

Is Your Organization in the Wake of Change?

There are times when really big changes happen in an organization. In those times when for instance a site is closing, workers are laid off, or a new facility is being built, it's easy to recognize that there are some big changes going on. Then there are times when the changes occurring in an organization are smaller or more subtle. However, the changes inside the minds of the organization's members, as a reaction to those small organizational changes, may be big.

Take, for instance, a large company that is relocating one of its small departments from one site to another site. The small department that is moving between two very large sites won't cause a site closure or lay-off. The move won't even hit the radar screen of on-looking analysts evaluating the company's strength for Wall Street investors. However, inside the company where the move is happening, the change is HUGE! Suddenly workers across the large site are wondering if their department is the next to move. These workers wonder if this is the first step to closing their plant's doors, laying them off, putting their family on welfare, and making it impossible to send their kids to a good four-year college. People have a way of creating 'Stephen King – like' scenarios of what might happen. They often base these scenarios on very little data. You'd think that if people were going to "make up stuff", they'd make up "good stuff". It's all made up anyway. The truth is people make up a nightmare in their minds, about what might happen, that would put most horror novelists to shame.

So what's a savvy leader to do?

1. Leaders need to be educated on the process people go through in times of change so that they can recognize progress as it's being made. They also need to ensure their organization has the skills they will need to thrive during change.
2. Leaders must role model critical behaviors in times of change. They need to explain the effect of the change on others. They also need to communicate what isn't changing. They need to listen to the people in their organization - truly listen. Finally, they need to involve people, whenever possible, in creating the future, while quickly solving conflicts as they arise.

Finally, leaders need to take care of themselves in order to survive the marathon of leading. Taking care means physically, mentally, and spiritually. Leaders often have a blind spot to doing this. They need to be extra careful that they don't burn out a mile before the finish line of the leadership marathon.



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