
----- WHAT'S UP, DOC? -----

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THIS MONTH'S THEME: ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Since Spring is here, and Spring is a time of change, I thought I would dedicate this issue to organizational change. It seems timely, since there are a lot of change efforts going on here in Washington, D. C. lately.

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THIS MONTH'S QUOTE:

I like this quote, because it playfully points out how stubbornly we can all resist change - or "reform." This is especially true in large groups of people, which become accustomed to their rituals and habits, however outdated. Ever try to take a bone from a "man's best friend?"

"Reform consists in taking a bone from a dog." -- John Jay Chapman

1. HOW TO BUILD A CHANGE COALITION

GET TO KNOW THE CHANGE ADOPTION CURVE, AND PLAN YOUR CHANGE EFFORT STRATEGICALLY BY UNDERSTANDING YOUR TARGET AUDIENCES

Ever hear the term "early adopter?" It's been used a lot in marketing, and in studies of market penetration during the tech boom. But the term comes from the work of Everett M. Rogers in the early 1960's, when he studied how all groups of people - countries, societies, etc. - get to the point of adopting truly or innovative practices. To build a change coalition, plan your campaign with the different kinds of change groups in mind. Note: we can all be parts of

any of these groups - it all depends on the nature of the proposed change!

FIRST PART OF THE PROCESS: IDENTIFY THE INNOVATORS

These are the people who by nature always want to try new things. They like to be at the front of the process. They try a lot of things that never make it, but they always are up for something new. They make up, on average, just 2.5% of any group. Chances are, if you are a manager, these are the people who wanted the change to be made even before you did! You will likely already have these people on your side; they don't take much convincing. Rogers describes these people as "venturesome."

SECOND PART OF THE PROCESS: IDENTIFY EARLY ADOPTERS

These are people who are typically opinion leaders - they naturally seem to have the respect of most others. These are the people that others want to check with to see if a change is worth doing. These influential people are not as adventurous as innovators, but will typically be keeping track of what things are new to see what might be worthwhile - they think that change can be good and sometimes should be sought out. They are like the gatekeepers for the rest of the group when it comes to trying something new. They can be anyone, regardless of title or position - the power they hold in the group is based on their personal character, judgment and credibility, and not based on title. If you are a manager leading initiating a change, you might be an early adopter, and any change leader wants to start a change campaign by targeting these people - because their influence is essential and their resistance will make any change efforts futile. Early adopters make up about 13.5% of any population.

THIRD PART OF THE PROCESS: TARGET THE EARLY MAJORITY

These people are a bit more conservative than the early adopters. Rogers calls these people "deliberate." They adopt new ideas just before the average member of any group does, but don't tend to keep track of things that might be new and exciting. They take longer to believe in a new change, and don't tend to hold positions of opinion leadership. They follow change with "deliberate willingness," but won't lead a change. Rogers defined this group as making up about 34% of a population, on average, and so if you add up the percentages so far, you get 50% or half the whole group. If you are leading a change effort, your initial coalition has to include unity among your early adopters, and then go after winning over the early majority. Too many change efforts fail because change leaders start out by trying to win over the most resistant elements, instead of building strategically and incrementally so that change can acquire momentum. The key to understanding this group is that they won't move to adopt change without the encouragement and leadership of the early adopters. They will take more time and attention to win over, and this is the point where most change campaigns will stand or fall - in winning these people over.

FOURTH PART OF THE CURVE: ACCEPT THE LATE MAJORITY

Late majority people come along with a change, not out of belief, but out of necessity, or because they see the change as inevitable. They make up another 34% of the population, and tend to take a skeptical view of change and the "woolly headed" people who try to start them (innovators can be so flaky!). They are conservative, but should not be disparaged. At the same time, as a change leader, don't worry too much about winning over their hearts and minds - you'll get their compliance, if not their affection - once you win over the groups described above.

FIFTH PART OF THE CURVE: DON'T SWEAT THE LAGGARDS

The "laggards" are the foot draggers, the ones who will always like the old way better. Some of them are even like those who want to believe the earth is flat! They make up the last 16% of the population, and if you get their compliance, you'll be fortunate. They may make a show of compliance when everyone else is on board, but may resist on subtle and hidden ways. When real change happens in an organization, there will be "casualties:" people who would rather leave the organization than adopt the change. Change leaders need to recognize that some extra spike in turnover during change is a good thing, because any other "laggards" you may bring on board will at least be laggards for the new system - so they can contribute to the new system while it lasts! You may not lose all of them, but create graceful ways that they can exit without sabotaging change efforts. It may even be a good thing to acknowledge at the beginning of a change campaign that there may be some people who won't want to see it through, and that they will be helped and supported in finding places to work or contribute if they at least step forward and decide not to stand in the way of what may be an organizational imperative.

2. PUBLIC SECTOR CHANGE TIPS

"PUBLIC SECTOR" AND "CHANGE" IN THE SAME SENTENCE?

Government agencies are more naturally resistant to change when compared to profit based companies because customers vote for change or not for change, every day, with their dollars. Government agencies don't get the same kind of immediate feedback. But change does happen all the time in the public sector, due to political imperatives or other influences. When changes are initiated in the public sector in order to make government more effective or efficient, here are some things I've noticed that can be critical to success:

DON'T BE AFRAID TO REMIND PEOPLE OF THE REAL MEANING OF THEIR WORK - THE MISSION OF THE AGENCY

Many people suffer from a crisis of meaning in their working lives, and this is especially true of many career government employees. But public service has meaning and dignity - just think of the firemen and policemen in New York on September 11. Remind people of how their work makes a difference, even as you show them the practical benefits of the proposed change. Many people want to - ache to! - be challenged to bring out their best, to feel that there is higher meaning to their work. Tie in any proposed changes to the true mission of the agency, and give concrete examples or images that show how other's lives will be made better once the change is in place.

KEEP YOUR CORE MESSAGE VERY SIMPLE

This is actually true of any change leadership effort, but especially true in the public sector. Be able to define three simple phrases that capture and define what you want people to do, and make sure everyone gets sick of hearing them! Repetitions and consistency are key, since bureaucratic agencies can get so easily out of focus when old, familiar policies, procedures - and feuds! - are involved. The successful 1992 Clinton campaign for President defined it's core message for everyone to see, and measured all new ideas against these three things: "Change versus more of the same. It's the economy, stupid. And don't forget health care." Whatever your politics may be, that successful campaign offered a model to study for all campaign operatives and consultants since.

FRAME THE DEBATE IN TERMS OF RESULTS, NOT POLITICS OR PERSONALITIES

Because government work lacks the immediate feedback that the marketplace gives, people can become all caught up in matters that don't relate to effectiveness. Every time someone raises an objection to change that has to do with politics, territory or personalities, refuse to let the conversation go in that direction. Keep bringing the subject back to efficiency and don't entertain diversions. People will get the idea over time.

3. RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND FILMS

BOOKS: "Diffusion of Innovations," Fourth Edition, by Everett M. Rogers, The Free Press, New York, 1983.

This is dense stuff, and I admit I have not read it through. But chapter 7 has the stuff I referenced above on the adopter categories, and there is more in this book that is valuable.

"The Secrets of Word of Mouth Marketing: How to Trigger Exponential Sales Through Runaway Word of Mouth," by George Silverman, AMACOM, New York, 2001.

This is another, very good book that summarizes the adopter categories. It's a very good marketing book, but the ideas inside also apply to building change coalitions - since change campaigns have to be marketed, too.

FILM:

Nothing too special comes to mind this month. Go see something fun! Or email me a suggestion for the next edition - and I'll see if I can pull some leadership lessons out of it!

4. CHUCKLES

If Restaurants Functioned Like Microsoft...

Patron: Waiter!

Waiter: Hi, my name is Bill, and I'll be your Support.

Waiter: What seems to be the problem?

Patron: There's a fly in my soup!

Waiter: Try again, maybe the fly won't be there this time.

Patron: No, it's still there.

Waiter: Maybe it's the way you're using the soup. Try eating it with a fork instead.

Patron: Even when I use the fork, the fly is still there.

Waiter: Maybe the soup is incompatible with the bowl. What kind of bowl are you using?

Patron: A SOUP bowl!

Waiter: Hmm, that should work. Maybe it's a configuration problem. How was the bowl set up?

Patron: You brought it to me on a saucer. What has that to do with the fly in my soup?!

Waiter: Can you remember everything you did before you

noticed the fly in your soup?
Patron: I sat down and ordered the Soup of the Day!

Waiter: Have you considered upgrading to the latest Soup of the Day?

Patron: You have more than one Soup of the Day each day??

Waiter: Yes, the Soup of the Day is changed every hour.

Patron: Well, what is the Soup of the Day now?

Waiter: The current Soup of the Day is tomato.

Patron: Fine. Bring me the tomato soup, and the check.
I'm running late now.

[waiter leaves and returns with another bowl of soup and the check]

Waiter: Here you are, Sir. The soup and your check.

Patron: This is potato soup.

Waiter: Yes, the tomato soup wasn't ready yet.

Patron: Well, I'm so hungry now, I'll eat anything.

[waiter leaves.]

Patron: Waiter! There's a gnat in my soup!

The check:

Soup of the Day \$5.00

Upgrade to newer Soup of the Day. . \$2.50

Access to support \$1.00

5. CLIENT SUCCESSES

TO SHARE YOUR SUCCESS, send your story to Speaker@AJSchuler.com
Unless your message states otherwise, we will assume that your story is NOT FOR PUBLICATION. If you do authorize that your success can be shared in upcoming editions of "What's Up, Doc?," then please include in your message the following sentence: "I authorize Schuler Solutions to publicize my success story in the newsletter 'What's Up, Doc?'"

6. ABOUT DR. SCHULER

A. J. Schuler, Psy. D. is a speaker, consultant and leadership coach who helps people and organizations become more effective, profitable, focused on their missions and able to maximize their opportunities that lead to growth. Dr. Schuler, President of Schuler Solutions, Inc., accomplishes this through speeches, seminars, consulting and one-on-one coaching focused on developing excellence in both leadership and team performance. He has served diverse organizations in the private and public sectors, including The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, Sony Development, Nomura Securities and the Executive Office for Immigration Review. A graduate of the Wharton School of Business, Dr. Schuler has successfully led the profitable growth of a dynamic, international consulting firm while serving as Operations Director, and has successfully coached over five hundred CEO's and corporate executives.

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8. NEWSLETTER STATEMENT OF ETHICS

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