

Leading Through Change

We are in a time of change! It is true that 'transition' is a constant theme for most organizations; however, the difference for 2009 is that change is a result of the global recession which is wide and deep. As a result, it is unlikely that any leaders will escape the need to lead through these tough times.

William Bridges and Susan Mitchell Bridges (*Coaching Leaders Through Transition, 2005*), experts in managing changes offer us some suggestions to help us lead through change.

- 1. As a leader, be prepared to openly; clearly and compassionately express the problem.** This can engender the trust needed to get through change. Make sure that the problem is clear to your people. Define the reason for change and communicate it in a way that is effective for your employees. One suggestion for ensuring that employees understand 'the problem' is to ask them to define it.
- 2. As a leader recognize that you communicate with both words and actions.** Choose your words carefully and opt for actions which demonstrate your concern for your employees. Communicating the solution to the problem is a first step in leading your employees through change. Change means that people will grieve which includes experiencing a wide range of emotions. See this response as part of the normal process of acceptance and letting go.
- 3. As a leader you have the responsibility to clearly communicate and behave in a manner that allows your employees to transition to a new way of doing business.** Your actions speak louder than your words. Employees will look to you for clues as to the new way of doing things. Let go of your own status-quo and adapt to the new reality of your organization.
- 4. How you support your people to achieve stability will be a hallmark of your leadership.** When in the middle of transition, because people are often in a state of flux and confusion, they will want to gain stability by having some control over their future, gaining some understanding how they feel, and regaining a sense of purpose.
- 5. As you lead into the new 'beginning' be sure to communicate your new strategy in concrete terms.** Remember that your thinking and acceptance of change is likely ahead of your employees. Communicate, on their terms, clarifying ways that employees can be engaged in the new reality of your organization.
- 6. After the change cycle has been completed take the time to reflect on the process.** Ask yourself: What worked; what did not work; what would you do differently the next time? How can you help employees define the new way of working together? How can you help the organization prepare for the next change?

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