

IS IT INCONSISTENCY OR UNEXPLAINED CHANGE?

By Aldonna R. Ambler, CMC, CSP, The Growth Strategist™

Are't most managers frustrating? They can be so inconsistent and difficult to read. One minute they measure minute detail, and the next they insist on only hearing the basic concepts. One day, a manager goes with the flow; the next day, the very same manager seems driven to complete tasks by deadlines.

Do managers have a personality disorder by definition or could there be some other explanation?

Some of the inconsistencies can be explained by the fact that completely different management techniques are needed to facilitate three distinct types of change. One of the primary functions of a manager is to facilitate change. Why would we even need managers if employees could do the same things the same ways each and every day?

Seemingly inconsistent behavior results when a manager does not communicate which type of change is involved at the time and the reasons behind their varying expectations. In today's companies, there are often multiple simultaneous, sometimes conflicting, strategic changes taking place, which places a greater responsibility on managers to communicate effectively.

What Are The Three Major Types of Change?

The first type of strategic change is **DEVELOPMENTAL**. When a significant element of interpersonal relationships and/or learning is involved, you are probably looking at developmental change. Coaches and mentors are helpful to people living through developmental changes, but people need to experience things themselves in order to grow, learn, accept, let go, move on – change.

The second type of strategic change is **TRANSITIONAL**. Transitions have beginnings and endings, involve sequential steps, and are often triggered by a significant event.

People need help with timing, staying organized, measuring results, and solving problems during transitional change.

The third type of change is **TRANSFORMATIONAL**. When the changes to be accomplished are measured in years, you are probably dealing with transformation. This type of change is so all consuming, no one person can be expected to keep track of every detail. It requires joint effort of involved parties, the use of objective outsiders, and a visionary leader. Transformational change implies that the individual or company involved is essentially different as a result.

What Are Some Examples of Each Type of Strategic Change?

For many people, becoming a parent for the first time is transformational. Having a second child is transitional, and the birth of a third child is well within the realm of developmental change.

Examples of developmental change from our personal lives include friendships, advancing through grades in school, and becoming an experienced traveler. Achieving company-wide computer literacy, product upgrades, merchandising, and improving productivity are business examples of developmental change.

Transitions in our personal lives include graduations, relocations, transfers, and promotions. Examples of company transitions include launching an entirely new product, some computer system conversions, and facility expansion.

Personal transformations can include first marriages, career changes, becoming a widow/widower, and/or retirement. Examples of business transformations include going global, the true integration of TQM (total quality management), and/or the succession of authority in most family owned businesses.

What Should A Manager Do During Each Type of Change?

Like the role of parents caring for a toddler who is learning to walk, a manager's primary contributions during developmental change include:

- acting as a coach, guide, mentor, facilitator
- providing a safe space for the learning, doing, trying, experimenting
- recognizing and celebrating incremental successes (cheerleader)
- not overreacting to minor setbacks along the way
- sharing techniques with the other coaches to improve one's ability to encourage and motivate
- conveying the benefits of continued effort to the learner.

It is usually not very useful to set a rigid deadline by which time a toddler must know how to walk. Nor is it helpful for a manager to nag employees who are genuinely trying to learn a new function. Sometimes, pressure to learn by a specified date actually inhibits learning.

It is important for a manager to be organized and help people stay on track during transitional change. The steps involved in transitions are always the same:

- problem/opportunity identification
- research
- design
- implementation
- evaluation

Managers need to encourage inclusion, open mindedness, and possibilities during the early phases of transition and shift to an emphasis on retained focus, completion of tasks, and measurement during the later phases of transitions.

It Is Important To Manage Transition, Not Just Monitor

Since transformational change requires constancy of purpose and direction, a visionary leader is usually needed. More than one person going through transformational life events (such

as divorce, loss of a child, or early retirement) has needed outside assistance and the support of others. Corporations with the strongest, brightest, most talented visionary leaders need the input of process experts who have experienced similar transformations before.

They also need input from technical experts. After all, the proposed change(s) would not feel transformational to people within the company if everyone in the organization had experience facing the same challenges before.

Since transformation often requires the involvement, commitment, and focused energy of employees, vendors, customers, and strategic partners, the role of an individual manager during transformational change usually takes the form of participation on a steering committee or interdisciplinary task force. A manager's top priority during transformational change is to internalize the vision and help translate it into day-to-day procedures, decisions, and actions.

*Known as **The Growth Strategist™**, Aldonna R. Ambler, CMC, CSP helps professional service firms, technology-driven businesses, and construction-related product/service for distribution companies reach their goal of **Achieving Accelerated Growth With Sustained Profitability®** through a combination of speaking, consulting, executive coaching, authorship, and growth financing. She has executed an ESOP, grown multiple international businesses, won just about every major award an entrepreneur can win, provided expert testimony on economic growth at over 30 legislative hearings, conferred with 4 different Presidents in the Oval Office, and published two books and over 100 articles. Aldonna was named the **national (USA) "Woman Business Owner of the Year" for 2000**. She currently hosts a weekly Internet radio show, **The Growth Strategist™** on VoiceAmerica Business (www.business.voiceamerica.com) every Tuesday at 11 a.m. ET. Aldonna Ambler can be reached at Aldonna@AMBLER.com, 1-888-ALDONNA (253-6662) or at www.TheGrowthStrategist.com.*

