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FOUR MYTHS REGARDING CHANGE IN An Organisation

IN the process of implementing change in organisations, our firm has encountered many flawed thinking that blocks change. The false beliefs people have regarding change can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. To ensure the successful implementation of change, the first thing one need to do is to debunk some of the common myths regarding change.

By DR VICTOR S.L.TAN

People Cannot Change

It is all too common to hear leaders in organisations assert their belief that people cannot change. Many are quick to launch a barrage of overused quotes to support this view. They pointed out the following:

- Leopards cannot get rid of its spots;
- You cannot teach old dogs, new tricks; and,
- You can take a horse to a river but you cannot force it to drink.

Of course, I would always gleefully point out to them that these are animals. I would argue that animals cannot think but humans do. And only if they would think a little; just take the horse on a ride in hot sunny day and then lead her to the river and she would be thirsting to drink!

People can and will change when we get them to see how the change will benefit them. The onus lies in showing proof that change is positive and productive for those affected by the change. To get people to change, first convince them of the benefits of change, then provide them the support till the change is successfully implemented and assimilated as part of their practice.

Change Is Difficult

Henry Ford has a very apt saying; "Whether you think you can, or you think you can't - you're right." Change can be as difficult as you make it out to be. What makes change difficult is when we resist or avoid it. On the other hand, change can be easier if we first approach it positively with an open mind ready to learn the new ways to accommodate it.

Most people are too concern about the things they cannot do that they lost focus and time to do the things they can do. Change is not difficult if we begin with the things that are within our control and start doing them. If we continue to do the things we can do, the results will be so inspiring that soon can influence others to do things outside our control.

Change Can Only Happen Gradually

While it is true that some changes can happen slowly, it need not be so. The reason why many changes do not happen speedily is because the leaders approach change in a gradual manner. Some changes need to be fast and transformational while others need to be instant. Whether change takes the "evolutionary" or the "transformational" path depends on the urgency to change. The urgency to change often arises from the need for survival. When a company is hit by a crisis, the pressure for change is heightened. Suddenly there is acceptance and the readiness of coming together will catapult the

people and the organisation for change. Yes, transformational change is possible, if enough pressure is exerted, especially when the change is for the survival of the company, as well as the livelihood of the people.

Change Must Begin From The Top

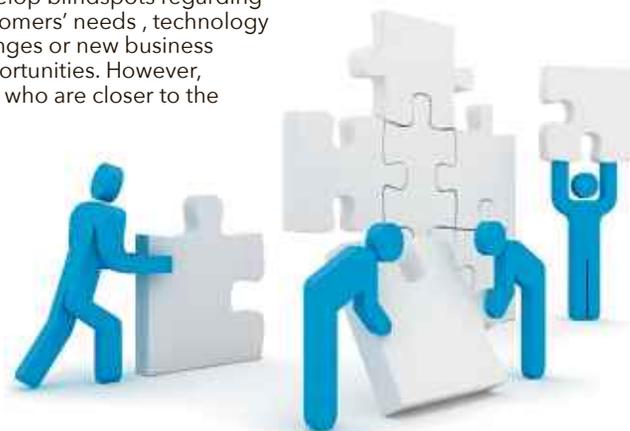
While it is ideal to have change starting from the top, it does not need a criteria for change. History has shown how revolutionary changes are initiated by the grassroots level spurred by their despair and despondency with the living conditions. It is the lower level that starts the transformation change in societies or nations. In organisations, leaders often develop blindspots regarding customers' needs, technology changes or new business opportunities. However, staff who are closer to the

marketplace and workplace are more aware of the needed changes and hence are more convinced of the rationale for change rather than the top. In this case, people in the lower level can start the change and influence the top to change through convincing proofs of the benefits of change.

Change Is Not Sustainable

Often leaders are not keen to take the effort to initiate change because they think that the changes introduced are not sustainable. They think people will revert back to their old habits and ways of doing things after a short period.

However, changes introduced in organisations can be sustainable if we continue to focus on the benefits and the safety that arise from the change. To substantiate this, we need to go further than the introduction of online banking. Initially, people were very reluctant to use this service. However once people are educated on the ease and safety of online banking, they soon continue to use this service and they do not go back to queuing in the banking halls to do their transactions. To ensure people's sustainability of online banking transactions, companies address the concerns and issues of users quickly. Hence, for example banks and credit card companies have anti-fraud departments to ensure that banking transactions or purchasing done online are safe and protected.



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