

COACHING TIP

From Rex C. Houze

“ENCOURAGE” CHANGE

Have you ever done anything stupid, knew at the time that it was stupid, and did it anyway? Have you ever done anything you knew was stupid, said you would never do it again, and did it again? Most, if not all of us, would have to answer “yes” to each of these questions. What does it prove? It proves we are human and we are creatures of habit.

The good news is that most habits are good because they save us time, energy, and effort. Once we turn something into a habit, the habit takes over and allows us to perform it automatically. The bad news is that the biggest threat to habit change is the habit itself. The old habit fights for its life and makes it more difficult for the new habit to take over. That is a primary reason that most people resist change; the old way is comfortable and known and the new way is threatening and scary.

If you do what you have always done, you will get what you have always gotten. If you want outcomes to be better, you need to do something different --- and that requires change. Effective leaders and coaches must expect change, encourage change, and embrace change. What worked yesterday won't necessarily work today. To meet the challenge of change, leaders must turn to their most important asset: people.

Leaders need to develop strategies for:

1. **Enhancing communication.** Growth is more likely to occur when clear communication is taking place on a regular basis.
2. **Promoting continuous learning and development.** When people learn to handle new responsibilities or develop new skills their self-confidence gets a boost and they will be capable of better performance and will accomplish more.
3. **Improving leadership skills.** Even people who do not perform a formal leadership role can improve their performance by developing leadership skills. It will also prepare them for future opportunities.

Meeting the challenge of change is easier when you use your most valuable tool: encouragement. Everyone needs and responds to encouragement. Encouragement brings out the best in people, helps people believe in themselves, and helps them accomplish more. It is amazing what people can accomplish when they believe in themselves and when the important people in their lives give them encouragement. The effective use of encouragement will work wonders and the best part is that it doesn't cost anything other than a little time and effort.

Think about someone who encouraged you and influenced your leadership ability. How is your life better because of that person? Think about people you can encourage and influence in a positive way. Then, systematically give them encouragement on a regular basis. When you do this, you will be well on your way to meeting the challenge of change.