

## Thrive and Succeed with change

Sadly, this year 70% of change initiatives, transformational programs will fail to achieve their primary objectives and goals. Billions of dollars are wasted each year on unsuccessful projects due to resistance to change, poor planning, ineffective execution of change, poor executive visibility and support, poor support from and middle managers and a lack of organizational capacity and capability for change and transformation. Lots of books have been written on the subject of change, consulting companies have come up with different models for leading and managing change and yet the needle for successful change has not moved much. Why is this so?

I believe people like change. I like change. If we didn't like change, we will not pursue career advancement, we will not move from our very first home, we will not pursue learning and development, people will not travel or go on vacation, and we will not eat from different restaurants. You see contrary to popular opinion, we all like change, we are engineered for change. It is our understanding of change, our association with the word change, and our experiences with change, how change was introduced to us and the books we have read about change that created the difficulty and clouded our perceptions of change.

Imagine if every single leader began a change initiative from the premise that people like change engages employees from this premise and prepares communication in support of that. If leaders began to develop change programs from a position that people like change and help employees navigate through the change. I am sure the results will be different.

How many of you if your spouse or significant other called you and said honey, I have a surprise trip for you; we are going to the Bahamas or Hawaii. But you got so angry and said, Honey, you know I don't like change. Please don't ever surprise me like this again! Or your boss calls you into his office and says something like we have increased your salary because of your performance, and the great contribution you have made to our profitability this year. Will your response be boss why did you do that? Boss, you very well know that I don't like change; I want to continue with my old salary. I appreciate your gesture but please leave me at my old salary. No you don't respond that way, instead you go home and throw a party.

I was invited to speak to a group of leaders preparing to embark on a major transformation program. I learnt that the success of the transformation could be a game changer for this oil and gas company. The Vice President got up and made his presentation articulating the business case and benefits of the transformation. He bombarded his leadership with statistics after statistics and when he was done, the leaders applauded.

I was introduced as the next speaker. My initial remarks when I took to talk with this leadership team were; Mr. Vice President thanks a million for making the case for change and setting the tone for this transformation. But my question Mr. Vice President is and so what? The place went very quiet and you could hear a pin drop. I said again and so what Mr. Vice President? Then I continued, Mr. Vice President you provided a solid and compelling business case but left out one of the most important ingredients for successful transformation. You left out the people factor! Your presentation did not paint a clear picture of how your employee's lives will change or be different as a result of this transformation and what they will gain from when all is said and done. I proceeded to speak about effective ways to engage people for transformation, helping them navigate through change and transformation and addressing their concerns with the process. He avoided me for the rest of the day. I thought they will never invite me back to speak in this company. I inquired from another leader if the VP was angry with me and he said No but thinks the VP was trying to figure me out.

The next day, I was invited to the Town Hall with the entire staff population in attendance to launch the transformation program. To my surprise, the VP changed his presentation overnight and included my suggestions. He painted a vivid picture of how the transformation will impact employees positively, create room for career advancement, make the business more profitable and hence bonus for the employees and many other good stuff. After his presentation an instant voting was carried out and the VP got the following: 90% said they got it; 85% said the VP created a sense of urgency for the transformation and 87% said they are ready, willing to participate and support the change. At the cocktail party in the evening, the VP walked straight to me and I thought oh boy, what is he going to say. He told me George, thank you for your presentation yesterday. I did not know what you were up to and nobody has ever spoken to me that way before. I was angry but got the message. You see I listened to you even though I did not show it in the meeting. What you said works.

Fast forward, I recently met the VP and he said we've just launched another big change initiative in a joint venture partnership with another Oil and Gas Company and I want to let you know that I am a good student. Things went very well. Why did I tell you this story? I told you this story not to impress you but rather to impress upon you that people like change and that all they want from their leaders is a clear demonstration of how life will be better after the change and how they will be supported during the transition. They also want to know how the change will provide opportunities for career growth and advancement.

Let me leave you with this thought, next time you are introducing, leading or managing change, begin from the premise that people like change, paint a clear picture of what the change will do for them and the business as a whole. Ask for their personal commitment, support and help in creating a better company for all. When leaders paint a vivid picture of how the change will move the organization to the next level and how it will benefit all, the results will change for the better.

Dr. George Ayee is a consultant, professional speaker, coach and trainer. He helps individuals and his clients to unleash the full power of the organization and employees for maximum results. George works with organizations and people to unlock the power of change and transformation for optimal results. George will help you go through change and the transformation process faster and successfully. With a doctorate in business administration, an MBA in international business administration and BSc in Finance/Accounting and decades of experience, George works with world class companies, oil and gas, banks, insurance, non-profit organizations, government institutions and people who want to succeed, follow their passion, exploit their potential, make more money and achieve organizational objectives.



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