Unit Lesson

It is not a matter of if; it is a matter of when change will occur. Times are changing, and in a world of Google Maps, change is a very dynamic concept. Change occurs in response to the environment, and the perceptions of the nature of change are heavily influenced by individual perspectives. The vast majority of employees do not understand where change originates because they live within 300 miles of their birthplace. For example, growing up in a small town with familiar surroundings for most of our lives not only provides a place of comfort but also can narrow our worldview since we are all a product of our enIn addition, there is an entire generation entering the workforce; the Millennials may not realize how globalization affects change in the workplace. They have never known a world without instantaneous global communication. The generation of workers in today's workplace may still perceive the world as discrete islands of "us versus them" and, therefore, may not perceive global politics, culture, and economics making change in their jobs. In this regard, Millennials may have an advantage in the workplace and seem to adapt to change faster.

In addition, change in the workplace is coming from a shift in emerging economies called *demographic dichotomy*. This phenomenon describes how the workforce in emerging economies is becoming disproportionately young, while the workforce in developed countries is rapidly aging (Claus, 2013). Today, in the three "aged" countries (Germany, Italy, and Japan), more than 20% of their populations are age 65 or older. At the same time, the highly educated baby boom generation is now preparing to leave the workforce, creating a "demographic deficit" of experienced, highly trained workers in developed countries.

Many organizations talk about the importance of change, but too often, human resource development (HRD) professionals within organizations are resistant to or fearful of change. They resist change to the point where a project never takes off, and the organization steadily diminishes in value. Resisting change can only make the process more difficult. In retrospect, many realize that if they had changed a long time ago, both time and money could have been saved. According to Bennis (2003), many organizations believe that they welcome change; however, they are often not as receptive as they believe they are. Change is not something to be feared. Instead, it is the source of personal growth and organizational success. Bennis (2003) even goes so far as to state that change is the only way to stay competitive. Some leaders and organizations may be satisfied with the status quo, but this can be a hindrance. Fascinatingly enough, some leaders and organizations do not realize their own resistance towards the changing times and that they have stayed static for too long. Even small changes can increase productivity, morale, and profit.

Kodak, the camera manufacturer, is one example of resistance to change. When the digital camera was invented, they resisted the move to newer technologies and fell behind their competition. Organizations likeKodak resist change for many reasons—one is culture. A strong culture can be not only a lifeblood but also a reason for failure. At Kodak, the culture was very by-the-numbers decision making with little room for individual expression and development.

Reflecting on Kodak, you may be asking yourself why change is so difficult. It seems so easy, but many struggle to keep up with constant change. The video below explains why so many fear change. As you watch the video (used with permission), take note of why so many struggle with change and how it can be overcome:

Miglani, B. (2015). *How to adapt to change in the workplace* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GsTSfiHtXsM

As mentioned in the video, there are several different reasons why we resist change. There is comfort in the old way of doing things, and change will disrupt that. Also, many feel fear in what they cannot control, and oftentimes, individuals cannot control the change. Miglani (2015) provides us with six ways of po1. Let go of how good it used to be.

2. Accept change happens all around us.
3. Consider what is possible and what is not.
4. Set new goals and go after them.
5. Focus on what you can control.
6. Let in some fresh air.

Notice how Miglani recognizes that we cannot control everything and that life is complicated. However, by understanding that change is a part of life, we can accept it and learn to embrace it.

Change models provide a pathway to making change more effective. For example, Lewin's change management model follows three simple steps: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. Think of the unfreezing step as breaking down the barriers to change or unfreezing from the way things have always been done. During this stage, present a detailed analysis of the reasons why the change would be beneficial, including why the current model is no longer working. Changing is the second step, and as you may have guessed, this is where the changes are implemented. During the refreezing stage, the changes are reinforced (Levasseur, 2001). This effort can ensure that the changes will take effect, and people will not revert back to the old ways of doing things.

Another popular model is Kotter's eight-step change model that includes the following: (1) increasing the urgency of change, (2) building a team dedicated to change, (3) creating a vision, (4) communicating the change, (5) empowerment of employees, (6) creating goals, (7) being persistent, and (8) making the change permanent (Boria, 2007). As you may notice, there are some overlaps between Lewin and Kotter's theories. Both theories communicate the need for the change and to make the change permanent.

Training and development professionals must be willing to adapt with the times. Change is not easy, but taking these risks can be beneficial. Leaders need to stay up-to-date on future trends and implement the changes most useful to that organization. As organizations undergo revolutionary transformation at an exponential rate to meet the many challenging demands of the 21st century, risk taking is a necessity. Risk taking can lead to lucrative opportunities for growth, improvement, and greatness. Frank Scully said, "why not go out on the limb, that's where the fruit is." HRD must not allow their fears to hold them hostage or dictate their actions. Equally important, HRD must also be careful not to jump to conclusions, make assumptions, or make hasty decisions without the basic facts surrounding situations.

References

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