
Scary Words

Regardless of how long you've been around, you often find that people that have had different experiences that you can relate to. Those people often give you something to think about and those thoughts can make you better at what you do.

Unfortunately, truly independent consultants are rarely involved in the internal project start-up planning or activities of projects that are going to significantly change an organization's ability to complete and the organization's stakeholders. Yet, Emercomm is often involved in assisting organizations with dealing with some results of those activities.

A good friend of mine sent me a book titled "Mastering the Challenges of Leading Change" written by H. James Dallas. James has an extensive, multi-decade track record as an agent of change in leading dozens of transformational initiatives and acquisition integrations as a CIO and COO of two multi-national organizations. Therefore, he's been very involved with those internal kick-off processes and has a different point-of-reference to the issues we've seen over the past four decades.

One of the points that James makes that got us thinking was how certain words can impact the effective start-up and buy-in to a new continuous improvement project. Given that we were discussing those words, we thought we'd get feedback from some current and past clients. Sure enough, in speaking with various people at various levels of the projects, we found that there are not only words, but combinations of words, that should be avoided at the introduction of a new project. The following is a short list of them and a few general reactions.

Standardization

- People who are in the last decade of their career – I'm too set in my ways. Standardize what I've been doing for decades?
- People in the middle of their career – I guess everything changes and I hope for two things: 1) I can learn the 'new ways'; and, 2) the new standard process doesn't mess too much with how I do my job.
- People in the early stages of their career with a bit of experience working for the organization – It's about time they recognized the need. Let's go!

Transformation

- People who are in the last decade of their career – Transform what and how? We know how the politics work in this organization.

- People in the middle of their career – As long as it's going to help me, I'm okay with it but we need to be clear on what's being transformed and the outcomes.
- People in the early stages of their career with a bit of experience working for the organization – Not really clear on what a transformation project would do for me.

Digital Transformation

- People who are in the last decade of their career – I hope this isn't being led by I.T. If it can clear some of the tedious stuff out of my day, that's good. If it's going to make me redundant, expect resistance.
- People in the middle of their career – The robots are coming! I hope this isn't being led by I.T. They are going to reduce headcount and I'm worried about my job.
- People in the early stages of their career with a bit of experience working for the organization – No worries. It's about time we got rid of the time-wasting tasks and I'm comfortable using technology.

Business Transformation

- People who are in the last decade of their career – I understand that the world of business is changing and we need to change. By the time it's done, I'll be retired. We need to let the next generation of managers work the project.
- People in the middle of their career – I know the 'stupid stuff' that we do that impacts the company and I hope we fix it. Does senior management know what's really going on?
- People in the early stages of their career with a bit of experience working for the organization – No worries. I don't know enough for this to really impact me.

Summary

Our take-away from reading the book is simple: There's always more that you can learn by viewing, in this case reading, situations from someone else's experience.

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