

The People Side Of Improvement **Success Factors for Sustainable Change**

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Being “Fed Up” and Showing Courage - Triggers for Action and Change

I always vote in every election, but I had never been to a political rally, never carried a sign, or put a sign in my yard to support a candidate. On April 15, I attended the Tea Party closest to my house. There were about 1,000 people there – business owners, working people that came on their lunch hour, retired couples, parents and students. Common concerns united us, despite our differences. The tea parties gave citizens the opportunity to 1) finally take action on issues they were “fed up” with and 2) **show courage** by assembling in public to voice their concerns.

Being “fed up” with problems and **having the courage to finally take action** are also key elements in improvement. Managers must have the courage and desire to begin the change process, but may not be aware of their key roles in leading and sustaining change:

- Enthusiasm, encouragement, expectations and the choice for change **ALWAYS** come from management.
- Improvement work involves more than putting new charts or reports in the monthly report, especially at the management level. To sustain a change to a business process, **a change is required in the way the process is managed.**
- This means that **management practices may change A LOT**, something that most improvement programs do not address and something that most managers are not prepared for.

When we examine management processes for improvement opportunities, **we risk discovering that a past decision could have been the wrong one.** As a manager, it is natural to be afraid of learning that we could have made a better decision. This fear is different from the fear of change, and can sabotage an entire improvement program. Managers need to muster courage to examine their processes for planning, communications and decision-making, then **choose different processes with the intent of improving mine or plant performance and the bottom line.** Having the courage to begin this discovery process is not easy, but is critical to the success of any change effort.

Management teams that overcome the fear of self-examination “choose to change” because:

1. They are “**fed up**” with **recurring problems** caused by work practices in all departments.
2. **They are not willing to forfeit future gains** (maybe millions of dollars) that come from improved management practices.
3. They understand that improvement success **hinges on their flexibility**, not their employees’ flexibility.

When I help departments improve performance, I ask managers and employees to make a list of the 3-5 top problems they wish they could eliminate. These problems cause production losses, increased costs, lost time, overtime, contractor losses, unhappy customers and suppliers, friction between departments, stress or embarrassment. Managers and employees dread these problems because they will happen again. Processes that are causing the problems are valued for economic impact and analyzed, and action plans are created. But...making these problems go away requires commitment to change from everyone involved, **especially the management team.**

Are you so **“fed up” with the impact of these problems** that you would be willing to change the way you work to prevent them? If the answer is yes, **you have the courage and determination to begin the change process.**

Thought for the month:

Fear of learning what you could have done differently is a bigger barrier to improvement than the fear of change. Courage and determination are required to achieve success.

Kay Sever, CMC, CQIA implements improvement programs and management development programs for mines, plants and service organizations. Her approach balances commonly used tools and methods with a focus on value creation and the “people side of improvement”. Kay works with every organizational level and department to find the highest dollar opportunities and remove barriers that prevent sustainable change. She helps management teams lead improvement and better execute the budget, capital approvals, incentive plans, communications, etc. See **MiningOpportunity.com** for details on her services and contact information. Look for the mining edition of her first book “Building An Opportunity Culture – Addressing the Barriers That Steal Profits and Prevent Sustainable Change”, available on her website under Products/Books.