

Our Love/Hate Relationship with Change

BY GREG SCHINKEL

After a historic American election with change as its central theme, hysteria and enthusiasm will undoubtedly give way to the sobering reality of how change might negatively impact many people. For executives, managers and supervisors, managing change is an important skill.

Why We Love Change

Marketers know that a significant chunk of the population is interested in the latest and greatest. Novelty is an important way to attract customers. In the same way, change can be personally motivating at work.

As you think back in your career to when you were the most excited, energized and enthused, chances are you were dealing with the challenge of change. Perhaps it was a difficult and complex project, or a new promotion, or a new job and even if it was slightly overwhelming, you got excited about the possibilities.

Unfortunately managers often strip away motivation because they keep assigning the same work to the same people day in and day out. It's easy for the manager because he or she can be confident the work will be done well. In the medium to long term, the motivation and creativity of employees will be reduced.

On a personal level, there is almost always something positive that comes from change. Even some of the most difficult personal challenges you have faced have



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brought with them some positives. The end of one relationship may have led to a new relationship. A job loss may have given you the freedom to go back to school or follow your passion to a new career.

If you are feeling personally stagnant, then take personal responsibility to create change for yourself. Take a course, volunteer in the community or ask for a new assignment.

Why We Hate Change

The reason change is so disruptive is because it involves changing our habits. Most of our daily routines are subconscious. A great example is your drive to work in the morning. You get in your car, drive to work and get out and can't remember even how you got there. You were on auto-pilot. Contrast that with a road trip to an address in a city you have never visited, which can be filled with frustration and conflict as the driver and passenger bicker

about how to get to the destination.

If something changes in your routine at work, your conscious mind has to become more involved with the activity. This can be fatiguing. As time passes, the new will become routine and the subconscious will take over and the stress will diminish.

Constant change can be overwhelming. Even those people who love change will notice some undesirable consequences to their health if they don't have some stability in their lives.

Ideally managers will challenge employees with change and then give them a breather so they can regroup and recharge for the next assignment.

Leadership Tips

- Change things up at work – give people new and challenging assignments.
- Give people a reason why the change is good and encourage them over their fears. Keep reminding them of the benefits.
- Systematize the change so that new habits can be formed more quickly.
- Give employees a break after a significant change so they can catch their breath.
- Help employees reflect back on a previous change that was difficult and yet yielded positive results.



Greg Schinkel is a speaker, trainer and author as well as president of Unique Training & Development, Inc. Contact him at www.LeadershipWizard.com

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