

Mistakes We Make When Dealing with Change (578 words)

Over the years I have witnessed and helped many clients go through tremendous change. There are three common mistakes made: Joining the anti-change crowd, acting like a victim, and freezing like a deer.

Joining the anti-change crowd. I learned a long time ago growing up on the farm that it was a lot easier to ride the horse in the direction it was headed. I don't know if you have ever been on a horse that wants to go back to the barn, it's going back to the barn. It's an 800-pound animal. All you have is the bit and the bridle, and the more you slap it on the ears, cuss and swear, the more likely the horse will scrape you off on a tree or the barn door on the way in. It is the same way when it comes to organizational change. When the industry is changing, when the organization is changing, sometimes you may have to go along with it, because it's a lot easier to ride the horse in the direction it is heading. So, embrace the changes, learn new skills, and don't get thrown from the horse. Stay involved. Join a task force, a climate survey committee, or a transition monitoring team, and seize the opportunities.

Acting like a victim. Sometimes we throw a pity party and invite others to attend. We talk about how hopeless it is and how helpless we feel. Throwing a pity party doesn't make us very appealing as a coworker or as a leader. Acting like a victim is personally and professionally damaging. We miss opportunities. We miss the chance of being respected and admired as the one who helped move change along. Acting like a victim adds stress to our lives and wears us down, and everyone around us, too. It is essential to accept the changes we face, remain productive, and have a positive influence. Often when we face change it is easy to fall into the pit of self-pity. Worrying about the future is silly; you are creating the future. You have the job. We should be thrilled that our organization has so much confidence in us. Put your shoulders back and take on change head-on.

Freezing like a deer. When we have endured a work environment plagued with nonstop change we do become somewhat fatigued with solving problems and making decisions. When we have made some decisions that weren't the best, we start to play it safe. Playing it safe leads to paralysis. We lose momentum and we can "freeze like a deer in the headlights." To make sure we don't lose our nerve in solving problems and making decisions, we need to keep reviewing our short-term plans and long-term goals and keep pointing ourselves in the right direction. Review your organization's mission statements and value statements to make sure your thoughts and actions are congruent with the organization's values. Keep an objective decision model close-by to guarantee you are balancing logic with emotion. When faced with change, it is natural to become cautious and play it safe. However, change is a full contact sport, and we need to practice on and off the field to sharpen our skills and keep moving forward. Study your industry and take personal responsibility to develop the talents you need to protect your career.

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