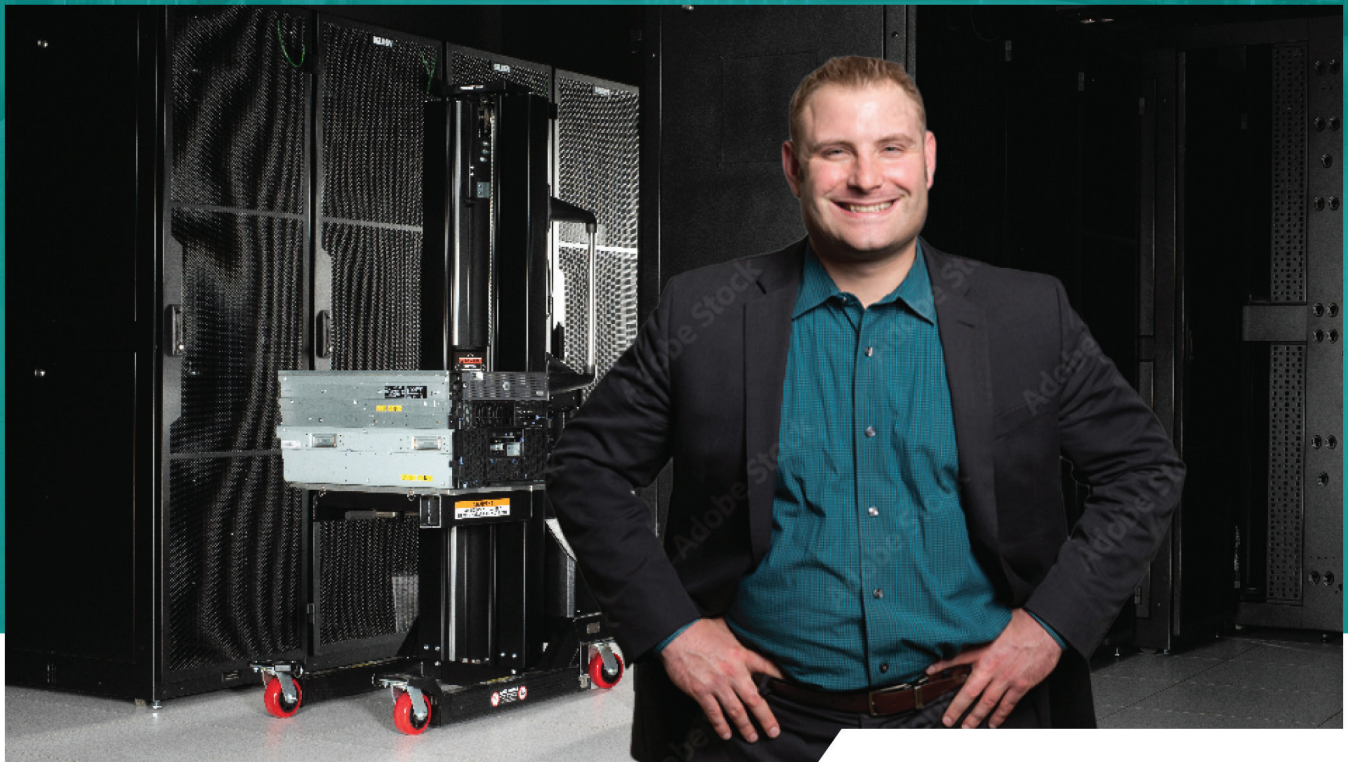


HOW TO EFFECTIVELY MOTIVATE FOR

CHANGE

A MANAGEMENT PRIMER



In 1998, I had a meeting with the CEO and executives of a major outdoor sports retailer based in California about their web presence. At that time, web presence was just a website since social media and other online marketing vehicles had yet to be invented.

Their site was amazing with great graphics, exciting things to do and see, as well as good information about their products. The site paired well with their store, lots of rustic woods, warm decor, inviting surrounds and friendly sales people.

When I sat and discussed their web strategy, a familiar blank look appeared on everyone's face. You know that sort of blank look between oblivious and apathy, that "it's not that I don't know – it's more that I don't care to know" look. I presented idea after idea as to what I thought was going to turn into a great contract since there were so many things needed, and it seemed every idea I tossed them they grabbed up and gobbled down like goats after a corn harvest. Then came the big one, the single most important part of my presentation and the big money idea, so I took a breath, paused for a moment to build the silent crescendo and boldly stated "why don't you sell your stuff through your website?"

The air lay heavy as the execs bit their lower lips, looking immediately to the CEO while the CEO slowly leaned forward, crossing his hands, looking at me directly while clearing his throat as he began to speak... "that would mean that we would need more people, a bigger warehouse and more inventory." I grinned softly to myself realizing that he got it, expecting that I would soon be winning a nice contract, only to be taken out at the knees when he declared "that's a lot of money and a lot of work the we don't want to have to do." Bam! Crashing and burning I quickly tried to bring the conversation back into line and was hoping desperately for one exec to come forward to save me but nothing...just silence until I blurted out breaking that uncomfortable moment with "perhaps you can tell me why you have a website?"

The answer I heard next was something that had not only resonated with me since, but has also been disclosed to me over and over by hundreds of companies I have known. It seems to still be the foundations of many online strategies today....

**“WE HAVE A WEBSITE,
BECAUSE EVERYONE ELSE HAS ONE.”**

Today, their website still sells nothing, yet the Internet of Things now generates \$19 trillion a year and nearly everyone is connected through millions of devices. I find it amazing since

that client I spoke of has a website that has not changed in 16 years, leaving me to ponder as to how much has changed though so many have not kept up with that change. The lesson is change, no matter how beneficial, is often bitter medicine.

In IT, we surround ourselves with people who embrace change, use what's available to help them do their jobs better, and in the end they prosper, but even so we all still resist change. Change requires bold leadership and the ability to judge risk against benefits. Change means trying something new before you declare it won't work. Change is work, though often temporary since when change is implemented correctly, it also means less work for more benefit in the end.

Change is complex and also needs to be managed psychologically. Following is a process that will help you sell your ideas, manage the process and hit your targeted goal.

- 1. BEHAVIOR IS COMPLEX** - Change occurs in stages. To increase your success, change needs to be managed in small steps. You commit to showing up to work on time as a change which in turn becomes a plan. What time to wake up, how long to shower, dress, prepare breakfast and how to get to the office. These are behaviors that need to be managed in implementing change. To create a plan for change, it is often best to start from the goal and work your way back to where you are today. When trying to sell others on change, develop a step by step plan to accommodate what needs to be done and by whom.
- 2. CHANGE IS FRIGHTENING** – Fully understanding that the status quo will no longer work helps with this fear; however, it's real as it should be since fear of the unknown is an instinctive survival trait. Fear, when properly managed, prevents you from making foolish mistakes. When you fully examine the consequences, and understand what a failure to change will create, that fear becomes far more manageable. Make sure you fully prepare yourself to understand the benefits of change and how to communicate it.
- 3. PREPARE OTHERS** – Since any change involves others as well as you, they too will have the same concerns. Create a plan to define this management, peers and subordinates as part of an integral part in implementing change. Make sure that others, not just those that are involved with this change are prepared.
- 4. BE REALISTIC** – When it comes to change that involves others, reasonable and realistic goals are usually the best way to go while making each step easily attainable. As over-achievers, we tend to be over committers, in that we often find ourselves scrambling to achieve that to which we have committed. The late motorsports legend Mickey Thompson once told me the secret to his success was his ego, in that he often over-committed and then found he had to use everything in his power to fulfill his commitment. This often led to resentment by those whom he worked, especially his staff who were slow to change.

5. **CHANGE MUST BE POSITIVE** – with positive reinforcements that motivate the change. I remember once asking a business partner to help with this and he responded, “Tell them they get to keep their jobs if they perform.” Not exactly what I was looking for but it was a start.
6. **HAVE FUN** – New stuff is fun, new ideas are fun, and few are truly happy with the same old day after day routine. People also love to create and though your change may not be something particularly creative, everyone creates even if it’s a new process, a form, an office layout, etc. Let everyone in on the creative process for this change and you will gain enthusiasm. As part of a change process with one company I managed, I had to split up one of my teams. No one was happy at first, but when each team participated in the design of their new offices, their anguish dissipated and moving day was highly anticipated.
7. **ADMIRE THE OUTCOME** – Sit back and watch the progress of your change while involving others to enjoy the view regularly. I hate yard work and always have, but when done I love the look of my yard and it brings about a feeling of accomplishment which builds esteem. Whenever I want to feel better about myself, I take on a task I normally don’t enjoy and when it’s complete I have a greater feeling of satisfaction.
8. **REWARD YOURSELF AND OTHERS AT EACH MILESTONE** – This also means you need to quickly hit milestones that exhibit results, then let everyone bask in the results with small celebrations, a little time off, a team building activity, pizza or whatever.
9. **TAKE SMALL STEPS** – Throwing someone in with a massive change is difficult. Trying to do this with an entire company can be catastrophic. Let’s say your plan is to decrease provisioning time for new customers. What would that plan look like? How many steps are involved? What equipment or resources can be obtained to accommodate this? Who needs to do what?
10. **KEEP THINGS SIMPLE** – Overstock.com set a goal to reduce their page load times to below 3 seconds. A simple plan that everyone understood; however, the overall plan was extremely complex. The plan was broken down into small steps that took over a year with teams working cautiously but constantly. The goal of each step was simple and the overall goal was stated simply; therefore, it was attainable. The end result was an increase in revenues by 25%.
11. **BE PATIENT, BE CALM** – Nothing brings more fear than panic. One person panics, everyone panics. Try to motivate and stay calm. If deadlines are not met, make new ones and move on. If the plan isn’t working, correct it so that it’s reasonable. The most important thing to remember when executing a plan of change is to never let them see you sweat. When things go array, slow it down, analyze and adjust, but never panic.

12. PROVIDE YOUR TEAM WITH THE RIGHT RESOURCES – remember that they more than likely still have to keep the ship afloat while at the same time, work on changes. Giving your team new tools and access to new resources is not only helpful but motivational as well since everyone loves new stuff. If they have a big server move, get them a new ServerLIFT®, as an example (no apologies for the shameless plug).

Motivating for change when there is a clear and shared vision makes the job much easier, in that motivating to change is most of the battle. Keep focused, maintain your vision and don't give up. Once you give up on a vision, all future visions will be devalued and few will take your ideas seriously.

MOTIVATING TO CHANGE IS MOST OF THE BATTLE

I still look back now on the retailer who lost their vision, and occasionally look up that website that has never changed. I assume that they had a goal at one time, and once they attained it, they lost the ability to create a vision of where the company needed to go next. Today, they have gone from 10 stores, and growing to 4 stores and shrinking. Their resistance to change has put them near extinction which will most assuredly come with time and though that may not be out of line with their initial goal, it is a shame that the world could not benefit from what was once one of the best retailers around.

About ServerLIFT Corporation

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