Throughout the year I assemble a mass of information about what is trending across multiple industries. I enjoy the opportunity to share in my client's diverse business experiences, perspectives, and approaches from their industries. My clients like to stay on the cutting edge of information and new technologies, and it's my job to make that happen. One of the most significant topics right now is change management. We talk about it, hear about it, and yet most fail at it. Recently, I had the pleasure of attending a conference put on by the California Association of Healthcare leaders (CAHL) and hearing what a panel of decision makers and trail blazer had to say about the benefits and challenges of change management. The mantra was, people, purpose, and process. I was so excited, I even tweeted about it!

Let's face it, change is not easy. However, if organizations want to remain on a competitive edge, be an employer of choice, be customer and people centric, this is a necessary part of an organization's evolution. Focusing on soft factors such as culture, leadership, and motivation provide the elements which are important for success. However, managing these aspects alone isn't sufficient to implement transformational or lean projects. Soft factors don't directly influence the outcomes of many change programs. For example, visionary leadership is often vital for transformational projects, but not always. The same can be said about communication with employees. Moreover, it isn't easy to change attitudes or relationships which are deeply ingrained in organizations and people. And although changes in culture or motivation levels can be indirectly gauged through surveys and interviews, it's tough to get reliable data on soft factors.

What's missing I believe, is a focus on the not-so-fashionable aspects of change management: the hard factors. These factors bear three distinct characteristics. First, companies are able to measure them in direct or indirect ways. Second, companies can easily communicate their importance, both within and outside organizations. Third and perhaps most important, businesses are capable of influencing those elements quickly. Some of the hard factors that affect a transformational initiative are, the time necessary to complete it, the number of people required to execute it, and the financial results that intended actions are expected to achieve. Research shows that change/transformational projects fail to get off the ground when companies neglect the hard factors. That doesn't mean that decision makers can ignore the soft elements; that would be a grave mistake. However, if companies don't pay attention to the hard factors first, transformational programs will break down before the soft factors come into play.

How measurement equals dialog
When I am working with companies to incorporate change management we immediately discuss *how* they will measure and track the development and the success of the initiative. It is important to have a metric or benchmark to follow progress. This needs to be determined early on. The ability to measure progress and have some type of process mapping tied into the organizations values stream provides a compass to managing and achieving successful change. Employee involvement is a necessary and integral part of managing change. Managing change is not a one way street. Feedback from employees is a key element of the process. Analysis, measurement, and corrective action based on the feedback provide a robust cycle for encouraging dialog while implementing change and identifying opposition from employees.

Resistant management

Resistance from employees and managers is normal. Persistent resistance however, can threaten a transformational project. The change management team needs to identify, understand, and manage resistance throughout the organization. Resistance management is the processes used by managers and executives with the support of resistance tools and the project team to manage employee resistance.

Understanding the complexity and sensitivity of change management and how it affects the company culture is key to successfully leading change. Key elements in change initiatives companies should consider are, looking at current state enterprises, leadership, systematic transitions, workplace safety, quality customer service, and an understanding company issues. Other elements that need to be incorporated into your discussion are team members to initiate new processes, varying perspectives, and obstacles to innovation in making necessary changes.

Epiphany partners with organizations to understand the processes that matter and matching people (human development) skills to align with the right job, role, and responsibilities. By asking the right questions such as; how do we recruit the best people to help manage this new enterprise? Who are the innovators in our company? Who are the best at taking charge, negotiating, and persuading? Depending on the task, length, and intelligence needed, this process provides the perfect foundation to help an organization transform.

Consulting Engagement

As a consultant and strategic partner I engage with my clients in problem solving by looking at their current state of initiatives, leadership, strategic plan, systematic transitions, human capital, quality customer service, and embed myself in their company to understand multifarious issues. I work with decision makers to work through a preposterous assortment of demands and help them decide the best approach and solution to manage the work load.

The Paradox

There are organizations that struggle to push through change initiatives, constantly fighting to meet or attain successful modifications, some of which I pointed out earlier. What I have learned over the years as a business strategist is that change management is what organization across all industries want to engage in but struggle to sift through. Even those that say they want and need to revolutionize the company, refuse to climb on board the "change bus" when it pulls up. As a coach, this is one of the first things I hear from a CEO or President is "things need to change around here." This is where I pull my seat closer and say "everyone says they want change, but are you and your people willing to do what it takes to make it happen?" This is where I begin asking the tough questions and discern if this is what really is needed, and without hesitation, warn that there will be a lot of push back and resistance if they don't get the right players on board to champion the cause.

No matter what industry, we all share a common denominator. Regardless if we want to implement change or are forced into it, we can't do it alone.

Change leaders, executives and managers - learn the "why," "how," and "what" of change management. *"Change Management is like a driving school for change agents."*

For more information about change management and how I can assist you, contact me at; laura@epiphanycoaching.net