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Face to Face with...

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Mark Hordes

Managing Director

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Mark Hordes has been helping big-name companies like Chevron, American Express and Intel manage behavior change during organizational transformations for more than 20 years.

A consultant, speaker and author, Hordes has held senior executive positions with Accenture, The American Productivity & Quality Center, Spherion, Dillingham Associates, Alexander Consulting and The Ransford Group. He also is a former faculty member at the University of Houston.

A graduate of the American Graduate School of International Management, "Thunderbird", Hordes has a master of business administration degree from Aurora University, a bachelor's degree from the University of Houston and is an Advanced Clinical Practitioner in the State of Texas.

Hordes was interviewed by Frances Gordon.

Q: What exactly is meant by change management, and what does it mean to effectively manage change?

A: To "manage" change means to plan and monitor the execution of moving an organization or project from its current to a future state, and to successfully manage the gaps that are created between these two states. To effectively manage change, you have to create an environment and change strategy to help everyone who is impacted by the change let go of existing and foster new behaviors, attitudes and work methods that achieve and sustain the desired outcomes.

Q: Research indicates that seven out of 10 change efforts fail to achieve their stated goals. How can a company improve its chances of making large-scale organizational change more successful?

A: First of all, recognize there will always be resistance to change. Resistance is a natural and inevitable reaction to the disruption of expectations and the status quo. Anyone who has ever participated in a change effort knows the tension that develops when people are asked to behave in new and different ways. Water cooler conversations, talk about personal impact and political ramifications of the change, and the always present, "What's going to happen to me?" In order to improve the odds and avoid failure, communicate frequently with employees about what will and will not change. These conversations help create a sense of control, stability and predictability and strengthen resiliency to deal with the change.

Q: How can companies better manage the people side of change during large-scale transformations, especially technology-led global projects?

A: Technology-led projects are often headed by technical subject-

matter experts who believe change management is sort of important, but often lack the education and mindset to fully understand change-management principles and tactics to effectively integrate these concepts into the overall project plan with adequate resources and funding to effectively address these issues.

Q: What are some strategies and activities to manage change, considering that we all react to change on such an emotional level? What has worked and not worked in your experience?

A: What works is having the sponsors constantly communicating and being highly visible, sharing why the change is important and asking for support and commitment. Everyone looks up in an organization, and senior executives are not personally and emotionally committed those further down the ladder don't see why they should be either. What doesn't work is assuming that everyone understands change because it's a natural part of life. Providing change-management awareness education with exercises reflecting personal and professional experiences with change, helps people understand the context for change and increases emotional capacity to absorb the change effectively.

Q: Resistance to change is pretty common. How do you get people to embrace change?

A: Involvement is critical. Make sure your overall change strategy and plans reflect ways for soliciting feedback from those who are affected by the change. You never want people to feel that the change is being done to them. Personal involvement and engagement always lowers resistance.

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