

DEALING WITH CHANGES ON THE JOB

Change takes place in every phase of our lives. Sometimes change is planned, but at other times it may be an unwelcome intrusion when things are going comfortably. Change can involve something as personal as marriage, a baby, a move or the death of someone you cherish. It can involve someone's job, perhaps through a promotion or a layoff. You can motivate your employees to accept change and to see it as an opportunity to grow.

The Impact Of Change

Change is going to happen. It is one of the creative forces in life. Change often can't be controlled, but your reaction to it can be. Of course, it isn't a problem until there is a difference between the way things are and the way you would like them to be. Some changes can hit hard, especially those that involve loss. But, with time, you will find a way to accept the change and re-establish a new, but different, equilibrium in your personal and work life.

If you are unable to adjust, your life will be filled with unhappiness or hostility and can seem out of control. Such a situation can cause depression, general apathy, absenteeism, uncooperativeness and can perhaps lead to negative substitutes such as the abuse of alcohol or drugs or overeating.

How To Help Employees Accept Change

Try to identify any reasons your staff fears a change. Is it a fear of risk or is there something wrong with this change? Does your staff clearly understand the ramifications? Does it threaten their personal or career goals? After you have identified the problems, plan a program to address your employees' concerns.

When possible, implement the change in stages. Be sure to emphasize the benefits. Be available to counsel and train employees along the way.

Show your enthusiasm and commitment to the success of the change. Your positive attitude will be invaluable. By showing your strengths, weaknesses and a willingness to set limitations you can role-model effective change.

Steps for Self-Directed Change

1. Define the problem behavior.
2. Brainstorm to find a substitute positive behavior.
3. Collect data about #1 and #2.
4. Select one positive behavior and set an action plan.
5. Implement the plan.
6. Evaluate and possibly revise the plan.
7. Continue positive behavior.

Give your employees as much power as you can over any change affecting them. Communicate openly, allow questions and let them make as many decisions as possible. Tactfully handle any suggestion that you know won't work. Help your employees from the time they hear about the change until it is successfully in place. Follow-through is important.

After accepting a major change, many employees will be looking for guidance in resetting their work goals. Help them assess their strengths and limitations. Long- and short-term goals can help them re-direct their energies in a positive way.

Reach out to your employees and show you care for them as individuals. Listen to them and have fun with them. Laughter can lighten the load of those struggling with change.

Encourage your employees to take good care of their health. Diet, exercise and rest were never more important than they are in this situation. Set an example of healthy living.

When To Seek Help

If work performance declines, have a meeting with your employees. Try to identify the problems. Assist in setting goals for improvement. Counsel them about possible coping strategies. If some seem unable to work through the change or respond with negativity, they should be referred to an employee assistance program.

