolina at Asheville (UNCA), B.S.C.E., Virginia Military Institute, M.S.S.M., University of Southern California, M.S., Ph.D., Kansas State University. LTC (US Army Special Forces, Retired). Dr. Yearout's awards include the Ruth and Leon Feldman Professorship for Outstanding Research, Distinguished Teaching Award, and UNCA Distinguished Teacher of the Year, University Service Council Award, and Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina Award for Excellence in Teaching, and Annual University Research Council Award for Scholarly and Creative Achievement. Dr. Yearout has published a significant number of articles in national and international peer reviewed journals such as IEEE Transactions on RELIABILITY, International Journal of Industrial Ergonomics, and the International Journal For Industrial Engineering Theory, Application, and Practice in subject areas directly related to his teaching expertise which includes Quality control and Production and Operations Management. He is the editor for National Conferences on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) Proceedings and a member of the Editorial Board for the International Journal For Industrial Engineering Theory, Practice, and Application.

Abstract: The economic downturn during the past few years has forced necessary changes in many organizations. The challenge has been to guide the workforce from complacency and discontentment to agreement and contentment. Just as in life, change in business can be painful. Often managers focus on the strategic and tactical changes and ignore the human responses to change, which can ultimately be quite costly. Employee resistance can cause the entire change management plan to fail. Key components for overcoming this challenge include thoughtful planning, sensitive implementations, and involvement of the employees directly affected by the changes. Participation by all levels of the organization in the planning, design and implementation of the changes helps to create a sense of ownership and ultimately, when the changes are successfully implemented, a sense of accomplishment and pride. Changes that are being implemented need to be realistic, achievable, measurable, and above all, supported by the organization's leaders. Attitudes are infectious! If the leaders do not outwardly demonstrate a strong commitment to the changes, the followers will not either. The reasons for change and the anticipated results and goals should be clearly communicated throughout the organization. Top management should strive to facilitate learning instead of training, encouraging each individual's personal development. When top management realizes that everyone learns in different ways and has different strengths and potentials, they will be able to focus on finding the developmental paths that are right for their organization and its most valuable resource, the people. Management must approach this with the attitude that the goal is progress, not necessarily perfection. When an organization has an employee or a group of employees that have embraced the changes, they should be recognized for their continued efforts. Public recognition is a tool to emphasize the organizational commitment to the change. The change should become part of the organization's culture and not fall by the wayside a week, a month, a quarter, a year down the road. This presentation describes ways to achieve this by valuing the employees above the potential profit, encouraging personal development, and recognizing individual's strengths and potential.

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