

# WHAT AGAIN!

*THREE KEY TIPS ON EMBRACING CHANGE*

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*TIME FOR AN  
ATTITUDE CHANGE*

*BECOME A BETTER  
LISTENER*

*COMMUNICATE  
YOUR VISION*

Most people, especially accountants, like consistency, predictability, and stability in their lives, which is the exact opposite of what occurs when change enters the equation. When change happens, people tend to fear the unknown, try to defend the status-quo, and protect their self-interests. Simultaneously, stress levels increase, and resistance begins to build.

There are two types of change: imposed and designed. Imposed change is when you have no control over the change. Designed change is when there is collaboration and communication throughout the organization.

In the Harvard Business Review (HBR) article Leaders Who Get Change Right Know How to Listen the author Patti Sanchez states, "Change comes at a cost. It requires people to sacrifice something they value, whether it's time, money, responsibilities, control, status, comfort, or relationships. The more your change effort disrupts those things, the more people will resist or even rage against it."

She points to the results of a PwC survey of more than 2,000 global executives, managers, and employees. Only 54% said their change initiatives succeeded and 65% said the biggest obstacle was "change fatigue." Because change is near-constant in many organizations, people are hit by wave after wave of it, and they're left feeling depleted. A big problem is getting people to connect with the larger vision: 44% of survey respondents said they resisted change efforts because they didn't understand the initiative, while 38% said they didn't agree with the change. Organizations struggle with getting people to see and understand the larger vision.

***"The biggest obstacle was change fatigue".***



**CHANGE  
MANAGEMENT**

**Time for an attitude change.** Lead the perception from imposed change to a designed change environment. The best way to achieve this is with your attitude. In the article *The Key to Embrace Change* by Steve Rizzo, Steve states, "When your thoughts are expressed in words, you increase their energy and intensify the effect they have in your life. The act of positive self-talk will not only strengthen your character but also boost your spirit. It is beneficial for you to ask yourself what good can come out of even the most challenging situation no matter how bleak it may seem. Even a very poor economic situation can be viewed as an opportunity to grow if we so choose. It will be difficult, if not impossible for you to seek opportunity if you are consumed with thoughts of fear, anger, and self-doubt."

In the world of improvisation, we refer to this attitude as the Yes And principle. Yes And is about agreement but not always agreeing. It is not saying "yes but" or "no because" – those negative phrases shut people down and kill one's attitude. Yes And is allowing yourself to step into the

other person's world, albeit for a moment, to better understand their issues. By doing this, we are showing respect to the other person, which helps in this attitude adjustment. The person gains emotional equity in the organization when they feel that they are heard, which leads to understanding and buy-in.

As Maya Angelou once said, "If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude."

**Become a better listener.** The skill of listening is one of the fundamental principles of improvisation, and the key is to listen to understand not listen to respond. Listening to understand is accomplished when we set aside our agenda and focus on the conversation. In a *Business Insider* article titled, *Yes, And... Improv Techniques To Make You A Better Boss* by Lindsey Lavine, Lindsey interviewed Charna Halpern who said, "Listening is crucial because you need to be present and in the moment. Most people are waiting to speak and not listening in the moment."



Instead, they're thinking of what they're going to say. In improv, you must listen to what's been said and pay attention so you can react appropriately. If you're not focused on what's happening around you, you miss an opportunity to build the scene, and the show comes to a screeching halt."

This listening skill is critical in a change management situation. It helps you to hear the feedback, answer any concerns, and lead the way to buy-in.

**Communicate your vision.** Share it with the entire organization through town halls, round table meetings, and memos. In the article, *Leaders Who Get Change Right Know How to Listen*, Patti discusses Anne Mulcahy, who took over the role of CEO at Xerox in 2001. When she took over, Xerox was struggling and bleeding cash. Patti writes, "There was pressure to show results quickly. She chose to spend her first three months talking with employees, understanding their concerns, and testing their reactions to potential solutions to the company's problems. What she learned informed her strategy for the turnaround, which she then communicated through a

series of town halls, roundtables, and memos." Through this listening tour in her words, "Defection slowed to a trickle. Hope rekindled. Energy returned," and so did profitability.

Using these three tips, here is my equation to successfully manage change:

**Vision + Attitude + Communication + Listening + Implementation + Feedback = Success**

Change is inevitable, often constant, sometimes predictable, and feared by most people. I have always looked at change as an opportunity, not something evil. Dr. Dennis O'Grady said it best when he said, "Change has a bad reputation in our society. But it isn't all bad – not by any means. In fact, change is necessary for life, to keep us moving, to keep us growing, to keep us interested. Imagine life without change. It would be static ... boring ... dull." I would like to change the last sentence and have it read, "It would be static, boring and dull, just like a pair of khakis!"

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