

Change happens because of the way people think, act and behave – know your people and you can manage 'change' better

In our experience the better people are motivated and managed, the better any 'change project' succeeds. And in support of this experience there have been many pieces of research conducted in the last 40 years in this particular area. The frequent conclusion is that a person's 'personality' will determine how they think, act and behave – so know your people and you should be able to manage the change process better.

Of course there has been much academic research into the subject of 'personality types'; the best known probably being Belbin's Team Types and the Myers Briggs Type Indicators.

But one piece of research we have found that is particularly useful was presented in the HUMAN RESOURCES magazine published in the autumn of 1993. The author of the article was Michael Armstrong and the article was entitled "Devil's Advocates" (*Reference the work of Andrew Pettigrew & Richard Whipp as detailed in their book Managing Change for Competitive Success – published by Blackwell, Oxford 1991*)

It was concluded that people rather than organisational structure stood in the way of 'change', and we were impressed enough with the simple pragmatic approach to start to use

the 'personality types' described, particularly when faced with a team of individuals tasked with a 'change project'. Having now used it on many occasions we are impressed with the approach – it does work!

Basically it has been observed that there are four personality types that at first glance can hinder change, and three types that can help change. However, we have concluded that even the 'hinderers' - if used properly, can be turned into 'change allies'.

4 PERSONALITY TYPES THAT HINDER:

- DOUBTERS:

Doubters actively RESIST CHANGE – they are people who can always find a good reason for not doing something. Their motto is... "When it is not necessary to change, it is necessary not to change"

- PRESERVERS:

Preservers have low curiosity and a high need of security. They favour CONSISTENCY & STABILITY – WHY CHANGE? Their motto is... "Don't rock the boat"

- DRIFTERS:

Drifters also have low curiosity but equally they have a low need for security. Drifters will be INDIFFERENT TO CHANGE, they may not be antagonistic to change but they will not support it. Their motto is... "Let it be"

- WORRIERS:

They feel that, as far as they are concerned, any CHANGE CAN ONLY BE DETRIMENTAL. They often feel threatened by the 'change agenda' because they fear they may not be able to cope and will suffer. Their motto is... "It can only get worse"

3 PERSONALITY TYPES THAT HELP:

- STEPPERS:

Steppers DO NOT MIND CHANGE and will not block it as long as the purpose is based upon exhaustive research and analysis of the existing situation. Their motto is... "Look before you leap"

- LEAPERS:

They welcome, and often SEEK CHANGE and are often described as 'visionaries'. Their motto is... "There must be a better way"

- FACILITATORS:

Facilitators not only BELIEVE IN CHANGE but are also aware of the need to carry people along with them. Their motto is... "People support what they help to create"

SO WHAT...

Well, each of the 'hinder types' has their uses:

DOUBTERS... could be right and may be worth listening to

PRESERVERS... keep you in touch with reality and can provide an historic perspective

DRIFTERS... may not make good leaders but they will not obstruct the process of change

WORRIERS... their concerns need to be investigated

And don't forget to use the 'help types' as well:

STEPPERS... can be enlisted to 'dig for data and facts' before acting

LEAPERS... are the prime movers of change AND they do exist at all levels of the organisation

FACILITATORS... play a vital role - they keep things moving, they enlist support and they

integrate the different 'strands' of the change programme.

CONCLUSION ...

It is our view that in today's uncertain and highly competitive world the 'change agenda' has become a permanent feature. That being the case then those responsible for 'managing change' will need to ensure that everyone they manage – directly or indirectly – is participating as fully as they can. Identifying their individual 'type' as described above will greatly assist in managing and motivating both the individual and the whole group.

For more information on this topic or for a face-to-face meeting with the NATION specialist on this topic, please e-mail:

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