

People will not change unless they want to – so locate the desire to change first

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Purpose

Often we approach change by setting goals, reviewing options, agreeing and implementing plans. But the will to act is tacitly assumed – and it is not always there. This strategy is about helping your client find the desire to change. It is *the* vital step, for example where an organization wants your client to change but the client does not, stuck in an assumption that the ‘problem’ is not their own, but the organization’s.

Description

This strategy focuses on the challenges of change. In particular, it encourages the client to clearly identify their desire for change and the current reality.

Process

The change equation ($D \times V \times P = C$) is a very useful explanation of the challenge of change for individuals. D is the personal *desire* to change or the level of *dissatisfaction* with how things are; V is a clear personal *vision* of how it will be like for the individual, once change is achieved; and P are the *practical steps* necessary to take to make change happen. C equals the *cost of achieving change* successfully and the equation is saying that D, V and P all need to be in place to

outweigh the perceived cost to the individual of making change.

So, do not let the initial coaching objectives (which reflect your client's conscious concerns) constrain the process too much. These are likely to change in time. Work by following the energy of your client in how they are making sense of the world around them. Allow the client to express feelings of frustration and uncertainty from an empathic place. The challenge, though, is continually to relate back to where the client is and where they feel they want to be, to keep them focused on their personal choices to think, to feel and to act.

Probe the value to your client of the perception of others in the organization as opposed to the objectivity of data: explore the view that perception is reality and that people's feelings are valid data too. Ask what it would be like if they did see a need for change. Ask what is likely to happen if they do not.

When you are making some progress around the client's engagement with change, explore the change equation together. Keep under review yourself the extent to which the client accepts the need for change; and what change exactly. Do not necessarily ask the direct question 'Are you up for change?' because it is not likely to elicit useful data.

If necessary, challenge the client directly about the need for specific change, but only once real trust has been established, so your challenge is not just more unwelcome feedback. This means working from a place of unconditional positive regard at all times. It means also choosing the right moment to challenge.

Pitfalls

- Acting as an advocate for the organization with a brief to persuade your client to change.
- Staying blind yourself to the choices your client may have.
- Offering explanations of what is going on from your desire to problem solve.
- Directly challenging at the wrong moment and creating dissonance/mistrust.

Bibliography

Beckhard, R. and Harris, R. (1987) *Organizational Transitions: Managing Complex Change*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.