

How to Successfully Lead Change in 2020

Dan Reiland

The year 2020 is just around the corner and change is non-negotiable. That's not a prophetic statement. The need for change in the local church is always in play. The issue is whether you are out in front, just keeping up, or playing catch-up.

- When you are in front of the change curve, you gain the privilege of margin for innovation. You have the opportunity to design what is next and new for you.
- Keeping up with change affords you the ability to remain relevant, though perhaps not cutting edge. You can borrow great ideas from others.
- Trying to catch-up with change is something no leader wants. When you are behind the change curve it requires far more effort, resources and emotional energy than would otherwise be needed. This is true because you spend much more time *convincing people of the need to change*.

If you and I sat down over a cup of coffee and I asked you what needs to change in your business next year, would you have an immediate answer? I hope you would. All businesses need change of some kind.

Perhaps you have already initiated a change and your response would be to follow through on what you started. That's great! If you don't know what needs to change, I would encourage you to invite a coach or consultant to come in and help you figure that out.

5 key questions to set the stage for healthy and productive change.

1) Are *you* willing to change? (The courage to change.)

Change always starts with the leader. Leaders resist change for several reasons such as not having enough emotional energy to take on one more thing, or an insecurity that prevents risk, or they just don't know how to pull it off.

Sometimes the most significant issue is what is required of you to change and grow personally, that will enable you to lead the change. As a leader, it's necessary to settle the issue of change in your heart and mind, including the leadership price tag of what it will take to see that the change become reality.

How about you? Are you ready to make some changes, large or small, in 2020?

2) What needs to change? (The decision of change.)

When assessing what needs to change it's important to not first think about your personal preference but focus on the change(s) required to best advance the mission. These two elements are not necessarily in contradiction, the simple point is to put the needs of the business first.

There will likely be several solutions to choose from, but “mission first” will usually remove most of the unnecessary tension from decision-making conversations. Start by making a longer list of 5-7 possible changes, then narrow it down to 1-3.

3) What is required to make the change? (The strategy for change.)

The taxi-cab principle says, “Count the cost before you get in.” That’s always smart to remember in leadership as well.

These seven questions will help you know what is required, and help you make a good plan.

1. Why are you making the change?
2. How much time will it take?
3. What financial resources are needed?
4. Do you have the leaders and volunteers you need?
5. What obstacles do you face?
6. What might you need to stop doing to all this change to take hold?
7. Do have a clear green light from God about this change?

4) Will the people accept the change? (The process of change.)

There are several components involved in whether your business will accept change from your level of overall momentum to their trust in leadership. However, even in the best of businesses, the process of change always meets with some resistance. If you make a change and nobody gets upset, you have just changed something that doesn’t matter.

When you are confident about your plans for change, then the tough question of “How do we lead those who don’t support the change?” becomes relevant. Have open and honest conversations to help key leaders and volunteers process the change.

In the end, however, you need to be willing to move forward even if some don’t agree. Do so with honor and respect but make the change.

5) What are the anticipated results of the change? (The measurement of change.)

At some point all your work of leadership requires and deserves measurement. Did the change take place? And was it successful? It’s not enough to simply acknowledge that the intended change happened, *leaders make changes all the time that didn’t work or don’t matter*. Instead, *did your intended results happen as you envisioned?*

4 principles that will help you lead change:

1) It is essential for the business to trust the leaders who are making the change.

Trusting you as the leader to make wise changes isn't the same thing as blind faith, it's about earned respect, character people can count on and a sense of God's presence. You earn people's respect by consistency in your leadership with more wins than losses, more good decisions than bad ones and continually becoming a better leader.

People can count on your character when they know you want more for them than from them. Trust increases when they are able connect with you at a heart level and they know you are genuinely for their best interests. Finally, when they sense God's presence and power, these things together create great trust.

2) It is vital for the people to see the need for the change.

The people in your business don't need to be seasoned strategists to have a gut feel of changes that make sense and changes that don't. Sometimes resistance to change represents a lack of understanding of the bigger picture, but if you clearly communicate the reason for the change, that helps to move things forward in a healthy way.

Be sure to communicate how the change is connected to the vision. This even works, for example, with a small group. Nothing evades the need for change. *(Not change for the sake of change but change that makes the business better and helps people grow.)* It's not the size of the change that matters, it's whether the change itself makes a difference.

3) It is necessary for the people to believe the gain will be greater than the loss.

All change represents a loss of some kind to some of the people. Don't be dismissive of those who feel some loss. Be open and honest about the loss and the impacts. When the people trust you and see the need for the change, they still need to understand how the gain will be greater than the loss. This makes the difference between merely a lack of resistance and active participation with full support.

4) It is inspiring for the people to have faith that God is for the change.

Are you confident that God has endorsed the change you have mind? If so, and assuming you have prayed through the process, the people you lead will sense it too and that increases their faith in support of the change.

This doesn't suggest using a spiritual "God card" to push the change through, but instead, communicate *your* faith and God's confirmation