DTD Episode 67 Show Notes

Six Strategies to Create Team Change that Sticks

Many of my new clients share complaints about employees that will not implement new processes or use new protocols. Teams often seem to do everything in their power to resist change.

Leaders are plagued with comments and complaints like these. Do any sound familiar?

- No one told me.
- This doesn't work.
- I don't understand why we have to do this!
- I keep forgetting.
- What are we supposed to do after the first part?
- The old way is way better!
- I'm not doing it!

My clients are left feeling frustrated, dis-empowered and ready to throw in the towel, resigned to the fact that change will never happen.

Once we dive in to the steps they took to make the change, however, it is easy to identify where they've missed some key elements.

If you struggle to get your team to implement change here are six surefire strategies to create team change that sticks.

1. **Get Input Up Front**:

   There are several reasons I recommend including employees before you design change.

   a. First, and most simply, you will have more buy in from your team if they participate in the design of the change. They will have a vested interest in achieving success.

   b. And, secondly, your employees have a unique perspective. They have valuable insights that can help you. Participation almost always yields better results.

Unless you are with them all day every day there are elements of the job that you are unaware of. They are creating work arounds, overcoming challenges, connecting tasks in ways you are not aware. You want that knowledge and perspective BEFORE you design change. You will want to incorporate their ideas for a better result.

c. Last, your team will feel acknowledged and respected if you ask for their opinions. Requiring change for a job they do daily without being consulted at all feels like a slap in the face. They will feel devalued. Ask their opinion and they will feel like an important part of the process.

2. **Communicate the Why's and What's:**

The Why: Why the change is happening. And if you have included them in the design of the change include the why's of using or not using their suggestions. If you ask the questions it creates the expectation that you will actually use their opinions. If you can NOT you must acknowledge their suggestions, share your appreciation and express why you were not able to incorporate them.

That What is what's in it for them. This will provide some motivation for the change. Will they gain efficiency? Will their job become easier? Will they experience some job enrichment? Will they be able to provide better service and happier customers?

3. **Document Well**

Part of the design strategy for change should include documenting the change. What will be the new process? This will provide for visual learning and will be an important resource for training for initial roll out and on going.

4. Acknowledge that Change Can be Hard

Call out the elephant in the room. Some of the resistance is resistance to change period and has nothing to do with whether the change will be good or bad. All change is stressful for some people. Show empathy, acknowledge it and then set the expectation that change will still happen. We must move on. If we didn't embrace change all of us would still be using corded, rotary telephones. Does anyone even still own one of those?

5. **Deadline and Documentation for Read it, Know it, Own It**

   Many of my clients struggle to know whether an employee has received full communication about a change. They'll roll out the change in a staff meeting and have no documentation about who was in attendance. Or, in larger organizations the communication has happened over email. They aren't sure whether it was read or digested. I always recommend creating a roll out process that can be documented with specific deadlines for "Read it, Know it, Own it."

   If you use email, for instance, include a deadline by which every employee must read it, understand, ask questions if necessary and then implement fully. Require them to send you an email response indicating they have read and fully understand the change.

   If you roll out a change in a staff meeting make sure to document who is there and then provide the documentation about the change in an email or a binder after the meeting for those who were not in attendance. Again, give a deadline for playing catch up from the missed meeting. They must get with you the leader, talk to a co-worker, read and understand, do whatever is necessary to gain a full understanding of the change by the deadline. Request that they sign a log or send you an email when the task is fully complete.

   Following a procedure like this will help you avoid the, "No one told me" excuse. They are responsible for Reading it, Knowing it, Owning it – or asking questions if they must.

6. **Hold Them Accountable**

   Once an employee has acknowledged reading, knowing, owning hold them accountable for adhering to the change. Give a little grace if there is a learning curve and your team is trying to make the transition smoothly. But stick with it and don't let them slide back. Do ask whether they have any input for required tweeks. Sometimes the design of change is not fully achieved without a trial and error period. A complaint must include an idea for how to make it better.

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