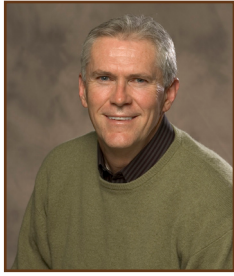




ADVICE FOR MANAGERS



## Make Your Change Style Work for You: How to Move Your Organization Ahead without Leaving Everyone Else Behind

[By Chris Musselwhite, Ed.D.]

Maybe you're one of those leaders who thrives on change, viewing a setback as a challenge, risk as an opportunity. It could be your most important strength — or your biggest vulnerability. The key is being aware of your personal "change style" and how it affects the people you're leading. Without this awareness, you could be alienating the very people you need to make the desired change a reality.

If you think that it's lonely at the top (or even in the middle), maybe you need to reflect on how you got there. The same behaviors that helped you achieve your current success may also be alienating the people whose help you need to continue being successful.

Observing leaders of global organizations of all sizes, it's clear that successful leaders are effective change initiators that share a special set of sensibilities and strengths: their drive, creativity, and willingness to take risks are just a few examples.

If you recognize yourself in that description, chances are you're never happier than when events are in flux, because you know opportunity is born of change. What you might not realize is how your gung-ho preferences for dealing with change may negatively affect the people who must share your vision in order to make your organization succeed.

After surveying over 41,000 managers on their preferences for dealing with change, we've created a profile of leaders who readily embrace change, detailing their four top characteristics and some advice to help ensure that they aren't negatively perceived by others. If you see some of yourself in these characteristics, consider trying out the practical advice provided. You'll increase

your effectiveness as an agent for change, and you'll improve your relationships with others all along the way.

### 1. A lack of regard for rules and policy

This can be good — it means you're not bound by convention. But it can also affect the quality of other people's work, which can set a bad tone for people you manage. Those who place high value on established processes can perceive it as arrogant or unethical.

**Advice:** Have a clear set of guiding values you won't violate. As a leader, you are in a position to make the rules. But whatever you decide, you must follow it or involve other people in your decision to skirt or change the rules, especially if their performance is affected by the decision.

### 2. A tendency to be less team-oriented

Again, this can be a good thing. You're willing to leap ahead (and to take the heat if things go wrong). But it may seem to others that you are an independent contributor, less aware of the feelings and emotions of others.

When you tend to be an intuitive thinker, you see things in terms of concepts and are interested in how things work. You may not

spend as much energy considering how the implementation of your ideas will affect the established ways people work together. A lack of team orientation can also appear to be self-serving, leaving everybody behind in your decisions. If that happens, when you're ready to move forward on a new concept, you may find that you don't have the support to make it work.

**Advice:** Make sure that you incorporate people important to the success of your ideas into the decision-making process — especially those who think differently. You should work extra hard to demonstrate your willingness to be team-oriented early on. It just doesn't work when it's too late. It's frustrating because you may feel you're being forced to slow down, but doing it now may avoid having to do it later in the middle of implementation, when timing can be much more important.

### 3. More emphasis on great ideas and not as much on follow-through

You may believe that the hard work is in the thinking and conceptualization of new ideas and not so much in the doing. Your heart is more in the invention than the implementation. But if you've damaged relationships through a lack of regard for teamwork and following established processes, you won't have anyone else



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taking up the slack when times get tough. Over the long term, you may have alienated the very people whose commitment to implementation is necessary for your new ideas to succeed.

**Advice:** Make sure you are following clearly defined processes and structures. To achieve follow-through, you must rely on those policies and systems. Limit the amount of time spent exploring possibilities. Spend more time engaging potential collaborators and anticipating implementation problems. Set timelines, and include yourself in the required accountability.

**4. Not detail-oriented**

Change initiators like to spend a longer time in the exploration phase of change,

and often aren't interested in the mechanics of how things work or get accomplished. You may overlook details crucial to the implementation of your idea. It may not be a flaw in your idea so much as a forgotten detail, but still it makes you vulnerable and opens your ideas to sabotage by people you may have alienated due to a perceived lack of regard for processes and teamwork. This could be due to a lack of understanding of the culture — especially when it comes to trying to change the culture. As a result, change leaders may not deal with details until there is a crisis, and then they may over-manage.

**Advice:** Get other people in place and involved who are good with details, project management, and implementation, and then listen to them all along the way. You'll win

their support and ensure the success of your ideas.

**About the Author**

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