



Bringing Change in Your Institution: *Whether It Wants It or Not*¹

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**There are hazardous assumptions in the title we have given to this workshop.
Can you find them?**

Hints:

1. Can *change* be deliberately forced upon an institution?
 - a) What sorts of changes (think “innovations” or “improvements”) can be intentionally encouraged or induced?
 - b) What preconditions must exist before a change will catch on?
2. Can deliberate *change* occur regardless of the participants’ attitudes?
 - a. Whose attitudes are most likely to affect the success of the change?
 - b. What social, emotional, and political mistakes of the supportive participants will delay or frustrate the change?

Suggestion:

Affecting the state of mind of participants is the best way to bring people into a readiness for change.
Consider the following problems:

A. Challenges That Threaten

Try it. You’ll like it! (Experience with the elements of a change is likely essential, but as an “encouraging cheer” this proposition is threatening. Why?)

It’s going to be even better than last time! (A hopeful claim. If it isn’t going to be better why try? But who says it’s going to be better?)

B. Claims That Stimulate Defensiveness

The new way is easier. (Easier sounds optimistic, but does anyone really believe that *better* is likely to be *easier*? Who is trying to fool whom?)

The new way improves productivity. (Great hope, but what evidence can be offered before we have put it to the test? There must be some other motive behind this claim.)

¹ Ted Ward. Bringing Change in Your Institution: Whether It Wants It or Not. Workshop Outline. A participative workshop concerned with problems and skills of stimulating and sustaining institutional change ACCESS Conference at Moody Bible Institute, January 17, 2000

C. Preconceptions That Dominate

Among the free-floating sources of resistance to change is *suspicion*. When pushed into accepting or rejecting a claim about the value of a change, many people will say to themselves, “I must show that this claim is phony. Anybody making such a claim must be distrusted.”

“This sounds a lot like the last time someone tried to talk us into such an idea.”

“I still think that this way of looking at it isn’t going to lead us in a good direction.”

“I wonder about the hidden purpose. Who is going to get hurt by *this* change?”

D. Arguments That Can Weaken the Case for Change

Dealing with the following arguments can take leadership headlong into a trap. Beware!

“It sounds like a lot of work.” (Indeed, it probably will be. So why not admit it?)

“If that’s the way you feel about it, why don’t you go ahead and do it. We will watch.” (You had better back up and get the stragglers on board. When you encounter this sort of resistance, often unspoken, avoid the tendency to argue.)

E. Attitudes That Control Behavior

“We’ve never done it that way before. In fact, we just *do* things, we don’t often spend time thinking about them.”

“We already have better ways to carry out our work. Why should we change?”

F. Apparent Selfishness That Frustrates Cooperation

“What’s in it for me?”

“Why should *we* want to change?”

“Does someone really believe we can do more than we already are doing?”

The crucial motivation is *service*. Encouraging the commitment to service by demonstrating how a certain change or innovation can contribute to more effectively serving those who are giving our life and ministry significance and worth is the best theme to emphasize.

Preparing the Way for Change

The skillful facilitator finds ways to turn each of the “negatives” into “positives.” Do some planning right now: How can you turn each of the problems identified in Items A through F, above, into a basis for encouragement and motivation?

A. Challenges That Threaten

B. Claims That Stimulate Defensiveness

C. Preconceptions That Dominate

D. Arguments That Can Weaken the Case for Change

E. Habits That Control Behavior

F. Apparent Selfishness That Frustrates Cooperation