

Caveat

Human beings have a remarkable ability to change. We are also self centred and our first reaction to change is to ask ourselves " What does this change mean to me?" We all go through a series of phases during any change and our first reaction to a change is to resist it. We may become angry or we may try to run away. Managers who are dealing with resistance to change can expect to hear people saying things like:

This will never work.

They do not understand how we do things here.

We tried that before.

It does not affect me.

I will be retiring in a few years anyway so I will not have to do it.

The list goes on and on. The difficult thing for a manager is to recognize the difference between legitimate observations as to why something may not work, and resistance to change.

The next phase is compliance. Compliance is not acceptance of change, it is going along with things. Employees who are complying will follow instructions literally, even if the instructions do not make sense in a particular or unusual situation.

The final phase is acceptance. The employee becomes actively involved in what is happening and is committed to making the change work. They will frequently put forward positive suggestions.

The interesting thing about these phases is that we all go through them and we can stay frozen in any one of them for any length of time.

Hopefully by now you see how important it is to be sensitive and observant, and not to distress your employees through misapplied efforts in work redesign. On the other hand, both you and employees must be aware that this concern cannot become a charter for preservation of the status quo.

Where the introduction of technology requires bona fide job changes, (such as learning how to use the keyboard and communicate via electronic mail) employees cannot be cocooned from these realities. Employees must be prepared to work at acquiring the necessary skills, or else carefully consider their future with the Department.

Why Now?

Why is the Department focusing now on the question of job redesign, and seeking your active co-operation in making this a reality? Because we are on the brink of a fundamental shift in the way the Department operates. Certainly there have been changes in operational procedures before in the sixty years of the Department's history, but with the exception of fax and desk-top computers, most of the technical aids to our work have been around since the 1930's (typewriting, dictating machines, telex, international telephone links, air mail). We are entering a new era, and putting on almost every desk a powerful communication and research tool, eventually linking every departmental employee on the globe instantly with every other. This will revolutionize our methods of communication and operations.