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Overcoming Resistance to Change

Objectives

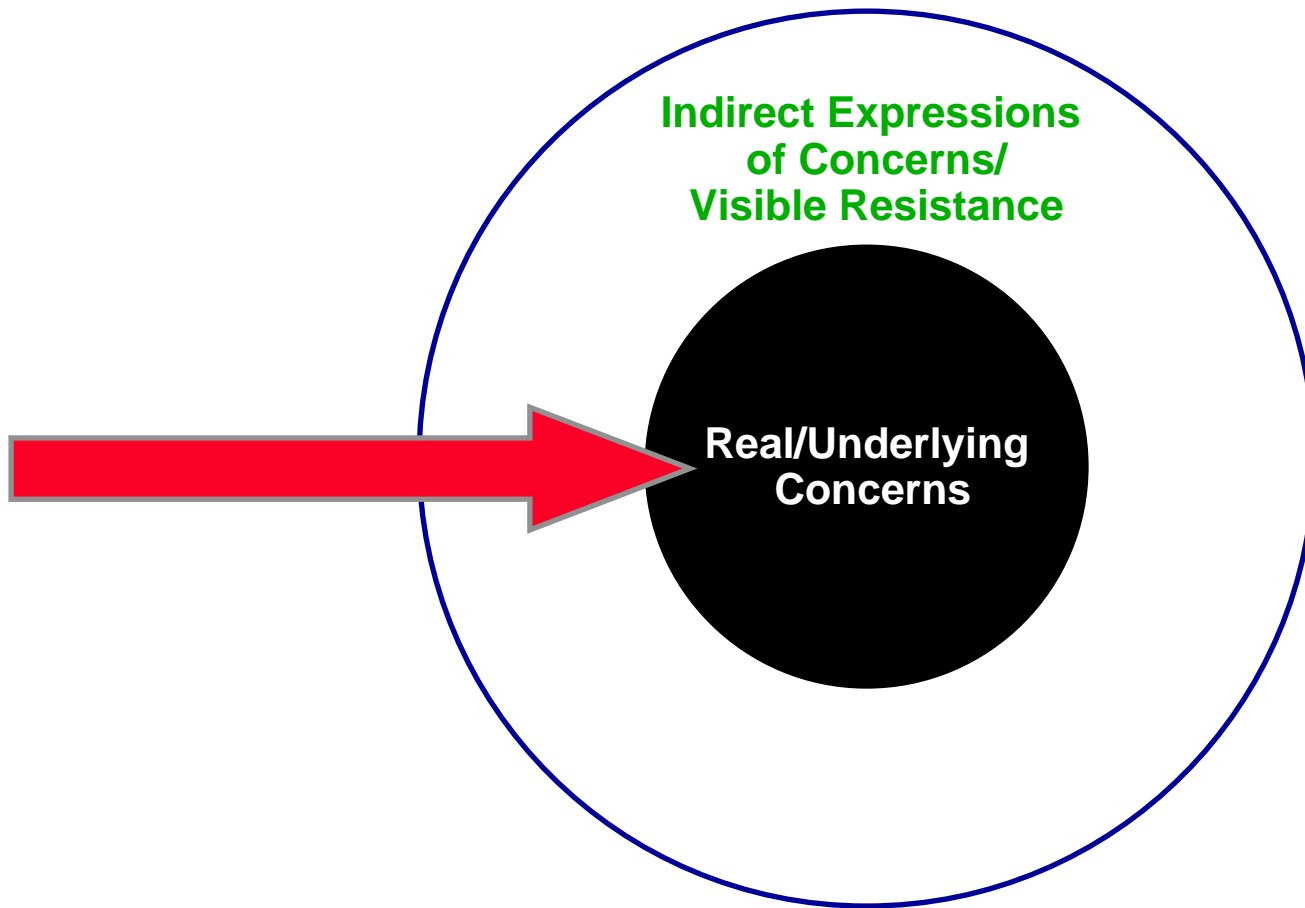
- Understand the nature of resistance
- Understand the forms resistance takes and how to acknowledge it
- Understand steps to take to deal with resistance

50 Reasons Why It Won't Work

1. We tried that before.
2. Our systems are different
3. It costs too much.
4. That's beyond our responsibility.
5. That's not my job.
6. We're all too busy to do that.
7. It's too radical a change.
8. There's not enough help.
9. We've never done it before.
10. We don't have the authority.
11. There's not enough time.
12. Let's get back to reality.
13. That's not our problem.
14. Why change it? It's still working OK.
15. I don't like that idea.
16. You're right, but ...
17. You're two years ahead of your time
18. It isn't in the budget.
19. We're not ready for that.
20. Sounds OK but impractical.
21. Let's give it some more thought.
22. That's my bowling day.
23. That doesn't effect me or my child.
24. Nobody cares about that.
25. We've always done it this way.
26. It might not work.
27. Not that again!
28. Where'd you dig that one up?
29. We did all right without it.
30. It's never been tried before.
31. Let's shelve it for the time being.
32. I don't see the connection.
33. What you are really saying is ...
34. Let's not be the first.
35. Maybe that would work in your department but not in mine.
36. The administration will never go for it.
37. It can't be done.
38. It's too much trouble.
39. It's impossible.
40. You're not here to think.
41. Can't teach an old dog new tricks.
42. Let me think about that and I'll get back to you.
43. Let's wait until the next generation.
44. Legislation says (I can't remember) we can't do that.
45. We can't fight city hall.
46. That's old/new business and can't be discussed now.
47. That's too serious a subject.
48. No one is interested.
49. It's too early to think about it.
50. It's too late to start.



Understanding Resistance





Why Do People Resist Change?

- The phrase, “overcoming resistance,” indicates an adversarial relationship ... since resistance is an emotional process, understanding the underlying cause is critical.
- People resist change because they perceive it to be negative and/or they do not want to deal with the root causes.
- Resistance is a way of expressing concern about making a change; concerns may include:
 - Power loss/protect status quo
 - Feelings of inadequacy/self-doubt
 - Fear the solution may be worse than the problem
 - Hopelessness ... beyond the point-of-no-return
 - Alienated ... they are upset and/or feel “used”
- The challenge is to help the person who is resisting change to express these concerns directly

Most of the time, the underlying concerns that cause the most resistance are control and vulnerability



Personal Vulnerability ... the Hidden Resistance

- Loss of credibility or reputation
- Lack of career or financial advancement
- Possible damage to relationships with boss
- Loss of employment
- Interpersonal rejection
- Change in job role
- Embarrassment/loss of self-esteem
- Job transfer or demotion



Identify and Acknowledge Forms of Resistance



Acknowledging Resistance: Hints for the Right Words

- How you feel:
 - Your perceptions of how they feel
- Authentic:
 - Encourages person to do the same
- Assertive:
 - Direct, without putting anyone down
 - Use “I” statements
- Descriptive, not evaluative

Use

Descriptive
Focused
Specific
Brief
Simple

Avoid

Judgmental
Global
Stereotyped
Lengthy
Complicated



Forms of Resistance

Open Resistance

- Attacking
- No Time
- Low Energy/ Inattention
- “I’m Not Surprised”
- One-word Answers
- Silence
- Changing the subject

Create a Distraction

- Critique of Methodology
- Nit-picking
- Flooding with Detail
- Needs More Detail
- Excessive Compliance
- Confusion
- Pressing for solutions

Distancing

- Avoidance of responsibility
- Flight into Health
- Impracticality
- “We’re Unique”
- Intellectualizing
- Moralizing

Forms of Resistance – Open Resistance

<u>Resistance</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>	<u>Possible Response</u>
Attacking	Most blatant form of resistance	“You are really questioning a lot of what I do. You seem angry.”
No Time	Means: “You are not a priority”	“You don’t have the time to work with me. I’m having a hard time trying to proceed without more involvement from you.”
Low Energy/ Inattention	Means: “I don’t value this”	“You look like you have other things on your mind, and have low energy for this project.”
“I’m Not Surprised”	Stakeholder downplays your impact/ contribution, whether or not it was a new insight	“I feel that you expect me to know more than you.”
One-word Answers	Means: “I’m not sharing what I think with you.”	“Say more about that.”
Silence	Toughest to deal with, as the meaning could have multiple interpretations	“I don’t know how to read your silence.”
Changing the Subject	Means: “I don’t want to deal with it”	“The subject keeps shifting. Can we focus on one thing at a time?”

Forms of Resistance – Create a Distraction

<u>Resistance</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>	<u>Possible Response</u>
Critique of Methodology	Beyond the need to gain basic familiarity	“You are asking a lot of questions about my methods. Do you have any doubts about the credibility of the results?”
Nit-picking	Theoretical discussions on minor calculations or assumptions that take the conversation off-topic	“We’re getting into a lot of detail. If we resolve these small questions, will it affect your assessment of the big picture?”
Flooding with Detail	Provides volumes of detail without thought or with the intent of creating irrelevant work	“You’re giving me more than I need. Can you headline it?”
Needs More Detail	Stakeholder has insatiable appetite for detail.	“Which decisions will be affected by more detail? How? Which decisions could move ahead now? Are you ever concerned about ‘analysis paralysis?’”
Excessive Compliance	Means: “Too much, too soon”	“You seem agreeable to anything I suggest. I’m having a hard time telling what you’re really feeling.”
Confusion	Responds to most discussions with “I don’t understand.”	“We are having difficulty moving ahead. You seem to be confused about what we are discussing. Is the problem unclear or are you just not sure what to do about it?”
Pressing for Solutions	Means: “I don’t want to understand more about problems . . . I want you to give me the solutions.”	“It’s too early for solution. I’m still trying to find out . . .”

Forms of Resistance – Distancing

<u>Resistance</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>	<u>Possible Response</u>
Avoidance of Responsibility	Means: “I really don’t have (or want) any control over the issue.”	“Do you ever feel like others may see you as part of the problem?”
Flight into Health	Problem “disappears” as the date to face it nears.	“What has changed to make this issue go away? What have you done to resolve the problem?”
Impracticality	Means: “We are already doing everything that is realistic and appropriate to our business.”	“You seem to feel that what we’re discussing is not ‘real world’. How could we make it more relevant?”
“We’re Unique”	Means: “Our business is too different from other industries; it can’t work here.”	“How have others in your industry solved the problem? Is there an advantage to being one of the first in your industry to deal with this issue?”
Intellectualizing	Stream of thought produces high-level “wheel spinning”	“Each time we get close to deciding what to do, you go back to developing theories to understand what is happening.”
Moralizing	Means: “I agree with you, but others in the organization do not (We/They syndrome).”	“What have you and your team done to improve the situation that was rejected by your peers? Why was it rejected?”

Guidelines for Naming Resistance

- Don't worry about being wrong
- If you can't find a name for what's happening: "How you are feeling about the discussion?"
- If all else fails. . . just say, "It seems this isn't going well" or "We're stuck"



Dealing With Resistance



Five Steps for Dealing with Resistance

1. Identify the form the resistance is taking
2. Acknowledge the resistance
3. Be quiet, listen, let the person respond
4. Don't take it personally
5. Remember the "two good faith responses" rule



Identify the Form of Resistance

- Trust what you see and how you hear more than what you hear
- Pick up cues
- Look at yourself:
 - Uneasy
 - Bored
 - Irritated
- Listen for repetition and telltale phrases



Acknowledge the Resistance ... Then Let the Person Respond

Acknowledge

- Tell the person your perception of the resistance
- Do it in a neutral, nonaggressive way with WIN/WIN words:
“What I think I hear you saying is ...”
- Tell the person how the resistance is making you feel:
 - Use “I” statements
- Be specific, clear, authentic

Encourage a Response

- Get him/her talking
- Encourage full expression of the concerns
- Be aware of other forms of resistance surfacing

“Best Practice” to Minimize Resistance (page 1 of 2)

- Explain why
- Identify the benefits
- Invite and answer questions
- Solicit participation, and, if possible, early involvement
 - (“first-draft/strawmodel” reviews, membership in planning/implementation teams, etc.)
- Avoid surprises
- Set standards and clear targets
- Inform/involve informal leaders
- Recognize and reward efforts
- Over-communicate

“Best Practice” to Minimize Resistance (page 2 of 2)

- Provide appropriate training in new skills and coaching in new values and behaviors
- Encourage self-management
- Give more feedback than usual to ensure people always know where they stand
- Allow for resistance. Help people let go of the “old”
- Measure results, step back and take a look at what is going on. Keep asking “Is the change working the way we want it to?”
- Encourage people to think and act creatively
- Look for any “opportunity” created by the change
- Allow for withdrawal and return of people who are temporarily resistant

What Not to Do

- Fight the resistance
- Go into more data collection
- Reengineer in the attempt to get a better intervention
- Avoid the individual
- Work more with your “allies”
- Give more than two good faith responses to questions
- Give lots of reasons
- Expect approval, encouragement, support and/or affection
- Get hooked into the details
- Lose your confidence
- Expect to have all the answers
- Collude with the individual
- Avoid giving “bad news”
- Use aggressive language
- Delay/wait one more day



Don't Take It Personally

- Remember, their behavior is not a reflection on you
- Let them air their defenses without responding defensively
- Do **NOT** defend your actions—this encourages “looking for holes”
- Do **NOT** counterattack head on

**Don't “resist resistance” or try to fight it head on.
Stakeholders are not resisting you — even if it feels like it.**



Remember the “Two Good Faith Responses” Rule

- The majority of questions about methodology or the project process are just expressions of discomfort
- Listen for repetition of questions or telltale phrases, such as:
 - You have to understand that . . .
 - Let me explain something to you . . .
- The third time the question is asked, respond to the question with a statement that suggest the person might be reluctant to commit to the problem or process

A ground rule is to give two good-faith responses to every question. The third time a question is asked, interpret it as a form of resistance.

Summary: Dealing With Resistance

- Resistance is inherent in the change process
- To deal with resistance, you should be able to:
 - Identify when resistance is taking place
 - View resistance as a natural process and a sign that you are on target
 - Support the individual in expressing their resistance directly
 - Not take the expression of the resistance personally or as an attack on you or your competence
- Common forms of resistance can be identified with practice
- The 5-step process for dealing with resistance will help reduce the emotional barriers to change ... and most people do not want to be a barrier to improvement.

Appendix

- *Identify the Resistance Exercise*
- *Role Play Exercise*

Exercise: Name the Resistance

- Compliance –
- Attack –
- Changing the Subject –
- Pressing for Solutions –

This exercise will help you practice naming the resistance. Above, you'll find some common forms of resistance. Space is provided for naming each form in your own words.

Exercise: Name the Type of Resistance

- “You know, we used to have that problem, but your help has got rid of the problem.” _____
- “I agree with this, but my boss won’t agree with it.” _____
- “Get out of my office. Now!” _____
- “You’re not telling me anything I didn’t already know.” _____
- “I’d like to help, but my boss is pulling me in too many directions.” _____
- “I might go along with this, but I need statistics on what percent is causing the problem.” _____
- “But what is the answer, if you’re so smart, Mr. Consultant?” _____
- “I’m trying, really trying, but it will start a revolution. We’re changing so much already.” _____

“Role Play” (Groups of Three)

- First, write down a form of resistance which is difficult for you to deal with:

- In your small groups, choose one person to be the Implementation Specialist, one to be a stakeholder, and the third person to be an observer.
- Have the Implementation Specialist pick a situation where resistance is likely back at the site.

This exercise provides practice in dealing with “live” resistance.

“Role Play” (continued)

- Have the Implementation Specialist briefly describe the situation to the two others. The Implementation Specialist should also share which form of resistance is personally most difficult to handle.
- Have the stakeholder role play this form of resistance. The sequence should be as follows:
 - The Implementation Specialist requests something
 - The stakeholder resists
 - The Implementation Specialist names the resistance
 - The two try to reach agreement
 - The observer gives feedback
- Your trainer will tell you when to end. After about 10 minutes, you'll switch roles and role play two more times, so each person will get a chance to take every role.
- You might want to write down some of the insights you've gained, or some of the feedback you received.