

Two Changes You'd Better be Prepared For

Welcome back to another session of Guidestone University. In this session, we're going to be looking at two types of workplace change that every leader should be prepared for in their life, their work, their leadership.

Here's something that I've learned: if any organization or any team is going to accomplish vision, change must occur in the organizational culture. If you're going to accomplish vision, change must occur because **change is at the core of leadership**. If there is no change, there is no leadership. Otherwise, what are we leading people to do? To stay the same? How does that work? So, as we worked with companies and organizations all across the country, all types and all size of organization, we've been asked literally hundred of times: "How do I lead through change or how do I help my team embrace the change that coming?"

What we know and what you know as a leader is change is a constant and natural part of growing teams and organization. So, we found that **change is best approached as an intriguing and energizing part of our work**. Change within a growing organization is like traffic in Atlanta or traffic in L.A. or Washington D.C. traffic. It's a naturally recurring part of life in the metro area: we get all bent out of shape everyday and have road rage on the way to work, because we didn't properly prepare ourselves for the traffic that happens every single day. Change is much the same way. It's there, it's natural, and it recurs. It's there everyday. So, why would we create all this emotion, this anxiety and this fear about change?

We have somebody on our team that regularly says to us, "I know I shouldn't fear change; and I don't like change, and I'm learning to embrace it." Why do we get all anxious about it? Because we label it. Even enjoy change. Effective leaders adopt the perspective that **everything is an experiment**, and many of our experiments work. Others that don't succeed, we can tweak them or we can improve them until we can maximize the return on investment. I learned this first from Mark Batterson, who leads a non-profit organization in the Washington D.C. area. One of their core values is that everything is an experiment.

So, while change is at the core of leadership, I think the thing that we have to understand is that **everything and everyone doesn't need to be changed.**

We've all seen or heard a leader that comes into an organization, make ill-advice changes which result in the loss of key personnel and millions of dollars in revenue; or the company might even go under. Leaders should first ask what's already in place and what is functioning well; they should speak to people at every level the organization and invest heavily on what is already working. Think about this: many organizations should allocate 80-90% of resources to initiatives that are already profitable or already high performing and 10-20% of resources in the innovation. I think, sometimes, we get the thing turned around on its head: we started allocating more and more money to innovation and to new initiatives, and we end up creating a lot of drama that creates problems for ourselves.

So, I want to share with you two types of change within every organization.

The first is incremental change. An executive friend of mine once said to me, "When I come into a new organization or new department, I'm not interested on stepping on toes that don't need to be stepped on. It's important to me that I find out what our personnel, at all levels, think, and develop an appropriate strategy for moving forward together."

So, incremental strategy really does three things: One, **it occurs over time as a part of an organization's evolution and development.** Number two, **it tends to be inclusive and collaborative.** Number three, incremental change **asks the question, "What could be done better?"**

The second kind of change is radical change. There are times when better or incremental is not enough; and, when better is not enough, the question then becomes, "What must be done differently?" **Radical change brings dramatic alteration to teams and to organizations,** even to leaders. Radical change changes things significantly, dramatically.

Radical change often occurs quickly. It's the peeling off the band aid real quickly.

Radical change requires unwavering leadership. It requires courage and commitment to stick with it long enough to get to real momentum. So, leaders that implement radical change must be communicating regularly. It must be encouraging their people regularly to stick with it and celebrating small successes that occur all along the way.

With radical change, some program or some processes, or even personnel or products or services may need to be eliminated. Other things may need to be launched, and leaders must have the courage to lead radical change.

So many lives of leaders, so many organizations and teams stagnate, because they fear the failure that comes along with radical change. Failure is the most common of all fears; and **to experience growth, we must be more afraid of missed opportunities than we are of the failure** of change; we need to go ahead and face that fear. **Our fears lose power when we confront them, and life's greatest memories are often discovered in the biggest challenges that we face.**

Instead of fearing these opportunities to grow through change, we should embrace them. We should embrace the change that comes along with them with energy and passion. Never allow fear to keep you from growing. It's not always going to be easy to lead change, but it will always be worth it.

Think about the two types of change, incremental and radical: what can be done better and what must be done differently.

Action step number one: (List your latest experience with each type of change)

What type of change has been most effective for you and your organization?

Action step number two: When was the last time you experienced incremental change in your team, in your organization, in your leadership?

Action step number three: When was the last time you experienced radical change within your team, your organization, and within your leadership?

We'll see you again in the next session of Guidestone University.