

Leadership Approaches to Change

Does your organization need a shot of innovation or motivation?

By Joe Whitefield

The off-season is always an important time for many sports teams and seasonally oriented organizations. It involves assessing the performance of the previous season, setting or resetting goals for the upcoming season, and taking the necessary steps to renew or increase your chances of success in business or on the field. The off-season is the time for implementing change. The same process applies for facility managers and their organizations. One big difference is there doesn't seem to be a truly defined off-season on the calendar to dedicate to this process. Implementing change without the benefits of time puts a real premium on leadership.

GUIDING CHANGE

Organizational leadership is nothing if it is not about guiding change. Continuing on the same path at the same speed producing the same results over long periods of time does not particularly require much leadership. These organizations run themselves. A handful of accountants and some experienced supervisors usually suffice.

Of course, no organization truly runs itself—and none that I know are immune to change these days. Externally, there are waves of changing customer expectations and market forces. These present numerous challenges with regard to



TO IMPROVE IS TO CHANGE; TO BE PERFECT IS TO CHANGE OFTEN.

—Winston Churchill

viable business plans and the economics of responding with competitive products or services. Internally, the work environment is constantly evolving, with shifting personnel issues coupled with technology issues that are some combination of helpful, hurtful, distracting, and/or confusing (the undesirable pairing of Murphy's Law and Moore's Law).

Change is everywhere. The need to be responsive and improve is evident. The need for effective leadership essential. Sir Winston Churchill, a great leader himself, once said, "To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often." With that in mind, let's look at a couple

of considerations to help today's organizational leaders deal with change.

TO BE PERFECT IS TO CHANGE OFTEN

Once the effectiveness of a particular product or service has been evaluated and found wanting, a shrewd leader should first ascertain the nature of the problem(s) and establish a path to improvement. There are two important questions to be asked at the beginning. First, are we doing the right things?

Second, are we doing things right? The answers to these questions will serve as the basis for establishing the improvement path and any resulting activities.

"Right things" questions are like directional questions. Are we heading the right way or are we lost? Directional questions challenge an organizational visions, strategies, and executable plans—the big ones and the small ones. If you get the wrong answers to the question of right things, the appropriate response will undoubtedly involve some form of **innovation**.

Innovation is a new and better approach, philosophy, strategy, plan, or process. Leadership recognizes the shortcomings of the old and replaces it with something new and different—by different, I mean better. This is the point where things get really interesting. It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the innovations and the quality of leadership when execution falters. That leads us to

question if we are doing things right.

It is always the right time to evaluate the execution of your business and service plans. Consider how to do the things you do better. Are we completing the tasks? Is our effort sufficient? Are we communicating well? Are we meeting a standard or simply doing the minimum? Is there a perception problem? A common thread for many of these questions is people. One possible answer to people problems of this nature is **motivation**.

Motivation is that internal personal commitment to a standard of conduct or service. When people are motivated, they see their work in terms of the value it contributes to the organization. Conversations are about standards instead of rules, accomplishment instead of duty, and others instead of themselves. Once again we find leadership to be essential

to foster this environment. In this arena, a leader must set the expectations, model the behavior and speech, encourage others, and recognize good decisions and behaviors of others. In this time of technological advances, great emphasis has been placed on innovation-oriented leadership. However, inspirational leadership, while often overlooked, produces so many benefits because it focuses on people more than things.

NOT SO OBVIOUS

One final thought is the inherent, but not so obvious, link between innovation and motivation. Innovation can trigger an uptick in motivation and performance because employees get excited over something new—especially if it helps them become more efficient at their work. Likewise, when the morale of

employees increases they may come forward with more creative ideas and innovation happens. The workplace becomes healthier and more vibrant when this culture is common place because people enjoy making their individual contribution to the organization's success.

Spectators have opinions; leaders have responsibilities. These responsibilities require making decisions and supporting those decisions to their productive ends through all types of change. So, make sure you look around and take inventory of your organization routinely. It may need a shot of innovation, motivation, or some combination of both. Give it to them. ☺

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