

Unless you've been asleep like Rip Van Winkle (Google it if you're too young to know the story), you know that change is a constant in today's world. But just because it's constant doesn't mean we're good at it.

Change would be easier if we all viewed it the same way. But inevitably, while some are clamoring to have changed yesterday, others are saying, "not in my lifetime!". The change leader must somehow get everyone through the change at roughly the same time. To complicate things further, the change leader has his/her own perspective somewhere along that spectrum. They have to empathetically shepherd those who are not on the same page with them as well as those who are.



There's no silver bullet to make change easy, but you can build a culture that supports a healthy change process. Here are some underpinnings of a change-ready culture:

- 1. It starts with hiring.** Ask candidates about how they've handled past changes. Set the expectation for continuous change. If they can't handle it, better to find that out before you hire.
- 2. Cast a compelling shared vision.** Get everyone inspired to row together toward a shared expectation of what the future can be. If they can see themselves in that vision they will be willing to do hard things to achieve it. Even better if they realize their own failure to change may prevent others from succeeding.
- 3. Listen. Ask questions. Seek to understand.** Listening is one of the most influential activities we can do. People who feel heard feel valued. People who feel valued will make sacrifices for their leader and their team.
- 4. Explain why. Clarify why. Refine and repeat continuously.** Clear purpose is a good motivator. Why won't what got us here, get us there? We lose heart when we don't understand the value in what we're asked to do.
- 5. Manage expectations – No surprises.** OK, change often comes with surprises. But if you see something unexpected coming, everyone else should too. You're in this together so don't hold back because you think others can't handle knowing the risks. It's your job as leader to equip them to handle the risks, not to hide the risks from them. Trusting them is more powerful than "protecting" them.
- 6. Reward self-sacrifice.** Change that benefits some people will often create extra work or challenges for others. The focus is on what moves us together toward shared success. If that means one person or department takes a hit for the good of all, acknowledge and reward their sacrifice.

The point is not to start doing these things when a big change is in the works. Live by these principles all the time. Then your followers will be confident that you'll abide by them when the changes get tough.

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