

► Volume 7, Issue 1

The Resistance Cycle in Change

(Part 1 of 2)

In 1996, \$655 billion was spent on mergers and acquisitions. The year 1997 brought \$915 billion in mergers and the trend continues upward. This is far beyond what experts had predicted earlier. As mergers in the United States keep increasing every year, more and more people are affected by significant levels of change. Add to the merger boom: increasing competition, reorganizations, and changes in governmental programs, and you will find a rare person NOT affected by change.

How do most people react to change? I think Alexander Graham Bell's quote applies "When one door closes, another opens: but we often look so long and regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us." Most people instinctively resist change.

The Resistance Cycle depicts what I typically see happening in organizations today.



In Phase 1: Ignore the Pain - people do just that - they ignore the fact that a change is even occurring. Their focus is on what others are doing to them. They make comments such as "why are they doing this to me?" or "it will never happen". They tend to avoid any information that pertains to the change(s).

When people begin **Phase 2: Feeling the Pain**, they recognize that this change is going to be worse than they initially thought. They experience a sense of loss over what used to be and they mourn the "good old days" of yesterday. People ask, "have we been doing it wrong all these years?" They feel like they have no choice or control over decisions which affect them directly.

This is the most difficult phase to be in because of the painful reactions. I typically find five types of reactions in this phase:

1. Keep to Yourself and Lick Your Wounds -

You stay to yourself and deal with the pain alone. You don't allow others to know about the pain you feel. Your internalized stress skyrockets and it begins to negatively affect your attitude and productivity.



2. Whine and Manipulate -

You are angry about the changes and whine behind the boss's back to other people. You try to manipulate the system for your own agenda regardless of the impact on others. Morale in the organization plummets.



3. Hiss and Pick Fights -

You become aggressive and say things in anger. You no longer care about others' feelings and your main goal is to make other people feel as miserable as you do.



4. Mark Your Territory -

You decide you can't influence the entire organization so you'll just stick to your own territory. You cover and protect any mistakes or problems in your department or area or responsibility.

5. Withhold Warmth -You don't share information with the rest of the team that could be beneficial. Since others do not seem to recognize your contributions to the organization, you are not going to share information with them. After all, information is power.



Following are some actual examples of reactions of people in the first two phases of resistance based on past program participants. The most common reaction to pain is to withhold information. Some people may leave the organization. Lots of whining and manipulation go on. In fact, one organization I know gives out "No BMW's" t-shirts (BMW stands for "bitching, moaning, whining"). Some employees concentrate on their product in order to avoid the process of change. Other employees pick fights with their peers over territory issues. Many employees are fearful because they don't get much information from their leaders and the leaders firmly act as if they have the new "right way" to proceed and therefore need no input from their staff.

What is critical for people who are going through change to realize is that these painful reactions usually don't just stay at work -- they carry over into our personal lives. We whine, hiss and pick fights, and withhold warmth at home too. It's a rare person who can lead a double life. Most of us find that if we are frustrated and discouraged at work, we will be frustrated and discouraged at home - we simply carry one aspect of our life

into the other aspect. I recently saw a quote that said "If you're dog-tired at night, maybe it's because you growled all day." If there is one major incentive for us to learn how to deal with change, it's the impact of our reaction to change in our personal life.

In the next briefing, we'll delve into the *Healing the Pain* and *New Growth* phases and provide some specific strategies that will help you begin to understand and accept change. ■

Is it as Good for You as it is For Me??

After six years of hard-copy newsletters, this is our first attempt at e-mailing and faxing our newsletter. We want your feedback. How did this work for you? Please let us know how we can improve it. You can e-mail us at Patti@thechangeagent.com or call 1-800-339-0973. If you know someone who would like to receive their own copy of *The Change Agent Briefing*, they need to complete the e-mail subscription form found at: <http://www.thechangeagent.com/news.html> or those interested in the fax version, please call us at 1-800-339-0973 or fax your request to 614-523-3515.

The Change Agent's Speaking Highlights:

A Special Thanks to Our Recent Clients:

Artina Promotional Products
Case Western Reserve University-Weatherhead School of Management
International Society of Special Events
Lenscrafters
National Speakers Association
Ohio Association of County Boards MR/DD
Ohio Bankers Association
Ohio Credit Union League
Ohio University
Sandusky County Board of MR/DD
United Grinding Technologies, Inc.
Wright State University
USS/KOBE Steel Company

Satisfied Client Quote of the Quarter:

“Thanks again for the excellent job you did in customizing your program *It's a Juggle Out There: Managing Life in the Fast Lane* for our Regional Directors of Operations (RDO's). We particularly appreciate your opening a dialogue among our RDO's about some of our organizational obstacles and helping us develop some solutions and specific usable strategies to increase our productivity and personal satisfaction. We are seeing results in increased productivity already!”

Brian Bandarra
NE Regional Vice President
Lenscrafters

Patti's 1999 Program Schedule



We wanted you to know that Patti is quickly filling up her speaking schedule in 1999. If you are considering a program with Patti, you will want to call and schedule now. We share this with you in an attempt to help you avoid disappointment. We look forward to serving you and making a significant difference in your organization in 1999!



Patti Hathaway, Certified Speaking Professional, is known as The CHANGE AGENTSM

who guarantees your satisfaction with every program she presents. She tailors her content based on researching your organization's needs and delivers superb content with high energy, humor and visuals. Patti's expert balance between serious concepts and humorous illustrations raises audience receptivity, creating tremendous impact. Patti Hathaway effects change that impacts bottom-line returns. She cuts across all levels of your organization to give your people the no-nonsense direction they need to deal with today's rapidly changing environment.

**Changing
People's
Perspective
to Produce
Results**



1-800-339-0973

<http://www.thechangeagent.com>

All of these articles belong to Patti Hathaway, but you are free to reprint or repost them providing that you note Patti's copyright, leave the article unaltered, and include Patti's phone number (800) 339-0973 and email address (patti@thechangeagent.com). In any other case, you need permission to re-use this material.