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**FIRM MANAGEMENT**

## 5 Ways to Maintain a Positive Attitude for Change

It's unfortunately all too common: a firm is anticipating change and knows they'll face resistance from certain people, recognizes the challenges they'll face and automatically assumes they're going to fail.

**Arianna Campbell** • Jul. 10, 2019



Imagine you're planning a vacation. Instead of making a list of all of the fun activities you want to do on your trip, you write down all of the sights you DON'T

want to see while there and make a plan for the chores you'll get done at home if the airport is closed and you can't leave town. Planning a vacation with failure in mind sounds absurd, but it's not too different from the way some firms deal with change.

Over the years, we've worked with hundreds of firms to adopt new technologies and execute process improvement initiatives. While every change comes with its fair share of challenges to overcome, we've noticed one trait of the firms that tend to find success at the end of their projects: a positive attitude.

*"It is your attitude, more than your aptitude, that will determine your altitude."* ~ Zig  
Ziglar

It's unfortunately all too common: a firm is anticipating change and knows they'll face resistance from certain people, recognizes the challenges they'll face and automatically assumes they're going to fail. Rather than planning a way through those obstacles, most of their plans revolve around dealing with what happens when the initiative fizzles out. Plan B becomes Plan A because that's where their time and attention is really focused.

Instead of going that route, firms that are successful with making lasting change have a success mindset. It's okay to spend some time thinking through potential hurdles and making a plan to deal with setbacks, but the emphasis should be on figuring out how you'll succeed, and planning for what you'll do once you get there. This reframe may seem like semantics, but it has a practical component to it – it makes success the primary consideration rather than failure. In the numerous lean process improvement projects that I've led in firms, this mindset has been the game changer. In fact, when we evaluate success metrics between firms (or even by locations within the same firm), attitude makes a measureable difference.

When success is at the forefront of your plans, you consider what success looks like. Olympic athletes are notorious for visualizing a winning performance before they compete. American alpine ski racer Lindsey Vonn can be seen moving her hands up and down in the air before a big race, doing one last visualization of every turn she's about to take. "I always visualize the run before I do it," Vonn told [Forbes](#). "By the time I get to the start gate, I've run that race 100 times already in my head."

By getting a clear picture of what success looks like, you can identify all the parts of the plan that might make success less likely and do something to overcome those hurdles. On the other hand, when you start with the assumption that you will fail,

it's difficult to know where to start – you've already determined that anything you do is unlikely to work.

If you find yourself (or your team) struggling with an attitude of failure before your initiative even has a chance to get off the ground, here are some tips to turn it around.

## **Be honest**

Be honest with yourself and your team about what it takes to be successful. If you have a hard time with change and struggle with project management, identify that as a potential hurdle. This lets you prepare an action plan for overcoming that challenge. For example, maybe you would benefit from the help of an outside facilitator to keep your team motivated and provide accountability for meeting project milestones.

## **Plan it all the way through**

What happens once you meet your goal? Consider the next project you have in mind. For example, if your project involves rolling out a new service line, how will you use the additional profit generated by that service line? What other services might complement the new clients you bring on. Thinking through success and what comes next will help keep the momentum going.

## **Be a part of the change**

Change can be stressful, but part of that change may stem from the fact that you feel a lack of control over what is happening. This is an excellent opportunity to ask how you can be a part of the change process. Volunteer to act as a champion, get involved in a committee or be a point of contact for your team during the transition. Once you are a part of the action, you'll feel less uncertain and more empowered.

## **Connect with a peer**

Talking through your project and concerns with someone else can be invaluable, especially if that someone isn't involved in the situation. Find someone in your peer network who has been through a similar initiative before and who can provide perspective and listen without judgment. Often, such a person can help you see beyond your current circumstances and make a world of difference to your overall outlook.

## **Communicate**

Communication is always essential, especially when facing change. If your firm is not communicating change effectively, be proactive in finding out more about what the change involves. Don't just sit back – talk to your boss and coworkers to ask constructive questions and find out meaningful information. When you've reached a better understanding, you can be a resource for others who might be struggling to maintain a positive attitude.

Change can be frightening and disruptive, but with the right attitude, outlook and actions, you can find opportunities in that change. Don't erode your confidence by spending all of your time and energy preparing for a negative outcome. Visualize your goals and your ability to achieve them. With a positive attitude and goals that align with your firm's strategic plan and vision, you'll have the right mindset to be successful.

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