

Ch-Ch-Ch Changes: Endings & New Beginnings by Consultant Bob Cooper



As we pass Labor Day I find myself thinking about the transition from summer to fall, even though the fall season doesn't officially begin for a few more weeks. It seems as if the pace starts to pick up again. Vacations come to an end, students return to school, and business tends to accelerate.

Change is a constant. Why do some people embrace change and others struggle?

After all, we know that the seasons change, one ends and a new one begins. In business, projects come to an end, and new ones begin. Changes in expectations, new technologies, increased competition, reduced margins are just a few examples of the changes businesses face today.

As a leader, it is very important that you take a good look in the mirror and reflect on how you embrace change. As a model for others, you set the tone for how your team will be able to demonstrate resilience when facing the business headwinds.

In order for you to assist others to move through the changing seasons, you need to understand what happens to others when facing change. Change is external to the individual. A new boss, revised policy, or a new role become understood once explained to staff. However, individuals react to changes differently. The reason for this is some team members psychologically struggle to come to terms with the change.

They find it difficult to make the internal transition. In my experience, the number one reason for this is fear. Perhaps they are not confident in their ability to deliver on the change. They may be hesitant to take a risk due to a fear of failure. They don't feel as safe or secure.

Questions you should ask yourself during times of change.

What do my team members need to let go of?

What do they feel they are losing?

Transitions require endings. Great leaders understand that certain changes have a big impact on individuals. Some individual's self-esteem is tied to the old process. They may have felt an enormous sense of pride in what they had accomplished. Great leaders effectively assist others to work through these endings, and become comfortable with transition.

The following are a few suggestions to assist others through change and transition:

1. Explain what is changing and why it is changing. Let others know what is not changing.
2. Allow staff to express concern, and show empathy for anyone struggling to embrace the change. Be tolerant of mistakes. Mentor others to turn mistakes into opportunities for learning and growth.
3. Maintain ongoing two-way communication throughout the change process.
4. Engage others in making the change work. Listen to staff ideas and incorporate suggestions that are beneficial for the business.

5. Be positive and promote a feeling of optimism.

Great leaders assist team members to come to terms with their endings, and work hard to help others to find new beginnings. Things will not be the same, but as a leader you can help staff to develop the competence and confidence to move forward.

You will be able to assist most team members to move through the changing seasons and find comfort in new beginnings, if you move through the transition yourself. If you are stuck in the summer, as we embark on the fall, how can you expect your team to turn the page?

Great leaders treat each and every team member as a unique individual who experiences change in their own way. Without judgment, great leaders meet staff wherever they need to be met. Some staff become the champions of certain changes, and others need a lot more attention.

One of the most important lessons in leadership (and in life) is to treat every person you meet with total respect regardless of how they deal with the seasons of change. Not everyone can be the "A" student, but they all deserve to be in the classroom. An individual may ultimately need to leave the room, but this should be handled with complete respect, understanding and compassion.

Bob Cooper: We are very pleased to announce that in collaboration with Consulting For A Cause, we will be providing another one day "Discovery Session" on Thursday, October 17 in Chappaqua, NY. You will be provided with the opportunity to capture in your personal journal the following – how to turn talents into sustainable strengths, lead a life with purpose and passion, achieve quantum leaps in performance, brand yourself for future success, achieve a sense of work-life balance, and how to effectively execute your business strategies. Space is limited. To register, please go to www.consultingforacause.com

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