How To Implement Change - Finzel, Hans

Bringing about change in an organization involves taking information through a variety of circles of stakeholders.

The more bases you cover before the change is made public, the better your chances for positive ownership of the idea. A few people will be upset that they were not "in the know," but most people will back your program. If there is major opposition, you will have already encountered it during the process of moving around with the information.

Picture six circles. These circles constitute various groupings of people, each of whom carry expectations and perspectives: the elders board, the staff team, the wider leadership team, the key stakeholders, those who may be anticipated opponents, and the general members of the organization.

The challenge lies in not only understanding how organisational/structural change takes place, but how cultural change of the 'people systems' takes place.

Stephen Covey once said that "many leaders don't know how to bring about a change in the culture. You see, business basically is run by the economic rules of the marketplace, but organizations are run by the cultural rules of the people involved. They are not in alignment. A lot of people over time have become dependent on the old cultures and systems, and it takes a lot of courage to change the structures and systems."

Changing the culture, structure, and systems is indeed a delicate process. Here are some of the reasons people do not want to change.

Reasons Why Followers Resist Change:

1. Fear: The unknown is a threat to people's comfort zones.
2. Insecurity: People may think they will be worse off after the changes.
3. Power: People sense the change may cause them to lose power.
4. Inertia: It is easier to maintain the status quo.
5. Energy: It takes a lot of work to change things.

Change will have many detractors. It is up to the leaders to champion the cause with careful planning and a solid rationale. When implementing major change in your church or organization, try to follow these eight steps carefully:

EIGHT STEPS TO EFFECTIVE CHANGE

First, prepare carefully. The more carefully you have done your homework the easier it will be to sell your ideas. If you can explain the changes in a convincing manner, you will get maximum ownership. If your reasons lack credibility, don't bother going on to the other steps.

Second, learn from the past. Don't just change for the sake of change. Learn what in the past should be preserved and find out if your predecessors wrestled with the same issues. Why did they decide to do things this way?

Third, gain ownership from the inside out. Follow the circles of ownership discussed earlier. Make sure the greatest number of people possible can be lined up on your side of the change process. The fewer the resisters, the better the chances of success.

Fourth, count the cost. Will you truly be better off doing it the new way? Is the juice worth the squeeze? Have you calculated what emotional and physical toll the changes will take on you and your organization?

Fifth, anticipate resistance. Determine what individuals and groups may oppose your proposal. What can you do to bring them along and make them your allies?

Sixth, listen and learn. Two of the most important words in any leader's vocabulary should be listen and learn. Listening means you respect your followers and welcome their input. By the time the change process is complete, all stakeholders should have their fingerprints on the outgrowth.

Seventh, use experts. Don't reinvent the wheel. Learn from others who have gone before you in the change process. Use consultants and outside experts to strengthen your hand. The more data you have to support your decisions, the more effective will be their positive effect on the organization.

Eighth, take your time. Rushed decisions follow the old pattern of ready, aim, fire." It is better to let the process of change take a slower, more natural course, which will gain more support over the long haul.

How do your members react when change comes? What is their first response when the bombs are dropped? Responses vary from person to person. When we announced our decision to move to Denver, one of my young Generation X employees was gleeful. "I think it is so cool that everything is up for grabs. Nothing like radical change to make work a fun place!" Other longtime employees were not so positive and burst into tears of grief and fear.

It is natural to face resistance in the change process. Employees and followers will go through five phases in their processing of major changes in churches and organizations.

Reactions of Followers to News of Change

1. Denial: Withdrawal, focusing on the past.

2. Resistance: Anger, blame, anxiety, depression, apathy.

3. Exploration: Concern about details, confusion, energy, new ideas,
   lack of focus.

4. Commitment: Cooperation, better focus, anticipation of the challenges ahead.

5. Rejection: Some will move on to other places.

"It is normal in the process of change to lose some people. We should expect it and not be alarmed. In some cases losing people is a good thing as some habitual resisters are thinned out of the ranks. If we lose a large number, then things are probably not going as they should."