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

Vol. 2, No. 11, November, 2002 - Copyright 2002 by A. J. Schuler, Psy. D
"Creating Leadership Solutions for Profit and Growth"

THIS MONTH'S THEME: MAKING THE CASE FOR CHANGE

The process of getting buy-in for change is complex, but it is definable. In this month's issue, I'll outline the basic steps that begin any successful change process. The first thing to understand is that the change process is essentially a social one - one that allows for a new idea or practice to be adopted or accepted by people who might fear the new way, see personal disadvantage to the new way or see greater benefit in the old way. Overcoming these factors takes intelligence and planning.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- 1. MAKING THE CASE FOR CHANGE: THE FIRST STEPS
- 2. TIPS ON PERSUASION DURING CHANGE
- 3. RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND FILMS
- 4. CHUCKLES
- 5. BOOK ANNOUNCEMENT
- 6. ABOUT DR. SCHULER
- 7. HOW TO SUBSCRIBE OR UNSUBSCRIBE
- 8. NEWSLETTER STATEMENT OF ETHICS

THIS MONTH'S QUOTE:

"The best things and the best people rise out of their separateness. I am against a homogenized society because I want the cream to rise."

--- Robert Frost

1. MAKING THE CASE FOR CHANGE - THE FIRST STEPS

TELL THE BRUTAL TRUTH

Okay, let's say you see the need for a change. You can see how doing something differently will significantly make your organization, club or even your family better. Gather the facts that support your position and be prepared to lay them out in rather clear, even stark terms. Realize that all people fear the risk of change to some degree, but people will take on new risks when they see the risks of standing still as greater than the

risks of doing something new. The hardest case to make is when staying the course will not yield bad outcomes with certainty, but some new course will bring significant leaps forward. In that case, your job will be to paint as clear a picture of the payoff for change as you can. Use data. Get your facts together. The more armed you are with the facts - and more powerful and salient facts than your would be opponents can muster - the more likely you are to succeed. Tell people the brutal truth in stark, indisputable terms why the status quo is risky - more risky than taking positive action for change.

ASSEMBLE THE FACTS

This step flows from the previous one. If you only introduce your idea of change as an idea, without data or facts, people will not pay real attention to you. It may be a quirk in particular of American society, but we want to see facts and data. No one is really ever persuaded by numbers, but we need to see them in order for others to get our attention in any meaningful way. So do your homework! To the extent that you can apply numbers and data to your case, do so! Don't tie all of your case for change to any given set of numbers or any one study, since sharp opponents can cast doubt about the best kinds of data. However, you do need to be sure your position is supported by some objectively measurable and verifiable data, in order to give your case some weight and endurance for the longer term - because your change idea will be tested!

TARGET YOUR FIRST KEY ALLIES

Okay, now you've gotten some of your case for change together. You need to target a few likely allies in your organization who are likely to be sympathetic and who are likely to be well placed - people who can be influential to others whose commitment you will need if your change is to become reality. Well placed people may not all be people with big titles in the organizational chart - some of the most influential people may not have hierarchical status but have social status either through their accomplishments and credentials or through their longevity and knowledge of the organization and its people. Be creative about which key people to enlist in your change group in the beginning. An ideal size to begin would include about eight people all together, but not too many more.

DEFINE THE ALTERNATIVES

Be sure you set the alternatives to change in rather clear terms. Particular strategies may differ in their details, but label the range of future alternatives in two or three categories, with your proposed change as the most clearly desirable option, based on your date. That way you won't have to haggle over the details of any one given course of action by taking the broader view and keeping

people focused on the long view. If you find yourself spending a lot of time countering arguments related to an alternative strategic path, you have lost the initiative in setting the agenda for discourse. Refocus the conversation and bring it back. By working with your core group and getting their buy-in, you can refine your case and more fully prepare it as all of you begin to take it out to others in the organization.

PEOPLE ARE ALERTED BY FACTS, BUT PERSUADED BY EMOTIONS

Remember, you will get people's attention with your facts, and that is an important step in establishing the credibility of your idea. But no one will be moved by that. Persuasion is a more emotional, more gut level process. Once you have their attention with facts, people must be persuaded by softer, more emotional factors that can be very individual. In the beginning of the change campaign process, you will do best by pointing out how the change idea you propose will generate some larger good, either in terms of the mission of the organization, or in meeting the needs of customers, or in meeting the needs of organization members, etc. Make it about something larger than self-interest, though in the end, you will have to sell the more skeptical people on the "what's in it for me (WIIFM)" level. But by beginning your campaign by an appeal to the higher ideals that people possess, you establish the high road for the long haul and have the best chance to enlist opinion leaders while establishing a precedent for unselfish action - a necessary step in developing a change campaign that lasts and succeeds.

REFINE AND REPEAT YOUR CORE MESSAGE

The process of getting your core change coalition together will help you and your new allies to refine and develop your message. Don't be afraid to work together to decide what is your core message - even work to put together some documents and talking points that you all agree form the foundation of your case for change. This will inevitably include some refinement of your original vision, but that is okay. Don't be too much of a purist if you want to be successful and get results for the organization. And yet, the more work you do to get your core group unified and on message, the more effective you will be together as a wedge that gets the message out further, when you will encounter less sympathetic people who will be more apt to test and resist your idea.

USE THE CORE GROUP TO PILOT NEW CHANGES AND GAIN NEW ALLIES

Once you and your core group are ready to roll your message out further, you may want to work first to develop buy-in for some pilot program that will move the ball forward on your idea but not require everyone to sign-up 100% right at the beginning. This will give you the chance to prove the worth of your idea, gather more data, and give the critics time to get a

bit more used to the idea you propose. A lot of the resistance you will encounter will involve simple discomfort with the unfamiliar, when all is said and done. By putting together a pilot program, you buy yourself some time, get the chance to establish some results and you let your new way become a bit more familiar. This will be a great step forward as you continue your change campaign - especially if you still need to develop buy-in from some key, senior members of the organization.

2. TIPS ON PERSUASION DURING CHANGE

DIFFERENT STYLES OF PERSUASION

A change catalyst has to be persuasive, but not all persuasive people are stereotypical "salesman" types. If you are not seen as the most outgoing person, that does not mean you cannot be persuasive. Even if you are a more quiet person, if you have real passion about the idea you wish to put forward, your passion is the rocket fuel that can begin the process. Every new idea that has made a difference in the world began with one passionate person. So here are some tips to help you build the case for change and persuade others, no matter who you are.

BEGIN WITH LISTENING AND EMPATHY

The fallacy of "selling" is that it begins with a canned message. You have an idea, and you may even begin to introduce it, but don't go too far down the road of trying to persuade before letting your listener respond and react. Ask them questions. They have thoughts; they need to get them out. They may even have data that will help you refine your core message. But on a more fundamental level, people need to feel that they have been heard and understood before they will take the risk of adopting the new idea you suggest, since you are asking them to take a step - maybe a leap - into the unknown. You have to listen, to put yourself in the other person's shoes (empathy), and see things from their point of view. And then you need to make statements or ask questions that make it clear to your listener that you understand them - don't just assume they will sense your understanding by magic! Only then will begin to overcome the emotional barriers and resistances your listeners will have to your change idea.

DON'T HAGGLE OVER DETAILS - BUT ESTABLISH THE BIG PICTURE

Remember, most people are alerted by facts but persuaded on an emotional level. They can be persuaded more by their trust of you than

by their belief in your facts. Actually, the facts you assemble really serve to say to the world "you can trust me," since you can show you have done your homework. But when you really get down to it, those who may resist you based on arguments about your facts may really be afraid or resistant on some emotional level - they see more risks to themselves or to the organization in adopting your change than in staying the course. So rather than get caught in the trap of debating little details, bring the conversation back to the real alternatives, the big picture. You may not persuade your most determined critics, but the perhaps more silent audience of uncommitted yet persuadable people in the middle will be watching and listening - and they can be reached by your larger message. And that, in the end, is where change campaigns are won or lost - with the assent and commitment of the majority in the middle.

STAY ON COURSE WITH YOUR CORE MESSAGE, BUT. . .

The process of discussion and debate about a change idea can seem to move the subject far afield and change the core issue. Go back to your notes from the development of your message at the beginning, with your core change allies. If the subject has been reframed too much so that the importance of your change has become muddy, bring the focus back to where it needs to be. You may have to reframe some things strategically in order to succeed, but this is a matter of packaging, not substance. For example, I led a change campaign in an organization where my instinct was to sell the idea based on the larger, public service mission of the organization, but this was not the way to go, in part because that packaging just did not naturally fit the lead executive's style. So I reframed the approach to speak more directly about meeting the survival goals of the organization, and that proved a better fit. The more idealistic part of the message was not lost, but it became the background, not the foreground of the process.

UNDERSTAND - AND ANSWER - THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIONS AND FEARS YOU ENCOUNTER

Fears can be defanged once they can be named, and if a path exists through your change proposal to address and allay those fears. As you respond to critics and begin to win them over, be able to state up front that you understand that, "Many people are afraid that _____, but by taking this course of action, those fears are groundless, because _____." Name the fears you encounter, and answer objections. You will do better even to anticipate them as you begin your change campaign, but some new ones may surface as you move the process forward, so be nimble enough to hear them and to address them in your persuasion campaign.

3. RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND FILMS

BOOK: "Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment," by Martin E. P. Seligman, Ph. D., Free Press, New York, 2002.

This new hardcover book falls under the category of "books I wish I had written." My late mentor, Dr. William E. Hall, spoke and developed ideas on positive psychology and the development of people's strengths as far back as the 1960's, when the disease model of psychology was all the rage. Well, for the most part, the disease model - looking at people as collections of deficits - is still ascendant in professional psychology, but thanks to Dr. Seligman and others, a lot more is being done to show and understand that health is not just the absence of illness - and it can be studied, promoted and maximized. I highly recommend this book, especially to those who may have particularly enjoyed last month's newsletter on "Mature Optimism."

FILM: "Finding Forrester"

Last weekend a friend and I had the idea to go out and see a movie - but nothing currently playing really grabbed our interest, so we just went out for dinner and conversation instead. But I did see this film, starring Sean Connery and supported by F. Murray Abraham, on cable one night this past month, and I got sucked in. It's a great family movie that is intelligent enough for the grown ups - about a talented young student finding his talents and passions for writing through an unlikely relationship with a reclusive old writer. The performances are good and they make what could otherwise have been clichéd, tired motifs come alive on the screen. This is worth a rental. See reviews at <http://www.metacritic.com/video/titles/findingforrester>

4. CHUCKLES

Favorite Oxymorons:

1. Act naturally.
2. Found missing.
3. Resident alien.
4. Genuine imitation.
5. Airline food.
6. Good grief.

7. Same difference.
8. Almost exactly.
9. Sanitary landfill.
10. Alone together.
11. Legally drunk.
12. Silent scream.
13. Small crowd.
14. Soft rock.
15. Taped live.
16. Clearly misunderstood.
17. Temporary tax increase.
18. Political science.
19. Pretty ugly.
20. Exact estimate.

There were three men standing at the Pearly Gates. St. Peter came out to meet them and asked, "What would each of you like to hear your relatives or friends say at your funeral?"

The first man answered, "I am a renowned doctor, and I would like to hear someone say how I had been instrumental in saving people's lives and giving them a second chance."

The second man replied, "I am a family man and a schoolteacher. I would like to hear someone say what a great husband and father I was and that I had made a difference in some young person's life."

The third man replied, "Wow, guys, those are really great things, but I guess if I had my choice, I would rather hear someone say, "Look! He's moving!"

5. BOOK ANNOUNCEMENT

Forthcoming Book:

ChangeRx: Prescriptions for Successful Change Planning and Implementation - A Practical Guide for Leaders, by A. J. Schuler, Psy. D.

Anticipated for publication in the Fall of 2003, "ChangeRx" will be the only practical guide of its kind to walk change leaders through the actual process of designing and implementing a successful change campaign. The book, designed and formatted as an easily accessible workbook, will be an ideal

resource for students of management, executives and leaders of organizations large and small, both in the profit and non-profit sectors.

To be placed on the notification list - to learn right away when "ChangeRx" will become available - simply email me at AJ@SchulerSolutions.com with the subject heading, "ChangeRx." By doing so, you will have the opportunity to purchase "ChangeRx" at 20% off the retail price. You will also be able to receive free sample text online once the content becomes available. Don't miss this chance to get in on a good thing - "ChangeRx" is destined to become a "cult classic" among leaders of change and required reading for the executive teams of large organizations under transition.

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.

7. HOW TO SUBSCRIBE OR UNSUBSCRIBE

If this e-Newsletter was forwarded to you and you would like to receive your own FREE subscription, send a message to AJ@SchulerSolutions.com and type the word SUBSCRIBE in the subject box.

If you believe you have received this message in error, or to remove yourself from this mailing list, please send a message to AJ@SchulerSolutions.com and type the word UNSUBSCRIBE in the subject box.

8. NEWSLETTER STATEMENT OF ETHICS

NEWSLETTER ETHICS: This e-Newsletter will be sent to subscribers only upon REQUEST, though subscribers may forward this letter to anyone they wish. Subscriber identities or contact information will NOT BE DISCLOSED to any other persons or entities under any circumstances.

A. J. Schuler, Psy. D.
Speaker, Consultant & Leadership Coach
Schuler Solutions, Inc.
6300 Stevenson Avenue, Suite 916
Alexandria, VA 22304
Phone 703.370.6545
Fax 703.783.0232
Email: AJ@SchulerSolutions.com
Website: www.SchulerSolutions.com

P.S. - Remember to send in your comments and successes, and to forward this newsletter to at least one friend! -- AJS

"Make each day you masterpiece." -- John Wooden

;-]