

Workplace Enhancement Notes

A Tip Sheet for Organizational Leaders & Managers

In this Issue

<i>Leading Change</i>	Page 1
<i>Performance Reviews</i>	Page 1
<i>Project Management</i>	Page 4
<i>About Russell Consulting</i>	Page 4

Leading Change Effectively

Why do people often resist change? How does change affect people? What actions can change leaders take to help people through resistance and into commitment to help realize the benefits of a change?

The Emotional Journey. Based upon our research — and the research of others — it’s clear that when change is introduced in an organization there is a natural and inevitable emotional path that people follow. We call this the emotional journey through change. This journey begins when a change challenges people with ideas or approaches that conflict with what they know and with which they are comfortable. In the face of this challenge, people often react in ways that seem to undercut the change. If, however, we work to better understand the emotional journey people take in response to a change, we are more likely to find success in developing employee commitment to a new direction.



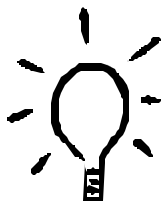
A Powerful Model. In our book *Leading Change Training* (published by ASTD Press, April 2003), we introduce a powerful approach for understanding the human response to change and, most importantly, helping to lead people through change. In this book, we propose a four-phase model that helps explain the common emotional reactions people experience — and that offers a framework for helping leaders successfully guide people through the change process.

(Continued on page 2)

Visit *RCI* online at

www.RussellConsultingInc.com

An Employee-Centered Performance Review



Most of us don’t look forward to the annual performance review. Whether we are the one doing the reviewing (the supervisor) or the person being reviewed (the performer), too often the process is more frustrating and anxiety provoking than satisfying and productive. There is, however, a way out of the frustration and toward a more productive result.

Sources of Distortion. The quality of the performance review is affected by a host of issues that distort the communication and understanding that takes place during the review. These distortions include (a) the relationship between the reviewer and the reviewed; (b) the reviewer’s level of knowledge of the performer’s work; (c) the “recency” of the performance events and the feedback (reviewers tend to recall more recent events vs. more distant ones); (d) the “halo” effect — where the reviewer’s perspective of the performer is influenced by one attribute (e.g., great at landing the deal) such that other performance issues (e.g., not getting along with co-workers) are ignored; and (e) restrictions in the rating scale — where the reviewer, wanting to avoid negative reactions from the performer in giving a “low” score and not wanting to defend a “high” score, rates in a rather narrow band that fails to distinguish between performers.

(Continued on page 3)

Read this Issue to . . .

- Lead people effectively through change . . .
- Develop an employee-centered performance review process
- Learn the fundamentals of project management

Leading Change, continued from page 1

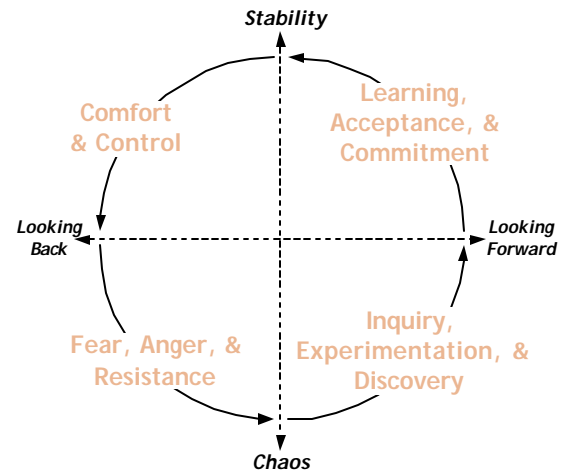
Phase One – Comfort & Control. In this first phase of the emotional journey, people feel comfortable, safe, and in control of their lives. There is order in their environment. They understand where they fit in and what’s expected of them. While they may even be dissatisfied with the status quo, it is at least familiar to them; they have found a way to deal with the stresses of the world as it is. In this phase, the greatest challenge for the leader is simply to get people to wake up! That’s why the actions called for in this stage involve creating a felt need for change.

Phase Two – Fear, Anger, & Resistance. Once people are nudged (or pushed) out of Comfort and Control they are immediately plunged into the next phase: Fear, Anger, and Resistance. In this phase people feel anxious and uncertain? as well as angry and fearful? because what they knew to be true about the organization and their role within it is being set aside. They have been told that the ways of the past and present are no longer adequate for the challenges of the future. Suddenly, the world is a more insecure and uncertain place. Leaders’ actions for this phase involve listening to the fears and anxieties and attempting to respond to these concerns – while continuing to move forward with the change.

Phase Three – Inquiry, Experimentation, & Discovery. As people’s anxieties, fears, and perceived losses are listened to and addressed in the change process, and as they begin to take part in designing the change itself, they transition from focusing on the past to focusing on the future. Once people (consciously or unconsciously) cross the threshold from “looking back” to “looking forward,” they begin to work *with* the change, to shape it around their own needs and issues as well as those of the organization. By engaging in inquiry (asking questions), experimentation (trying out new ideas), and discovery, those in this phase begin to “connect the dots” and help create a new reality. Despite the positive focus of this phase, however, this can still be a frustrating time – since there are still many unanswered questions. Leaders can help best by giving people direction – but not so much that it stifles their creativity and their own voice in designing the change.

Phase Four – Learning, Acceptance, & Commitment. In this phase people begin to see that the change? which has been tested, shaped, and molded by their own actions and the actions of others? is beginning to lead to tangible and positive results. They continue their search for answers to the challenges posed by the forces of change and the change itself as they enter this phase. And the solutions they discover become integrated into their thinking and behavior. This learning, sparked by the chaos and confusion of the change process and the need to restore direction and stability, is the first sign of a real emotional commitment to the change. For the first time, people who may have initially resisted the proposed change begin realizing the promised opportunities and benefits.

Learn More About Leading Change from RCI. Russell Consulting can help you lead your employees through the change process. Contact us to purchase a copy of our book, **Leading Change Training**, or for a free consult on how we can help you lead change in your organization. Visit our website at www.RussellConsultingInc.com to explore our leading change services or to view an outline of our book.



Leaders can help best by giving people direction – but not so much that it stifles their creativity and their own voice

Call Russell Consulting today to explore how we can help you lead your company more effectively through change.

(608) 274-4482

Performance Reviews, continued from page 1

Consequences of Failure are High. Many of these sources of distortion work to prevent a rater or reviewer from conducting an effective performance review. And, when so much hangs on the quality and effectiveness of this review, the consequences for failure are high. Is there a way to reduce the impact of these sources of distortion? And, just as importantly, is there a performance review process that also reduces the performer's defensiveness and denial in the face of constructive feedback?

Putting the Employee In Charge & Improving the Process

RCI has developed a review process that reduces the sources of distortion while increasing employee ownership of performance improvement. This model, based upon the assumption that employees are best able to assess their own performance, puts them in charge of the process. While the supervisor stays engaged throughout – asking questions, guiding the conversation, reinforcing the employee's perspective, challenging the employee's self-perception when necessary, and exploring solutions – the final responsibility for assessment and performance improvement lies with the performer.

A further problem with the traditional review is that we often try to do too much: give feedback, set improvement goals, rate the performance, and link performance with pay. While these objectives are laudable, RCI recommends that these elements be addressed at different times in a multi-stage process. Here are the core principles that guide our employee-centered performance review model:

The conversation is more important than the rating. The primary purpose of the review is to engage the performer in a conversation about what is and isn't working. While the rating is important, what is more critical is getting the performer to reflect on past performance and to guide him or her toward a higher level. Equally important is the supervisor learning from the performer about performance obstacles and what the performer needs from the system to be most effective in his or her job.

The employee is in charge of the process. As long as supervisors do the evaluating, employees are able to take a back seat to managing their own performance. Asking performers to take the lead in assessing their own performance, identifying the causes of performance problems, and developing an improvement plan puts responsibility for performance improvement where it belongs: on the shoulders of the performer.

The supervisor/coach guides the process. While employees must be in charge of their own performance review, the supervisor never walks away from his or her responsibility for shaping the employee's performance – and from giving specific feedback on what the employee is doing well and where he or she needs to improve. The role of the coach in this new process is one of asking questions, listening, challenging, and guiding the employee's exploration of possible solutions to performance problems.

Frequency of the review is jointly determined. How often should the review occur? As often as necessary – and "necessary" is jointly determined by the supervisor and employee deciding on the best frequency to ensure continued great performance.

The overall "rating" by the supervisor and pay adjustments follow the conversation. Finally, while developing an overall "rating" on a scale and linking this rating to pay may be necessary (based upon your HR policies), the best review process keeps this step removed by at least a day from the performance conversation. There's nothing like getting a "3" on a six-point scale to distract the performer from a serious exploration of performance issues and the causes performance breakdowns.

Need Help to Develop an Employee-Centered Review Process?

Contact RCI to find out more about our approach to performance reviews. We can help you strengthen your performance review process and enable you to achieve your goals – for individual performers as well as your company. RCI@RussellConsultingInc.com



**There's nothing
like getting a "3"
on a six-point
scale to distract
the performer**

**For more information
on performance
reviews . . .**

**Call Russell
Consulting**

(608) 274-4482

The Fundamentals of Project Management

How can your company improve its management of complex projects ?

Call Russell Consulting today to find out how we can help develop strength in your project management bench!

(608) 274-4482

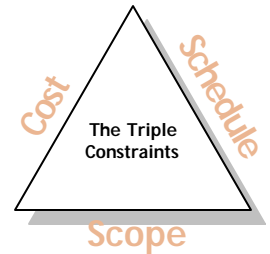
So much of our work these days involves multiple players doing complex tasks simultaneously to accomplish outcomes that have never before been created. All of this complexity and interdependence calls for an integrated approach for accomplishing work. The relatively new discipline of “project management” provides a helpful roadmap to those who want to manage their work while maintaining a high level of control over quality results, project costs, and the schedule/due dates.

The fundamentals of project management involve first embracing project management as a thoughtful step-by-step process for integrating the interdependent pieces of a complex set of tasks and then closely monitoring that process in the implementation of a project. There are four phases of project management:

Phase One – Project Conception: The first phase of a project involves more thinking than work. In this phase you define your scope, quality requirements, timeline, the boundaries and parameters that you must attend to, and the talent/resources that are available to move the project ahead. This phase requires adherence to the admonition “don’t just do something, sit there!”

Phase Two – Plan Development: The second phase of project management involves detailing both the specifics of your end results and the step-by-step process you’ll use to accomplish these results. Establishing key project milestones, assessing risks, identifying deliverable dates, finalizing your costs, and noting the critical interdependencies of tasks are critical steps of this phase.

Phase Three – Implementation: The project kicks into high gear with this phase. Here your focus is now on keeping the project on track as you manage the scope, schedule, and costs. Monitoring these “triple constraints” gives you timely feedback and enables you to make adjustments along the way.



Phase Four – Close-Out/Evaluation: As you achieve your goals and your efforts on the project wind down, the last project management phase leads you through a critical assessment of what about the project worked and what didn’t. Unfortunately, we often set aside this phase and move on to the next project. The price we pay, however, for not reflecting upon our project’s successes, problems, and challenges is that we fail to learn and improve – and we end up making the same mistakes on subsequent projects.

Managing projects well is a key talent in today’s lean organizations. If you want to learn how to guide your company’s projects toward successful outcomes, contact RCI. We can help you develop the project management competencies you need for success. Call us at 608.274.4482 or send us an e-mail at RCI@RussellConsultingInc.com.

“Hell, there are no rules here – we’re trying to accomplish something.”

- Thomas A. Edison



Enhancing Organizational Performance Through Quality Workplace Consulting and Training Services



Jeff & Linda Russell, Co-Directors

Workplace Enhancement Notes is published periodically by Russell Consulting, Inc. (RCI) for its customers. *Notes* shares insights and issues that emerge from RCI’s consulting practice on organizational dimensions of leadership, strategy, change, performance management, motivation, process redesign and improvement, teamwork, and customer service. Visit us online for information on the full range of our consulting & training services.

Russell Consulting, Inc.
1134 Winston Drive
Madison, WI 53711-3161

tel (608) 274-4482
fax (608) 274-1927

e-mail: RCI@RussellConsultingInc.com
www.RussellConsultingInc.com