



Liz on Leadership

Coming round the bend on my Five Cs of Leading Change: Communication Context, Clarity, Challenge... and last but surely not least: Consequences.

To effect change – and to create results that last – you've got to attach consequences to your team's effort, achievement and behavior. After all, consequences are a tremendous tool for driving accountability. But consequences aren't necessarily a matter of reprimand or removal. For more on this, read on...

Change and Consequences: Where the Rubber Meets the Road

So let's talk about consequences. If you've already read my recent newsletters, you can review or simply skip past the [first four of my Five Cs of Leading Change](#) – and check out my tips on **change and consequences**.

First, the recap:

1. Communication. As a senior leader, your job is to ensure that change takes hold through the collective efforts of your organization. That means you've got to make sure your team, business partners, cross-functional colleagues, customers and clients clearly understand your vision of the future. Your key managers must know what you expect of them – and they have to be able to drive the message to their teams and partners throughout the organization.

If you think you've stated the message explicitly and compellingly enough, that's a great start – but it's not enough. Pressure test whether people thoroughly understand what you're driving and what's expected of them. Ask your key stakeholders whether the message has come through loud and clear. Invite questions. Convey the message yet again, and in a variety of ways. Remember, it takes time for people to adapt to change – but your best leaders and employees will embrace change as an opportunity to stretch – and to truly make a difference.

2. Context and 3. Clarity. OK, so you've already articulated that change is coming – and you've explained what is expected of everyone involved. You're off to a great start.

Now ask yourself this: Have you adequately conveyed *why* change is needed – and addressed the myriad spoken and covert concerns about shifting away from "the way it's always been done"? Remember, your people will embrace a new direction and a different approach with far less resistance if they understand the reasons for change:

Is there a shift in market dynamics that must be proactively addressed?

Has the regulatory environment changed?

Are your customers asking for something new, different and better suited to their current and future needs?

Is your company's growth steadily declining in the face of the status quo?

Don't neglect to dig into these issues and help your leaders and front line employees understand just how important it is to move boldly forward. While you're at it, make sure everyone can plainly see where he or she fits into the big picture – and how all the pieces come together.

Communication, context and clarity – Together these three Cs set the stage for change, exponentially increase organizational buy-in and help short-circuit the kind of unproductive but stubborn resistance that can otherwise stop change in its tracks.

4. Challenge. To drive change that leads to increased organizational success, individual growth and dramatically improved team impact, you should challenge your leaders in a variety of ways. Have them develop an innovative approach to an existing problem. Ask for greater creativity and efficiency in collaborating across functions. Require rapid improvement in the quality of leadership, communication and talent across the organization.

In framing change as a challenge – and by presenting the opportunity to do things in a new and exciting way – you will bring out the best in your most motivated leaders. They, in turn, will bring out the best in the people they lead. And you will quickly identify those who refuse to take on the challenge but, instead, continue to go about business as usual. That kind of information will be priceless, as you push forward a new agenda and build a team of exceptional, forward-thinking leaders who can bring your vision to life.

5. Consequences. Let's take it as a given that you've done a terrific job in setting your organization up for success. You've shared the vision. You've been clear and you've created context. Everyone now understands what is expected, knows where he or she fits in the big picture, and has heard why change is so important. You've challenged your people and generated genuine excitement about the opportunities ahead. And some of your team is really hitting it out of the park! Others are chugging along and one or two are clearly resisting, refusing or unable to get the job done.

So what do you do now? You turn to consequences.

Make no mistake. Although you rightly expect excellence from your team, outstanding results, above-and-beyond effort and exemplary behavior should be consistently recognized and rewarded. And for those who aren't getting the job done quickly, effectively or enthusiastically? Well, the consequence should match the need. Possibilities are plentiful. You can: increase the frequency or specificity of feedback; reiterate or realign around expectations; provide training, coaching or mentoring; and, if all else fails, remove the underperforming individuals from the project.

The point is that consequences and accountability need not equate to something negative. Your job, as a leader, is to accelerate the success of each member and address obstacles on the challenging path to change.

And now I'd love to hear from you. What do you find to be the best and most effective ways to drive change in your organization?

About Dr. Liz

Dr. Liz Bywater has been called a one-of-a-kind leadership expert. Working at the intersection of business and psychology, she brings together pragmatic experience, advising top executives across the Fortune 500, with an advanced degree in Psychology and a dynamic personal style to inspire, engage and counsel her clients.

For more than a decade, top global organizations have requested Liz's help in resolving issues such as creating extraordinary client relationships, increasing market persuasion, and driving productive collaborations in an increasingly complex world.

Liz advises senior leaders at some of the world's most successful companies, including Johnson & Johnson, Nike, Thomson Reuters, Bristol-Myers Squibb, AmerisourceBergen and more. She uses her expertise in human behavior to drive commercial success. She helps her clients propel innovation, exert influence and lead their organizations through change.

A thought leader in organizational excellence, Liz provides expert commentary for such publications as the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Fast Company and USA Today. She is on the editorial advisory board for **Life Science Leader** magazine and is a featured expert on such radio broadcasts as CBS Philadelphia's **Philadelphia Agenda** with Brad Segall and **Woman of the Week** with Marilyn Russell.

Liz earned her PhD in Psychology at the Derner Institute for Advanced Psychological Studies at Adelphi University. Her undergraduate degree is from Cornell University, where she graduated Phi Beta Kappa and Cum Laude. She is a longstanding member of the American Psychological Association and the Society for the Advancement of Consulting. She lives in scenic Bucks County, PA, with her husband and two teenage children. Stay tuned for Liz's forthcoming book, **Slow Down to Speed Up!** (Business Expert Press, Fall 2017).

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