

C hange: Managing People & Transitions

by Simma Lieberman

Increasing intercultural awareness and diversity in an organization means creating change. Guest writer and diversity specialist Simma Lieberman helps leaders to successfully manage transitions and change.

The 6 Questions All Leaders Should Ask Themselves about Change

1 Who are you leading? (a board of directors, managers, general employees, etc.) The dynamics of your group will impact what message you deliver and how you deliver it.

2 How have these people reacted to change in the past? Think about changes that are both small and big. Past change is a powerful indicator for future reactions and ultimately the success of future changes. Think back, identify problems, concerns, and needs, and plan to address them again with future changes.

3 Have they been resistant or open to new ideas? Make a list, if possible, and identify what changes people were open to and what they resisted. Can you identify a pattern? Are people more open to cyclical changes (reoccurring ones, like seasonal or budget changes) than structural changes (permanent changes, like downsizing)?

4 Have they been fearful or secure with change? Even when a group seems secure of change, there may be an underlining fear that can impact the success of your change if left unaddressed. Try to pinpoint fears that surfaced in the past and plan to address them during the new change.

5 How will this change impact them positively or negatively? People are more likely to accept change when they both understand

the change and can see the value of the change. Think about how the change will impact your group, and plan to face the possible negative results of the change. If left unspoken, negative impacts will create strong resistance to change.

6 Do you understand what will motivate your people and create buy-in for the change? Think in terms of their needs and concerns, and adapt your strategy for approaching change to address these motivating factors.

Asking yourself these questions sets the groundwork for successful change. If you are new in your position or don't have the answers to these questions, find the people who do. You will effectively be rallying people for the changes ahead in the meantime and will gain powerful insight for how to approach change in your organization.

Reminder: Change is Acceptable...

- When the reasons for it are understood.
- When it does not threaten needs.
- When those affected help to create it.
- When it follows previous successful changes.
- When inaugurated after prior change has been assimilated-not during confusion of other ones.
- When planned rather than reactive.
- To people who will share in the benefits of the change.

Simma Lieberman works with people and organizations to create environments where people can do their best work. She specializes in diversity, gender communications, life-work balance and stress, and acquiring and retaining new customers. Simma is the co-author of Putting Diversity to Work with Culturosimy's founder Kate Berardo and George Simons of www.diversophy.com. Reach Simma at simma@simmalieberman.com and visit her website at www.simmalieberman.com.

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