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Change Management – How to Inspire Your Sales Team

With his slogan “Change: We Believe In” charismatic US presidential candidate Barack Obama is inspiring the American people. Not only in politics, also in business change is constant. Your market is changing at blinding speed. And your company is sprinting to keep pace – fighting each day to protect and to grow market share. Organizational agility is the key to winning in today’s information-driven economy, and ultimately your front line employees determine how agile your company will be.

Unfortunately, the experience of MFB Resultants, Wiesbaden, shows that almost 70% of all change initiatives fail. We attribute this failure rate to the way in which organizations approach change. What most companies underestimate is the human factor of business change. To be successful any change process has to be discussed, planned and implemented together with your employees – not without them or against them.

The people-side of business change

People don’t resist change. They resist being changed. The most common reasons people resist change are concerns about learning something new, concerns about their ability to adapt to a new system, and fear that the new system requires more effort than the old one. To manage the people-side of business change, management has to realize that any change process has to take place within the social infrastructure of the workplace.

Affecting behavior is a critical success factor in the implementation of any change process. The implementation team must assign management staff to work with your employees in the planning and design stages to ensure that the people who are supposed to adopt the new system actually understand the process and will, in fact, implement it.

To achieve the required business outcome, change processes have to be strategically planned and implemented. Communication, rewards, and consequences have to be considered and an infrastructure created to make this comprehensive.

Shifting from strategic selling to strategic account management

Reorganizing your sales force under the slogan “one face to customer” ensures your strategic account managers don’t only chase deals but also create a joint enterprise from which deals emerge. Inevitably, some people within your sales organization will view such a fundamental change as an opportunity while others view it as a problem.

Indeed, there is a place for positive resistance throughout the selection, planning, designing and implementation process. Well-intended criticism, debate, and disagreement are not necessarily counterproductive. In many cases, the employees may be trying to introduce additional points and solutions or a better understanding of the process.

Workshops and training classes will help to ensure that your salespeople understand the change process. Training must be convenient and regularly scheduled to include everyone. Commitment to change must include the budget and resources to make it work. Communication is important throughout the process because without a formal system, rumours will become the source of disinformation.

Engage your salespeople

Employees will not support what they don't understand. Merely getting your salespeople to follow orders isn't the same as winning their support. Your employees need to understand the project's vision and their individual role before they can help make it happen. Senior executives -including, whenever possible, the CEO- must be involved to demonstrate their own commitment and seriousness to keeping the transition moving forward. If your management does not advocate a change, it will not happen.

If the observations of MFB Resultants are correct and 70% of all change initiatives do indeed fail, it is worth the time and money to be part of the other 30%. The experts of MFB Resultants will support you to successfully define and implement change processes within your sales organization.

MFB Resultants - We Create Results.

Contact:

MFB Resultants GmbH
Luisenplatz 1
65185 Wiesbaden

Phone 0611 / 34 11 70

Fax 06 11/ 34 117 22

kontakt@mfbresultants.com

www.mfbresultants.com