

CHANGE

OUTLINE

The human world has always changed . . . and it is changing still. The human world of business: trade and exchange, growth and development, exploration and exploitation, wheeling and dealing, profit and loss, globalisation and off-shoring, competition and shareholder value, cost-cutting and quarterly performance, flatter structures and high-performing teams, motivation and disillusioned employees, customer service and call-centres, mergers and acquisitions is changing at a rate much faster than many other areas of human endeavour and inter-action.

Humans built the structures that operate the business arena but, increasingly, humans seem unable to manage those structures so that they operate efficiently for the benefit of all involved. Business has always involved an element of exploitation, in the Age of the Internet inequities are more quickly detected, observed and reported on. This results in motivation and performance problems for organizations, particularly large ones. They don't seem to be doing much about it. They don't know how.

In larger organisations a new cultural model is operating: the Juggernautocracy: 'We're so large we can do what we want, bulldoze through any difficulty or opposition'. Sometimes they're right . . . in the short-term. Another trick is to use marketing to correct perceived performance problems: if you're a polluting, dirty, wasteful organisation get a new logo and run a world-wide marketing campaign about your green credentials. It becomes the truth because, increasingly, perception is all . . . until it all unravels.

CHANGE IN ORGANISATIONS

Most of us find change, at the least, unnerving and, usually, threatening. This is the case even when we are actively choosing the change. The more so when it is change imposed. And, in organisations, change is almost always imposed. Employees almost always feel threatened by it. As competition and change increases employees are likely to feel more threatened and, as usual, their feelings will drive their behaviour: their fear and suspicion will increase, their loyalty and commitment will decrease, they will know when, or believe that, they are being lied to or not told the whole truth, they will take steps to protect themselves, they will devote less of their energy to the work they do, they will join in with the politics, they will withhold their willingness and goodwill.

Because of the way in which organisational culture grows and develops organisations do not realise the scale and the extent of the problem they have on their hands until it is too late. And that's when they institute a Change Programme. Which is viewed with disinterest, distaste and suspicion by the intended victim. Rightly so, because it is usually just one more thing, one more indignity, being done to them. The implicit threat is 'Embrace Change . . . or else!'

If you want to change your organisation, and change the attitudes of the people working in that organisation you must do a number of things: start with the people. Find out what they think and what they want. Identify any synergies with what you think and want. Plan what you are going to do, taking into account what will work and what won't. It is staggering the amount of organisations who have gone through major change programmes, often more than one, whose employees, when you ask them for detail, have only a sketchy recollection of what they participated in.

CHANGE PROGRAMMES

Successful change programmes transform organisations and their employees for the better. They revolutionise the way those organisations do business. They work well in organisations which are agile, daring, creative, lively, innovative and love risk. There aren't very many of those around.

Organisations can be changed. Relatively quickly. But you start at the bottom not the top. Canvas other peoples' opinions, avoid manipulation, veiled threats, blackmail, exhortatory jargon and 'get-with-it-or-get-out' phrases. Let the change permeate the organisation from the workers because the workers will see the sense of it, the need for it, will want to do it and, most importantly, will start to lead it. Change is about behaviour, not about everyone learning to use the same language.

KAi will come into your organisation and research, design and run a Change Programme which will motivate and galvanise your people. It will make them want to change, make them want to be part of it not part of a sullen, silent opposition to it. It will be difficult, it will take courage, it will be worth it.

And remember: if a piece of software could fix it we'd all be writing software.