

Hello, this is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute, thanks for tuning in. As always, we welcome your comments below, and click on our social media icons; we appreciate that.

So, we had our first boot camp class a few weeks ago, and it was a great success, lots of enthusiasm, lots of energy, and great ideas in the room. It was actually a little bit bigger success than we had envisioned even, so that was great; we really thank our members for participating.

And there was a great question that came out of boot camp, and the question was "Why won't our employees just change when we ask them to?" Now this is important, obviously, because every organization has one, or two, or 10, or 20 change initiatives going on at one time or another. And so, this question was a terrific one, "We want to be safer, we want to change a process, we want to do something different in the field. We won't our employees just change?" So, we're going to talk about that.

It was just a terrific question, it set off a great round of discussion in the boot camp meeting. The fact is that, according to the studies, about 90% of corporate change initiatives fail; we know that. Now if you want your change initiatives, safety, processes in the field, etc., if you want your change initiatives to succeed, what do you need to do? What specific things do you need to do to make it happen?

The first thing is focus. Bringing a list of 10 change initiatives to your organization, or implementing one, then another, then another, then another change initiative in your organization over a relatively short period of time, like a year, is going to set you up for failure. The leaders need to focus, focus and measure. You've got to measure what you want to change, but you've got to have a baseline, and you've got to have a goal, and you've got to be able to measure your milepost, and incremental improvements along the way.

Most organizations, when they create change initiatives, don't set SMART goals, they're not Specific, Measurable, Action oriented, Realistic, and Timely. It's like, "We want to be a safer company." Well that's not measurable. That's just broad, and vague, and it doesn't give your people the actions that they need to undertake in order to be a safer organization.

There's lag measures and there's lead measures. Okay what's a lag measure? Well your safety incidence rate, by the time you've measured accidents on job sites, it's too late; the accidents have occurred, the mistakes have happened, the slip-ups and have been already. What's another lagging? Well your financials, for example. Once you get your financials at the end of the month, or the end of the year, what can you really do about them besides maybe make a little adjustment here or there? It's too late, they are lagging indicators.

What you need to focus on is leading indicators, what are the things that we can do to get our profits in the right place? What do we need to do? What specific actions do we need to take to improve margins, or whatever it is we're trying to improve in terms of the finances?

So, the second key, then, is to focus on the vital behaviors that create change. If safety, again, is our measure .... Well, let me give me an example from ... This is just a general example, it's not related to family business at all. The YMCA operates hundreds of pools around America, and maybe other countries too. And they want their pools to be safe, they don't want any drownings and yet, drownings happen, accidents happen; it's awful what it does, but let's face it, it happens.

So, they implemented something because, again, by the time they measure drownings, it's too late to do anything about them. They implemented a simple 10/10 scanning, that's what they call it, 10/10 scanning measure. They train their lifeguards every 10 seconds to scan the 10 feet of pool in front of them, and the third 10 was offer assistance to anyone who might be in trouble, who might be in trouble, within 10 seconds; it's actually 10/10/10. So, the 10 feet, every 10 seconds, and offer assistance to anyone who's even remotely in trouble within 10 seconds. And that reduced their incidence of drowning by, get this, two thirds. That's a lot of lives saved through a simple action, a simple behavior, that was easy to implement for every single lifeguard.

Now let's talk about safety. What about safety in your organization? I read a story about a company that wanted to improve safety, I think they were residential builders actually. And, again, by the time they measured the safety statistics, it's too late to do anything about them. So, they came up with some really simple behaviors that can influence those safety numbers. And the behaviors were simple: everybody wears hard hats, eye protection, gloves, and steel-toed boots on the job sites. And guess what? Their safety issues just dropped off the table, their safety record improved dramatically.

Those lead measures, those behaviors that you can influence to get the result that you want, that's what you need to focus on. And then there are six particular forms of influence that you need to focus on in order to get people to help you get your people and your organization, itself, to reinforce the change. There are two personal motivations, two social motivations, and two structural motivations. The personal are personal motivation, some people are just motivated to change, and they're eager to embrace new things. And then, of course, you've got other people who are not early adopters, they're not adopters.

You've got to focus on those people who are personally motivated to make changes happen, people who have the ability to change, so it's always motivation and ability, motivation and ability. The people that have the ability to change, focus on them because they will be your leaders, and your champions for the changes that you want to make. You've got to change the social norms in your organization. If it's not okay for a field worker to talk to a project manager, or even an executive in the company about safety, then that's a social norm that prevents your organization from being as safe as it could be. Every employee ought to be empowered to call out, or to respectfully challenge any other employee who's engaging in unsafe behavior on a job site, for example. You got to find those champions, you've got to find people with the social ability to talk up your new change initiatives, and to be your champions and your guides; your early adopters, that's you're looking for.

You've got to have structural motivation. If you want to have more and more safe organization, again, for example, then one of the things you can talk about is specific rewards. If we can improve safety, maybe that means a financial bonus, or more time off, or some other incentive; so, these structural motivations need to be in the organization.

And then, finally, does the organization itself, does the environment, does the culture support the kind of changes that we want to make? The worst thing that can happen is if you're focused on safety, and the chief executive of the company shows up on a job site and doesn't have a vest, and a hard hat, and gloves, and eye protection, that sends a message to everybody, "Guess what? We're not really serious about this." So, the organization, embodied by the CEO, the organization has said, "We don't care about this change, we're not going to make it happen."

So those are the six influencers there, so focus and measure SMART goals, focus on those vital behaviors, not the lagging indicators, but the leading indicators, and then engage the six forms of social, personal, and structural motivation. Here's

what it comes down to, try to change one thing at a time. I worked for a bank when I first got out of college, and it was miserable; thank God those days are over. But I did learn one valuable thing, and one of my managers said, "Only try to change one thing at a time." And that has stood the test of time over 30 years, I think that was really good advice. And I think those of us that try to push change, after change, after change, after change in our organizations, and try to go too fast, we just bite off more than we can chew.

And then the leaders need to focus on that change. If the leaders aren't focused, if the leaders don't talk it up, if they don't make it a part of their toolbox talks, if they don't make it a part of their staff meetings, if they don't make it a part of their project management meetings, etc., etc., it's not going to happen. Your people are not going to change willingly, it is not human nature. If you want change in your organization, the executives have to drive change and reinforce it throughout the organization.

I would love to have your comments on this particular blog, this is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute. Thank you.