The power of emotional appeals in promoting organizational change programs

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Executive Overview

In attempting to persuade employees to support an organizational change strategy, managers usually place their prime emphasis on the cognitive elements of persuasion, using mainly rational arguments. The central message of this article is that, in any change implementation program, the emotional elements of persuasion must be taken into consideration. The importance of emotions in organizations is discussed, and practical methods on how to use emotions in the change process are offered. These methods are organized around five domains: the core messages, how the messages are packaged, the characteristics of the change leaders, the interaction of change leaders with their audience, and the setting in which interactions with employees take place.

The organization of registered disabled people in Israel initiated during 2000 a program to change what it saw as the inadequate and unjust state benefits package to which the disabled are entitled. In an attempt to radically change government policy toward disabled people, the organization presented its demands to government officials and tried to persuade them to increase their benefits. The plan was strongly opposed by all government officials, who argued that it would cost too much and would break the financial balance of the country, as other sectors would jump on the bandwagon and demand more money. Organized protests and struggles to change the policy were ignored. The cause seemed hopeless, and the protesters appeared to have no means of exerting pressure on the government. Facing this situation, they decided to change their persuasion tactics. The daily protests continued, but with widespread media coverage. Leaders and others, all in their wheelchairs, appeared on television, explaining their difficulties, and painting in colorful and vivid details the everyday hardships they faced. Some of them were sobbing during interviews. The widespread media coverage of the protest caused an upsurge of public support for the disabled protest-

ers, and officials were seen as cruel and callous. Continued coverage of the negotiations with government officials granted the protesters much leverage throughout the talks, and eventually led to the attainment of their goals. It was widely accepted that the emotions the disabled aroused were the main cause for the change in government policy.

This process of using emotional appeals to promote significant changes is relevant to many organizational change contexts. Why is it the case that managers and workers sometimes respond more strongly to an emotional appeal than to a rational one? What is it in the emotional message that gives it this power?

In today's turbulent work environment, where change is the common experience, organizations must continually cope with new situations in order to survive and prosper. The central strategic challenge of managers is managing changes. Managing change is a complicated, sensitive mission, which requires moving through several stages and executing different tasks: organizational diagnosis, planning, formulating a vision, communicating, persuading others, and consolidating the change.[1] These different activities require using a

variety of abilities and overcoming many potential pitfalls along the way.

Managers can handle change by reacting to the events surrounding any change—adjusting to the new situation or using new methods to exploit the change. Managers may deal with change by anticipating it—foreseeing what is going to happen and making the proper preparations to align with the expected forthcoming events. Managing change at its most challenging level is being a leader of change—being the first one to introduce methods, standards, and products that others will have to compete with.[2]

In spite of the typical condition of need and urgency preceding change initiatives, many planned organizational changes fail.[3] Managers often falter in their most crucial mission—managing change effectively. There are many factors that can contribute to slow implementation or termination of change efforts.[4] One of the main reasons for failure is the inability to induce others to support the change and to commit themselves to its successful realization.[5] The new behaviors required by individuals as a result of the change commonly evoke disturbing responses, such as denial, objections, feelings of stress and cynicism, and reduced organizational commitment. This article focuses on the methods by which managers can gain broad acceptance and support of a change plan from all those who may be affected by it.

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Resistance to change has several causes. Uncertainty and the perceived loss of control the change program induces are crucial contributors to resistance. In addition, the expected losses—to the self and the organization—incurred by the change, and the mistrust employees feel toward the change agents and the process of change implementation, are among the most mentioned reasons for employees' rejection of proposed changes.[6]

Communication is believed to be the key to overcoming resistance to change.[7] Open and effective communication is considered the most effective way to reduce uncertainty, to strengthen employees' sense of control, demonstrate the advantages and benefits of the change, and build trusting relationships between management and subordinates. But what is effective communication in the context of change? How can managers alleviate resistance to change?

Communication has two main components: a rational component and an emotional component. Managers seem to invest most of their communication efforts in the rational aspect. The main goal of this article is to emphasize the importance of using emotional elements when delivering information about the expected change. We will attempt to show that a major factor in determining the success or failure of a change program is the tactics used by employers when trying to convince employees to accept the change. These tactics must involve emotional elements because emotional elements are essential to persuading others and to overcoming resistance to change plans.

The idea that organizational activities are rational, logical, and nonemotional is well rooted. Organizations have definite objectives, and to fulfill their missions they must use rational methods—analysis, systematic calculation, examination of external and internal forces, logical decision making, and precise ordering of activities. Organizational meetings are built around charts, tables, numbers, figures, and predictions, focusing on where the organization is and where it ought to be in the future. Emotions, according to a generally accepted view, are not relevant to organizations, and they may even impede work performance. Interest in the role of emotions in organizational life has occurred only recently.[8] Several studies have shown that emotions experienced at work are highly relevant and may affect motivation, organizational citizenship behavior, performance appraisal, and negotiation outcomes.[9]

Although the professional literature dealing with organizational change emphasizes the critical necessity of recruiting the support of all those who are going to be affected by the change, the emotional aspects of change implementation are often ignored. Change programs in organizations are events that arouse intense emotions. The antecedents to initiating change—usually a crisis or an opportunity—are themselves strong generators of emotions. As the idea of the change is spread throughout the organization, many people may become anxious and tense. The leaders of change seem to perceive these emotions as one of the burdens that they must endure, and not as a potential tool for securing the willingness, commitment, and efforts of subordinates in the process of the change. Instead, they try to turn to the safety of concrete facts, descriptions, graphs, and data to show how the change program is going to resolve organizational problems or take advantage of the given opportunities and pave the road for organizational growth.

Cognition in Persuasion Communication

The literature on implementation of change urges managers to communicate with their employees. Managers are encouraged to talk about the change as openly as possible, as early as possible, and as much as they can in order to minimize or eliminate resistance.[10] In the case of a major change such as a merger or acquisition, researchers assert: "It seems that the only way for management to deal with the anxiety that follows a merger or acquisition announcement is to communicate with employees as soon as possible about all the anticipated effects of the change."[11] The recommended form of communication involves explanations as to why the change is needed, providing facts and information regarding the faults of the present situation, and including a portrayal of the organization after the change has been successfully implemented, illustrating the opportunities it will open and the benefits it will create. This communication should elaborate on the stages of the change program. The main idea is to provide the employees with as broad a package of information as possible concerning what is about to occur and the reasons for it.

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Behind this approach lies an assumption that the employees' reactions are guided solely by rational thought. Therefore, the explanations and information should be carefully considered and processed by the recipients, the benefits of the change plan should be clear to them, and, consequently, they should be easily persuaded to hold a positive attitude toward the change. Presenting strong arguments regarding the importance and the inevitability of the change should dilute any resistance the employees may have against the change, and thus the road to fully implementing the change program should be smooth.

The motivations for people's behavior are like an enormous iceberg emerging above the water, whereas most of the iceberg is submerged and invisible. Like the tip of the iceberg, only a small part of human motivations can be seen. This metaphor is applicable to the context of the change process. Management frequently concentrates only on what is seen—the tip of the iceberg—and

attempts to use rational methods to push a process forward, ignoring that the underlying motivation for human behavior sometimes lies in the invisible, submerged part of the iceberg—the nonrational sphere.

The rational emphasis of managers when implementing change programs is derived from the assumption that there is full consonance between the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of human experience. They assume that changing the way employees think about the change will lead to changes in the way they feel about the change and the actions they will take towards the change. Therefore, a rational appeal should have a domino effect on the person's entire approach toward the change.

Although this view is valid on many occasions, there are many other situations where it is not well founded. In some instances, the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of life are not harmonious. They may be independent of one another, or even be in conflict. There are many instances in which our heart tells us one thing and our head another, when our feelings and thoughts are in conflict, with each trying to take over the other. Remarks such as "Let's put feelings aside for a moment and discuss this objectively," or, "I know he is crazy, but I like him anyway," are common.

Some of the dominant researchers argue forcibly that affective processes operate independently of cognitive processes, claiming that affective reactions precede cognitive processes.[12] The individual first feels and then justifies his or her feelings. Feelings, which are reflected in evaluation, are a basic and universal element of perception. A person may hold many positive arguments in favor of something, without communicating his or her feelings about it. Some types of behavior may be more cognitively driven, and other types more affectively driven.

Emotional appeals can help establish a sense of urgency for the change, for delivering the vision to accomplish the desired objectives, and for forming a powerful coalition of employees who embrace the change plan. This is supported both by the assumption that cognition and feelings are closely interrelated, and by the assumption that sometimes they are in conflict. When there is a strong relation between cognitive and emotional facets, affecting the emotions will lead cognitive elements to align with them. However, when one's emotions and cognitions are not in full congruence, ignoring the emotional aspect of the change and appealing only to rationality may keep firm the employees' emotional objection to the change.

Forms of Communicating Cognitions and Emotions

Feeling, thinking, and doing are sometimes incongruous because they are distinguished by the different forms of communication they use, creating conversation barriers among them. Essentially, each facet uses a form of communication that is foreign to the other. The main forms of communication the cognitive component uses and understands are words, arguments, rationales, analysis, information, numbers, and graphs. Cognitive processes consist of thinking, analyzing, and drawing conclusions.

The emotional facet understands and uses a fundamentally different means of communication, including pictures, colors, voices, music, taste, smell, atmosphere, pain, sensation, aesthetic objects, and songs. It also includes identification with a person, and refers to the moral value of the change. Emotional processes include feelings of happiness, anger, irritation, sadness, love, fear, and relief. They are highly related to ego involvement and motivation, and are more strongly related to physiological reactions than are the cognitive processes. Generally, many affective judgments are difficult to verbalize. Emotions are very often not translated into semantic content. Instead, they are reflected in visceral or muscular activities.

Emotions may rapidly mobilize and direct behavior. An emotional appeal may establish a connection between the proposed change and the employee, a strategy known in marketing as bonding. Emotional appeals are perceived more easily, are likely to be memorized, and can make the subject more familiar, consequently increasing people's involvement with it. Emotional aspects are frequently more important and more relevant to the change effort than cognitive aspects.

This is clearly illustrated in the literature on leadership, where a significant factor behind the success of the situational leader is the ability to utilize a crisis for his or her own benefit. This is done by harnessing the extreme, negative emotions the crisis arouses in people by using emotional arguments, and then appearing able to satisfy the needs of the people. Emotions are very important in transformational leadership, where the leader builds a vision that portrays a positive future picture to attract followers and build and strengthen the leadership base.[13] Emotions must be taken into account when building a leadership vision. If not, it is unlikely that the vision will win the support of the workforce.

Methods for Affecting Emotions

How can we tap the emotional components of human behavior? How can managers touch the emotional side of those who are going to be affected by the change and bring about positive emotions toward the change?

To affect emotions of those involved in the change process, managers should consider all aspects of their interaction with those who are going to be affected by the change. Five main domains should be considered: the core messages regarding the change, how the messages are packaged, the characteristics of the change leaders, the interaction of change leaders with their audience, and the setting in which the interactions with employees takes place.

Managers should take into consideration the tension and anxiety the employees are experiencing about the prospect of change. These emotions should be seen as tools facilitating a connection with employees, rather than as a burden to be dealt with. At the same time, the change program has to build excitement and anticipation. This can be achieved by delivering the information about the change in a positive tone and using trustworthy communicators in a pleasant environment. This communication ideally should build upon an existing working environment of healthy day-to-day interaction. Engaging others and listening to their needs creates general positive feelings which may turn resistance into support.

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Core messages regarding the change

The content of the messages should include emotional arguments regarding the change and appropriate metaphors.

Emotional arguments

Managers should consider incorporating into their messages both rational and emotional arguments regarding the proposed change. When describing the present situation of the organization, they should address the possible negative consequences the employees may suffer should the change fail to be implemented, using words with an emotional connotation, such as danger, loss, unpleasantness, and risk, as well as depicting the

future condition of the organization after the change has taken place, using words that engender positive feelings and optimism, such as comfortable, convenient, success, progress, pleasure, and relief, and portraying the organization after the change in vivid and rich detail.

In 1979, Antioch College and its far-flung network of learning centers faced a financial crisis because of declining enrollments and federal support, which brought it near bankruptcy. In addition, pressure to dissolve the network started to build. Dr. William Birnbaum, who was hired as president, succeeded in overcoming the crisis and in unifying the learning centers into a national university, based on the values and standards of Antioch's tradition. Birnbaum explicitly presented the facts regarding the difficulties facing the institution and communicated authority and optimism to the governing bodies. In addition, he used the crisis as an opportunity to restate the institution's mission to provide an education to the underprivileged, and to raise themes unique to Antioch, such as community government, or the idea that liberal education must be connected to practical work in the marketplace. These themes touched the emotional chords of both alumni and faculty and contributed to the success of the transition.[14]

Metaphors

When managers wish to persuade employees to adopt a change plan, it is important that they incorporate metaphors into their messages. A metaphor is "a figure of speech containing an implied comparison, in which a word or phrase ordinarily and primarily used for one thing is applied to another, e.g., the curtain of night."[15] Reality does not have only an objective meaning; it also has a symbolic meaning that is loaded with emotions. Metaphors are effective devices for transmitting and creating symbolic realities. They evoke rich emotional associations and fantasies that bypass logic. Metaphors make the strange familiar, and also embellish and vivify the messages.[16] Working with metaphors is particularly important when a significant change is being introduced. People in this situation feel nervous and excited and are likely to experience difficulties expressing themselves. Metaphors give them a way of explaining their perceptions indirectly, yet lucidly. When a manager introduces new metaphors as part of his or her vision, it is vital that these metaphors are not too far removed from those already held by employees. Otherwise they will not be able to relate to them. Creating accepted, positive organizational metaphors can help managers bring about

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When organizations are going through a major change, employees need to acquire an understanding of their organization as an open system, influenced by and influencing its environment. The organization must also see itself as having a warm, open relationship between its management and employees. One effective way to achieve this is by changing the dominant metaphor from one that represents a rigid system and cold approach, such as that of a machine, to one that evokes a more caring and flexible system, such as the family.

Another example of metaphors in a change process is selecting employees to form a work team. For those employees, this change will involve a total shift in their work paradigm. They will be asked to form a culture of creativity, cooperation, synergy, and autonomy. In such a case, the manager may use a shift between two metaphors to explain this change; for example, the shift from a symphony orchestra into a jazz band.

A human resources manager of a semiconductor manufacturing plant shared her experience regarding the impact of metaphors on the feelings of employees when they were informed of the company's decision to close the plant. At the beginning, the dominant metaphor used by the corporate staff was "turning off the lights." This metaphor was perceived by the employees as reflecting the disrespect and insensitivity of the management toward them at their most difficult time. The bitterness of the employees was intensified when the local press referred to the plant closure process as "handing out pink slips." A change in the emotional state was observed when people started to use the "grieving process" metaphor to reflect the transition process they had undergone. The HR manager said this metaphor helped her and many other employees become more proactive in coping with the new predicament. (Other employees, however, were prompted by this metaphor to focus on their grief, rather than looking forward.)[17]

Packaging the message

The content of the messages should be presented using various emotional modes of communication. Incorporating humor into the communication and displaying emotions are effective ways of attracting attention and causing the message to be accepted and digested more easily.

Emotional mode of communication

The messages regarding the change should be delivered in various ways, with emphasis on the appropriate mode of communication for emotions. The messages should include pictures, slogans, music, and colors. These tools are very effective as a means of catching the attention and interest of people in the organization and creating a link between their emotions and the change process. As the tunes and the slogans catch on, they may become part of the organizational vocabulary and culture. It is vital that these tools be used cautiously and sensitively. In some organizational settings, these methods do not always fit with the culture and norms of the organization, and employees may perceive them as an inappropriate attempt to manipulate their feelings. Overexposure to any of the components can lead to antagonism towards the whole campaign and what it stands for.

The Israeli Aircraft Industry, one of the largest organizations in Israel, successfully implemented a TQM program in 1990. The widespread acceptance of this change was attributed to the quality of the communication modes used for marketing the new program. A special logo was designed, displaying the title of the program and its main components; the logo incorporated the messages of continuous improvement and employee involvement. A large, colored poster decorated with the logo, and showing the picture of the CEO expressing the core message of TQM, was displayed throughout the organization. Also, attractive key chains, featuring another slogan saying that the plant adopted the total quality management principles, were distributed to employees.

A plant manager of an American corporation had difficulty gaining the support of his employees for a transformation he saw crucial to the unit's survival. Since the unit, at the time, was successful and flourishing, the employees did not perceive the potential crises and the new opportunities facing the organization, and did not have any sense of urgency to adopt new practices. The manager's initial attempts to communicate with the employees and persuade them were met with indifference. Searching for a different way of persuasion, the manager traveled around his town taking pictures of other plants that were closed down. The pictures showed the broken windows and the weeds covering the plants' parking lots. In his next communication session, he projected these pictures on a screen behind him and asked people to think about those who had worked in the closed plants. He said this fate might await their corporation unless the intended changes were implemented. He also reassured his audience that those who wished to retire from the plant might do so, and that he did not intend to throw anyone out in the street, as had the other plants. These messages were the turning points in changing the employees' attitudes. From that point on they were open to accepting the change plan and investing efforts to implement it.[18]

Humor

The use of humor in communication creates a pleasant atmosphere and generates good feelings. Humorous messages gain and keep an audience's attention,[19] put listeners at ease, and show that the change agents are human. Subordinates show more liking for managers who are high in humor, and view them as more effective.[20] Humor releases tension and allows the change agents to make statements about aspects of the change more easily than delivering them outright. Humor has the power to bridge distances between managers and employees; as both sides laugh together, they may identify with one another and with the same larger picture. This unity may create a new and more favorable perspective for the change.[21] Using humor as a tool in communicating the change requires competency and sensitivity. Inappropriate humor may lead the change program to be perceived as a farce and may form the impression that the change agents are not thoughtful regarding the program.

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Displaying emotions

In face-to-face interactions with employees, communicators should display emotions while presenting their arguments. Cold presentations are not likely to be attended to. Smiles, enthusiasm,

and pride should be displayed. Liking, trusting, and respecting the audience are critical. Emotional displays that convey the warmth of the communicator and his or her confidence in the change contribute to the effectiveness of the messages.[22]

Transformational leaders constantly make use of facial expressions to reinforce their verbal messages. Former U.S. president Bill Clinton, for example, accompanies his positive verbal themes with rich emotional expressions including smiles, open body posture, changes in speech tones, and sensitive and expressive eyes.

Managers should not only reflect their feelings, but also legitimize employees' feelings. In communication sessions, leaders should let their subordinates feel free and confident to express their emotions regarding the change. Listening to people's hopes and dreams, encouraging them to express their fears and doubts, and enabling them to present their visions of the future of the organization may lead them to feel that management is attentive to their concerns and respectful of their feelings. There are several advantages to encouraging employees to express their feelings. Generally, managers may learn of the underlying sentiment in the organization and obtain a broader picture of employees' attitudes toward change. In addition, this unleashing of emotions may serve as a ventilation process that may calm down potential aggregates of blocked emotions that may otherwise erupt in undesirable forms.

The senior management of a hospital discussed possible changes in the role of the maintenance staff. One issue was whether to allow maintenance workers to assist patients with simple tasks, such as giving them bedpans when no nurses were available. Convincing arguments were made by people on both sides of the proposal. When a maintenance worker emotionally expressed the degradation he felt when he was not authorized to perform such a simple task for a patient, the matter was settled in favor of the change.[23]

Characteristics of change leaders

The messages delivered to employees regarding change should be conducted, as in effective advertisements, by a credible, likeable, and attractive source. People will perceive their managers as credible when there is congruence between the values expressed by the managers verbally and those expressed by their actions, when they adhere to moral and ethical principles, and when they are competent, knowledgeable, open, and concerned. In addition, change leaders have to be perceived as motivated to tell the truth and not as

having vested interests in the change.

Communicators who are attractive and likeable are more persuasive than those with less positive attributes. When employees meet with communicators they evaluate positively, they listen to their messages more attentively and are more ready to accept them. The most important element contributing to effective communication is the trust employees feel toward the leader, and, as a result, toward the change process. Credibility, likeableness, and attractiveness are the essential ingredients in building trust. Also important is the trust managers show toward subordinates. When employees perceive that their managers trust them, they tend to reciprocate by trusting their managers.[24]

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When Leonard Bernstein became conductor of the Vienna Philharmonic orchestra, he wanted to schedule the symphonies of Gustav Mahler into the orchestra's repertoire, in spite of the opposition from his musicians, who thought Mahler too pompous. Their tremendous admiration for Bernstein led the musicians to play the works of Mahler wholeheartedly and joyfully.[25]

Behavior of change managers toward their employees

Change agents should treat their subordinates in fair and honest ways, letting them raise their objections and sympathizing with their needs.

Fairness and justice

When employees feel the procedures by which the decisions are made are fair, their resistance to change may be diminished, even if the results of change are not positive for them. Having a voice is one of the antecedents of this sense of procedural justice. It enables employees to express their views to the change leaders regarding change and the way it is implemented. Decisions regarding change should be made only after having adequately considered the views and rights of the employees. These decisions should be consistent and without personal bias. When managers do not violate moral principles and when they treat employees in an honest and courteous manner, the

employees will develop positive emotions towards change and change leaders, and their resistance will be minimized.[26]

Listening to employees' objections with sincerity, sympathizing with their needs and concerns, and taking into consideration their attitudes are effective ways to gain cooperation. Letting employees voice their objections may turn their negative emotions into positive feelings toward the change agents and their plans.

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The result of disrespectful behavior of change leaders towards their subordinates is demonstrated in the case of a major information-technology company that underwent a large internal restructuring program under a new management group. During this process, according to Q.N. Huy, the management undermined basic human values of morality and justice by trampling on the loyalty and trust of long-serving middle managers. For example, management belittled these veterans in public as being incompetent. This led to mistrust of the new top managers, strong resistance to change, and increased absenteeism and turnover.[27]

The setting

Group dynamics and ceremonies are useful means for delivering the messages of change. To arouse positive emotions toward the change, all the communications should be made in a pleasant atmosphere.

Group dynamics

A strong, cohesive group can control many important aspects of behavior. Promoting change is more effective when a group decides that its members should change their behavior than when a lecturer encourages the change.[28] The vast literature dealing with teamwork demonstrates that giving more responsibility to work groups, which allows for more participation in important decisions, may improve productivity, and also serves as a basis for support of the individual's social and emotional needs.

Efforts to change behavior can be supported or hindered by group pressure. Thus the group should be the catalyst for change. When the group contains significant elements in favor of the change, the general atmosphere will be supportive, and group members who were doubtful and suspicious about the change may adopt the positive mood that fosters the change. The leader of the organization has to locate change agents in each work group, make them active partners in the change process, and teach them how to transfer the message. The most important factor is to get people excited about the program and emotionally committed to the project. When the group accepts the change, it becomes a very influential force in the wider organizational change plan.

Changes at the Bayer Corporation were achieved by involving, all along the way, groups of workers. First, the HR team selected employees at random and conducted seven focus-group meetings in which the state of the corporation was discussed. The information elicited was transferred to employees who did not take part in these focus groups. They were asked to comment on the findings. Afterwards, another crossfunctional employee team, consisting of volunteers from all organizational levels, was formed to conceive and recommend improvements to the organization operations. The team, called Roadmap for Change, held a three-day offsite marathon meeting where the main initiatives and plans for the change were formulated. Several all-employee meetings were then held, where all the initiatives were communicated. Electronic newsletters were sent to the site management team, who exchanged their comments and ideas with those who reported to them. Managers held group meetings where employees could raise their doubts, fears, and pessimistic views regarding the change plans. After months of hard work, many of the change objectives were achieved. The corporation, which started the change process with serious difficulties, succeeded in overcoming most of them. Managing the change by means of groups, and with active involvement of many employees, was the key factor in this success.[29]

Ceremonies

Ceremonies are an effective way to play on people's emotional chords. A ceremony celebrating the introduction of the change program should be well organized, with a stimulating content, and held in dignified and pleasant surroundings. Participants will be influenced by the content of the ceremony, and by its trappings and surroundings, which will lead them to see the changes as being of greater significance. The decorations and

adornments of the change ceremony may cause the audience to perceive the importance and the positive aspects of the change program. In addition, ceremonies are important indicators for workers as to how well the change program is progressing. They are an opportunity to give workers positive reinforcement for having reached a significant stage. Such ceremonies may carry with them a wave of positive emotions that will persist long after the ceremony is over.

There is another aspect to holding ceremonies to mark significant organizational changes. Changes commonly include relinquishing old ways of thinking and behaving and replacing them with new ones. People have to do away with their old habits and life perspectives and start living with the new ones. Ceremonies are effective ways to celebrate the past before departing from it. Ceremonies marking significant organizational changes are akin to rituals celebrated in every culture when there are significant losses or life transitions (e.g., bar mitzvahs, weddings, and funerals). In these rituals, important aspects of the past are presented and summarized, and a new direction is justified. Some rituals consist of the expression of pain together with hope for a meaningful future. In separations, people need to mourn the loss, commemorate the past, build a bridge between the past and the future, and pave the way to the future. Organizational rituals should include these elements; without them, people are blocked from facing their losses.[30]

Pleasant atmosphere

Information about the proposed changes should be given in a positive, pleasant atmosphere. Providing information about change in a manner that is too formal and cold may augment the conflict between one's emotions and cognitions. Transmitting the information in pleasant, intimate, convenient, and aesthetic surroundings contributes to the coordination between reason and feelings. This creates a conditioning between the positive emotions linked to the pleasant environment and the planned change. People will be more willing to cooperate with the change process if it is associated with their positive feelings.

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In marketing research, it is well recognized that contextual factors moderate the impact of persuasive communications on message recipients. The mood of the recipients is one of the contextual factors that has a significant effect on responses to persuasive communications. A 1998 study, for instance, showed that negative mood induced by a television program hampered the processing of the advertisements embedded in the show. Creating a positive mood when delivering a message of change will enable workers to pay more attention to the communication and its meanings.[31]

Politicians and marketing experts, who are often tremendously effective in promoting ideas, use many of the suggestions mentioned in this article. Their methods include concentrating on the overall style, tone, and setting of their message, using different media, building up the messages through repetitive and compelling communications, linking ideas with desirable social attributes and value-related goals, using attractive celebrities to present their ideas or products, and displaying the messages in an attractive setting and atmosphere. Adopting such tactics may also be effective in promoting organizational change programs.

Changing Attitudes

Social psychologists have long been aware of the difficulty of changing attitudes simply by providing information or appealing to logic by presenting the pros and cons of the change. Without incorporating emotional appeals, the efforts to minimize resistance to change may be fruitless. A prominent researcher noted: "If we stop to consider just how much variance in the course of our lives is controlled by cognitive processes and how much by affect, and how much the one and the other influence the important outcomes in our lives, we cannot but agree that affective phenomena deserve far more attention than they have received from cognitive psychologists and closer scrutiny from social psychologists."[32] Managers and change agents should be added to the list of those who should seriously consider affective reactions to their change programs.

Endnotes

[1] There are several references dealing with phases in implementing change. For example: Armenakis, A., Harris, S., & Field,

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[2] See Brown, S. L., & Eisenhardt, K. M. 1998. *Competing on the edge*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

[3] See Cascio, W. F. 1995. Whither industrial and organizational psychology in a changing world of work? *American Psychologist*, 50: 928–939; and Beer, M., Eisenstat, R. A., & Spector, B. 1990. Why change programs don't produce change. *Harvard Business Review*, 67(6): 158–166.

[4] See Kotter, J. 1995. Leading change: Why transformation efforts fail. *Harvard Business Review*, 72(2): 59–67. Kotter lists eight errors common to organizational change efforts.

[5] See Maurer, R. 1996. *Beyond the wall of resistance*. Austin, TX: Bard Books.

[6] See Fox, S. 1998. *The psychology of resistance to change*. Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press (Hebrew). Fox lists 21 common causes for resistance. Also see O'Toole, J. 1995. *Leading change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

[7] Schweiger, D. M., & DeNisi, A. S. 1991. Communication with employees following a merger: A longitudinal field experiment. *Academy of Management Journal*, 34: 110–135; See also Wanberg, C. R., & Banas, J. T. 2000. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85: 132–142.

[8] See, for example, the special issue of *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 1999, 8(3), which was dedicated to emotion at work. See also S. Fineman, (Ed.), 1993. *Emotions in organizations*. London: Sage, and the popularization of emotional intelligence by Goleman, D. 1998. *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. New York: Bantam. Huy's article contributed to the increasing salience of emotions in organizations in the context of change. See Huy, Q. N. 1999. Emotional capability, emotional intelligence, and radical change. *Academy of Management Review*, 24: 325–345.

[9] See Briner, R. B. 1999. The neglect and importance of emotion at work. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 8: 323–346.

[10] See, for example, Clarke, L. 1994. *The essence of change*. New York: Prentice-Hall; and Kotter, op. cit.: 59–67. One of the reasons for failed change programs is what Kotter calls "undercommunicating the vision by a factor of ten," namely, the change leaders do not communicate the new approach sufficiently. "Without credible communication, and a lot of it, the hearts and minds of the troops are never captured" (63). And, "The guiding principle is simple: use every possible channel, especially those that are being wasted on nonessential information" (64).

[11] Schweiger & DeNisi, op. cit., 111.

[12] Zajonc, R. B. 1980. Feeling and thinking: Preferences need no inferences. *American Psychologist*, 35: 151–175. In this classic article, Zajonc presents impressive evidence regarding the dominance and primacy of affective reactions, their separation from content, and the different processes used for emotions and cognitions.

[13] See Roberts, N. C. 1985. Transforming leadership: A process of collective action. *Human Relations*, 38: 1023–1046.

[14] See the comprehensive analysis of Antioch's transition in Warren, D. L. 1984. Managing in crisis: Nine principles for successful transition. In J. R. Kimberly & R. E. Quinn, (Eds.), *Managing organizational transitions*: 85–106. Homewood, IL: Irwin.

[15] *Webster's New World Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 1976. Cleveland, OH: William Collins Sons & Co., Ltd.

[16] See Illes, L. M., & Ritchie, J. B. 1999. Change metaphor: Grappling with the two-headed organizational behemoth. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 8: 91–100. See also Hamburger, Y., & Yitzchayak, U. 1998. Metaphors and organizational conflict. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 26: 383–398.

[17] Illes & Ritchie, op. cit.

[18] This case is recorded in Pasmore, W. A. 1994. *Changing strategic change*. New York: Wiley.

[19] See Wanzer, M. B., & Bainbridge Frymier, A. 1999. The relationship between student perception of instructor humor and student's reports of learning. *Communication Education*, 48: 46–62.

[20] Rizzo, B. J. 1997. A source and receiver oriented view of humor in the workplace. Master's thesis. Canisius College, Buffalo, NY.

[21] See, Kahn, W. A. 1989. Toward a sense of organizational humor: Implications for organizational diagnosis and change. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 25: 45–63.

[22] Briner, op. cit.

[23] Mauer, op. cit.

[24] One main source dealing with the impact of the source of information is Petty, R. E., & Wegener, D. T. 1998. Attitude change: Multiple roles for persuasion variables. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey, (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology*: 323–390. New York: McGraw-Hill. Implications of source credibility on the change process are given in Simons, T. L. 1999. Behavioral integrity as a critical ingredient for transformational leadership. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 12: 89–104.

[25] This example is reported by Maurer, op. cit., 177–178.

[26] See Greenberg, J. 1995. *The quest for justice on the job*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Greenberg presents several studies that show the importance of organizational justice and its implications for many aspects of organizational life.

[27] See Huy, Q. N. 2000. Do humanistic values matter? *Academy of Management Proceedings*, ODC: A1.

[28] Lewin, K. 1947. Frontiers in group dynamics. *Human Relations*, 1: 5–41; Lewin, K. 1947. Group decision and social change. In T. M. Newcomb & E. L. Hartley, (Eds.), *Readings in social psychology*: 390–344. New York: Holt.

[29] Bayer Corporation won *Workforce* magazine's Optimas Award for managing change. See the details of this change project in Laabs, J., & Danchisko, J. *Workforce*. Paving the way to profitability. March 2000, 66–70.

[30] See Albert, S. 1984. A delete design for successful transitions. In Kimberly & Quinn, op. cit.

[31] Ayelesworth, A. B., & MacKenzie, S. B. 1998. Context is key: The effect of program-induced mood on thoughts about the ad. *Journal of Advertising*, 27: 17–31.

[32] Zajonc, op. cit., 172.
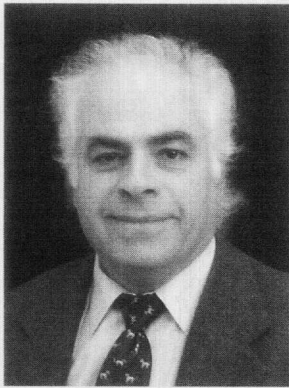
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Executive Commentary

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The year is 1963, the city is Washington, D.C., 250,000 people march on the capital, one of the 20th century's most influential leaders proclaims: "I have a dream." Thus climaxed one of the most emotional, compelling, quoted, and effective appeals of our lifetime. A great deal of planning had been put into the march and into the movement. A great deal of planning had been put into the speech. And a great deal of planning had been devoted to the events that immediately preceded and followed this speech. How effective do you think Dr. King's speech would have been if he had stated: "I have a plan"?

Dr. King's use of emotive language put the nation on the march for change. He recognized how critical it is to pay attention to the affective needs of people when implementing plans for sustainable change. In business, a small number of highly educated, compensated, and motivated individuals engage in a great deal of expensive market research and presentation preparation. They do this to deliver coherent, cognitively based arguments to top executives to support their plans for change. Fox and Amichai-Hamburger point out that cognitive arguments are only part of change management. To implement and sustain change the organization must use affective logic and communication, the sequencing of ideas or deductions in which the connecting factors are emotional.

In most companies, change is imposed on the employees, as opposed to being initiated by them. Human beings have a natural fear of change, and when change is imposed they feel a loss of control. Effective change management turns emotion into an advantage by focusing on the positive and giving some sense of control back to employees.

Communication is an effective tool to return a sense of control to your employees. A common mechanism is to ask for feedback. A preferred method of getting feedback is to be straightforward and ask: "What do you think?" This question is then followed by a deliberate pause, giving the respondent an opportunity to answer. By asking this simple question, and, more importantly, actively listening to the response, you begin the process of returning control to a person who was not actively involved in crafting the change.

Another device the article addresses is the packaging of the message of change and the use of pictures, slogans, music, and colors to involve the emotions of the employees.

As an example, the president of the Food and Support Services (FSS) division of our company set four major business goals to achieve in 2001. The goals in and of themselves were very dry business terms: new business growth, earnings-before-interest-and-taxes margin improvement, customer retention, and employee retention. But the president, an avid car-racing enthusiast, created an auto-racing metaphor, "The FSS 500," where the objectives, incentives and communications about the effort were all tied to a concept that employees could identify with: a race. While the business goals are quantifiable and cold, the auto-racing metaphor has enabled him to consistently communicate his messages in a sensory and emotive fashion that reaches the person, not just the employee. Any communication to the business or rec-

ognition of outstanding performance has been tied to the racing metaphor. He has sent racing flags, scale-model racing cars, chronographs, racing photos, and racing artwork that incorporate our company logo with updates on the business unit's progress in the race.

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Emotive communication is used by organizations and companies to connect with customers and consumers, and by executives trying to motivate their organizations. This article helps us understand just how powerful emotions are in driving change.

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