

# Leadership Excellence



Inside:  
Exclusive  
Interviews with  
**LEAD Award**  
Winners 2018

## POSITIVE CULTURE: THE KEY TO ACHIEVING YOUR STRATEGIC GOALS

Great leaders build and drive great cultures

- Brad Deutser

**10**

Advancing Women In  
STEM Begins With You

- Audrey Taylor

**26**

The Seven Qualities Of  
Great Leadership

- Bruce Hartman

**34**

Leading Change

- Gregg Brown

**44**

Centralization vs.  
Decentralization

- Jim Clemmer

# Leading Change

## Change we initiate vs. imposed change

By **Gregg Brown**

Leading change within an organization can be a struggle, especially if your workforce feels the change has been imposed upon them rather than at their own initiation. The success of your change initiative will often boil down to how your employees direct their mental and physical energy levels while trying to accept and adapt to the change your organization is planning.

On top of that, people are coping with shifting priorities and dwindling time, which can lead to fluctuating energy levels. We're almost always expected to do more with less in both our personal and professional lives, and so we need to expend our energy in the most efficient way to meet our goals.

This also applies to facilitating a smooth change in the workplace: focus energy where it's needed to have a successful change. It might sound easy in theory, but in reality your employees may be unconsciously or consciously putting up barriers that could stunt the change process. Your employees, just like you, respond faster and easier to change

they agree with vs. change they disagree with or that is imposed upon them. Most change at work comes from above!

As you introduce change, your workforce will likely be asking "[What's in it for me \(WIIFM\)?](#)" If they see the benefits that come with the change, chances are the process will go a lot smoother.

But not every change has immediate or long-term benefits to the workforce. Some involve restructuring and job changes. If they don't see or are unaware of the benefits, they'll be asking the more impactful question, "What's the *impact* on me (the WIOM)?"

This is when people start to get a little antsy over change and will spend time and energy stressing over the effects your plans may have on their work lives, even before the change has been implemented. Sharing the benefits of the change is only a small part of getting employees engaged in change. Answering "What's the *impact* on me?" which includes the positive and negative aspects of the change is most often overlooked.

You can't be afraid to discuss the negative! This is the point where people get "stuck".

If your employees get stuck on change, you can help them refocus with strategies that will quickly and effectively get your change process back on track. Here are 4 strategies to get your team "unstuck" and move change forward in the face of uncertainty:

**Managing emotional response:** The workplace overflows with emotions that are often bubbling beneath the surface, behind closed doors, and never more during times of change.

There may be a particular part (or parts) of the change strategy that is triggering the emotional part of your employees' brains. Experts [David Rock](#) and [Daniel Goleman](#) have both noted that when our emotional brain is engaged, we lose working memory because of the cortisol and other hormones flooding in.

Fortunately, you don't have to become a clinical psychologist to manage your employee's emotions. David Rock's [SCARF model](#) is very effective at identifying possible emotional triggers and how to

minimize their impact on the change process

- a. **Status:** Your employee may feel that their status is being threatened, or that they'll somehow look less than competent before, during and after the change. Encourage them to build on what they already know so they'll be fully prepared when the change actually occurs. Let clients and others know that someone is on the learning curve, so they don't feel less than competent in someone else's eyes.
- b. **Certainty:** Many people don't like uncertainty, especially when it comes to their work routines. Itemize for them everything that will stay the same, as well as what will change, so they feel reassured that some things will still be familiar.
- c. **Autonomy:** How much is your workforce worrying about losing control of certain aspects of their job? Let them know which things they will retain control over so they can focus their energy in that direction.
- d. **Relatedness:** Moving people around always stirs things up in a company. Implement ways to make everyone feel like they're part of the new group so they can start Forming, Storming and Norming before the change happens. No one wants to feel left out.
- e. **Fairness:** Some employees may feel the change isn't fair, or that others will be treated more "equally" than others. Being fair, doesn't always

mean being equal. Explain the difference *equitable* and *equal* so people know when each concept is being used.

Overall, you should expect some negativity when change is introduced. Managing the emotional brain of your employees will help them maintain their productivity and stay focused on the tasks at hand.

**Examine their past strategies:** If you find people are stuck because they don't know what to do to help move the change forward, help them identify ways they dealt with major or minor challenges in the past.

Coach them by having them itemize which talents, strengths, and skills they brought to these past situations. Then help them see how they can apply these same traits and abilities to the change happening now. The situations need not be similar, as our underlying strengths are transferable.

**Allow time for ideas to collide before making decisions:** Does the change require innovation and idea generation, decision-making, or both? People tend to try doing both creative thinking and critical thinking at the same time, which keeps them (and your change process) stuck and going around in circles. I call this the 'Ping Pong Ball Effect'. Ideas and decisions being passed around ineffectively.

Think about unproductive meetings you've been in. They are often not functioning properly

because people are shutting down ideas before they've had a chance to be discussed: "I've been here 10 years; that won't work". You then have to have a meeting to discuss what happened at the last meeting. Talk about not being productive!

If you are in a meeting, and this happens, say "Let's just discuss the idea for two minutes. THEN we will determine which part of the idea we may want to action". Even if "bad" ideas are introduced, treat them with value because even the worst suggestions usually contain one or two usable elements, or the person would've not brought the idea up. In the end, you might cobble together enough of these nuggets to create a whole new, innovative idea!

Only then should you do your decision making to determine which ideas are the best to act upon. It doesn't need to take a lot of time.

**See what lies underneath any complaining:** Do you have people on your team who seem stuck in "complain mode"? Although some people just live to complain, you may be able to stop most negativity by discovering what actually lies *beneath* the complaint.

When people complain, chances are there's something unspoken that's important to them but not being addressed.

As an example, if someone complains to you about the bad working relationship they have

with a colleague on their change team. The individual wouldn't be complaining about the situation, unless it was important to them to have a good working relationship with that person. If you identify that for them, it will help move to positive action.

Allow them to express their concerns and try to solve the situation together – if you can. You'll demonstrate a willingness to listen at a deeper level without shrugging them off, siding against them, or labeling them as a "complainer" or "being negative".

During workplace change, be sure to get to the heart of your team's concerns.

No one is 'change ready' when the impact on them is negative. Try one or more of these strategies to help your employees respond to imposed changes at a faster pace. You can do it!



**Gregg Brown** is driven to change the way we think about change. Gregg is a best-selling author, inspiring speaker and award-winning expert in the fields of leadership, resilience and change. With a solid background in change management, Gregg has worked extensively in the US and Canada and spoken hundreds of times at conferences and led sessions with Fortune 500 clients in sectors such as finance, insurance, retail, real estate, health care as well as numerous public sector clients. Over 25 years ago, Gregg was part of the ground breaking team that opened the first wave of Starbucks stores in Canada.

