

Tips for Overcoming Resistance to Change

- **Focus on the goal:** You are pushing change for good reason. Ideally, that reason involves an important, strategic outcome for the company. Find ways to systematically remind yourself – and others – of the reason. Include the rationale in every speech, and in comments at every meeting.
- **Talk to employees face-to-face:** You will want to employ every conceivable communications tool, but nothing works like face-to-face conversation. Consciously schedule time each day to interact with employees.
- **Work on your listening skills.** When employees voice concerns, don't react defensively. Simply listen; ask questions, and repeat the key concerns so employees know they've been heard and understood. Thank them for their input, and assure them you will consider their comments. Then do it.
- **Have a strong implementation plan:** Nothing undercuts an initiative more surely than sloppy execution, which emboldens the naysayers and diminishes your allies.
- **Expect problems:** Things will go wrong. It's an axiom of change. Anticipate the need for flexibility and keep the focus on learning and improving. Don't play the blame game.
- **WIIFM:** Tell employees how the change will affect their jobs and their lives. Help them understand the new performance expectations. Show them how they might benefit from the change.
- **No free passes:** Consider inviting the resisters into the process. Solicit their ideas and invite them to participate on the implementation task force. If the resister is an opinion leader, weigh the pros and cons of assigning him or her to a leadership role in the change initiative. Best, get resisters' input before the change is announced. And send the message: There are no free passes; in your workplace, people can criticize the change only if they are willing to help work toward solutions.

-- Larry Olmstead