



IAF Canada Monograph Series, Number 6, April 2009

The mission of the IAF is to promote, support, and advance the art and practice of professional facilitation through methods exchange, professional growth, practical research, collegial networking, and support services. This is accomplished through peer-to-peer networking, professional development, and annual conferences which are critical means for fulfilling the mission and reflecting our core values.

Influencer: The Power to Change Anything

*Sylvie Lapointe-Lemaire
Organizational Development Specialist
Canadian Forest Service
(613) 947-8994
Sylvie.Lapointe-Lemaire@NRCan-RNCan.gc.ca*

I have been reading a fascinating book entitled Influencer: The Power to Change Anything, by Kerry Patterson et al. Through their model, the authors propose that, in order to have an impact on human behaviour, you need to address two fundamental questions:

- Do I have the skills, knowledge, and ability to do what is required of me? In other words, "Am I able?"
- What's in it for me? In other words, "Am I motivated?"

The authors explore the concepts of ability and motivation in the context of personal, social, and structural factors.

Under **personal motivation**, the notion of "making the undesirable desirable" is introduced as a key element to influencing others.

What would this mean in the context of organizational development? As change agents, we need to ask ourselves: "Will this new behavior we are proposing (this new way of doing business) bring people pleasure, and, if not, how can we make the 'old ways' less rewarding and the 'new ways' more fulfilling?"

For much change is bad. Change is unsettling. Change requires time and effort to learn new ways. Change is feared because it is the unknown. Therefore, we cling to what we know. We cling to the 'old ways' because it is safe and comfortable to do so. For most people, then, there is little pleasure in change.

How do we make change more enticing in the workplace, for example? The authors say that "*there are two very powerful and ethical ways of helping humans change their reaction to a previously neutral or noxious behavior: creating new experiences and creating new motives*" (p. 88).

1. Create new experiences

- **By getting people to try it:** For example, invite people to attend a staff meeting where a lot of time and energy is spent to create a festive atmosphere and to design a process where everyone's voice is heard and celebrated. Chances are, people will leave feeling positive and more likely to support new approaches of doing business that are in line with the values that were demonstrated during that event.
- **By making it a game:** Transform the tedious into something more appealing. How can you make strategic planning more enticing? Instead of spending agonizing hours wordsmithing a mission statement, you could ask small groups to put their creative minds together and come up with a poster with illustrations and slogans that describe their purpose and then make a "sales pitch" to the other teams. The best poster becomes the mission statement for the organization.

2. Create new motives

- **Connect to a person's sense of self:** We cannot motivate people; we can only help create the conditions that might assist them to find motivation within themselves. If people feel that, by adopting a new behavior, they uphold the image of who they want to be, they are more likely to change their behaviour. How can we help people see that changing their ways can be a defining moment in their lives, a moral quest of sorts? The most powerful human motivator is passion - the power of a committed heart. What are ways we can engage the heads and the hearts of people? Storytelling is a good start, because, in the telling of that personal anecdote or experience, we are connecting facts with emotions. If your heart is open, chances are that your mind will be more open to change as well.

As facilitators, coaches, trainers, organization development specialists, storytellers, and others, helping groups to create their own “power to change” is part of our mandate and obligation. To accomplish this, we need to be able to look within ourselves to create our own passion for change, both personal and professional. Influencer: The Power to Change Anything provides valuable insights into how to go about that process and how we can help others experience it as well.

Reference

Patterson, Kerry, Joseph Grenny, David Maxfield, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler, Influencer: The Power to Change Anything (McGraw-Hill, 2008).