

THROUGH FOUR ROOMS TO REAL CHANGE

Successful change requires a humane approach and recognition and handling of emotions. Two coaches of the coaching and consulting company Edia Oy, Finland, say that a successful and coherent handling of change is based on the Four Rooms of Change theory.

In a changing world, the success of an organisation often ultimately depends on how well it can respond to changes in the business environment.

Fear is frequently present in a change situation, as is also confusion and resistance to change itself. But a successful change requires an understanding and processing of people's emotions because it is the people that make change happen in any organisation. Edia Oy is a consulting company specialised in this kind of approach.

"We help organisations to understand and manage change better and act appropriately in a change situation", says **Tuija Arola**.

She does not consider human and emotional issues to be so-called "soft issues", but the opposite, an organisation's "hard core", because the power of an organisation is greatly affected by what feelings and emotions its people are experiencing.

"If people do not commit to change either because they don't agree with it or because they don't understand it, it is pointless to expect a real change to take place, let alone quickly and efficiently", emphasises **Katariina Benedetti**.

NEW METHOD FOR MANAGING CHANGE

With the aim of managing change more rationally and systematically, Benedetti and Arola have introduced a new method in Finland. It is based on the theory of the Swedish psychologist **Claes Janssen** called "The Four Rooms of Change". This method develops the capacity of an organisation to better understand and function in change. The theory has been applied successfully for over 15 years in many parts of the world.

The Four Rooms of Change helps people create a common language in change. First and foremost, it diagnoses the relationship of an individual or an organisation to change, providing glimpses of change resistance or preparedness to change. Moreover, it gives concrete tools to promote change by finding solutions to problems.

"Change as such proceeds through four emotional states. One of them is called denial, which is exactly where change resistance can be found", says Benedetti. Change resistance can be very strong, especially when the pressure to change comes from outside, e.g. in the case of a fusion.

"I've come across organisations where resistance to change has simply been swept under the carpet. In these cases, resistance is not magically disappearing, but stays there for a long time, for years and years. In cases like this, people's energy is wasted in other things than in committing to and promoting effective change", Arola points out.

DEFEAT OF CHANGE RESISTANCE

One of the emotional states is called confusion, or chaos. This state is turbulent, but the attitude to change is more positive. When one is ready to give up the old, resistance can be transformed into real power, power of change. The inspirational state is a world of possibilities, where change is seen as an opportunity. Then it is easier to agree on new matters arising and implement change.

It is therefore crucial to know in which state an organisation going through change is. The Four Rooms of Change can, for example, show that there is a lot of denial, which perhaps is due to the fact that the reasons for change as well as its objectives and consequences have not been openly discussed.

To move ahead from a situation of change resistance, there is the need for a common action plan. "This method is antiauthoritarian and requires from the management openness and capacity for listening", says Arola.

"Managers on all levels have a huge role in handling change, but the employees have to take responsibility for their own attitude".

"Change is not necessary and survival is not mandatory", concludes Benedetti.