

Change – the forgotten component - people

Ever wondered why some changes that appear to be crucial, simply fail to be realised? Is this active sabotage or just apathy?

- **People versus process**

There are many good, well researched change processes and methodologies around. What many of them focus on are the processes, the drivers – IT, Technology, Premises, Markets, Competition, Economic, Legislation, Geography and many, many more. These are what drives, induces, causes or influences change. Changes to the way a company operates, where it operates from, how it supports its operation technologically, what markets it operates in.

What really enables change? What makes an organisation do things differently?

People! And all people are different and respond to the need to change in different ways.

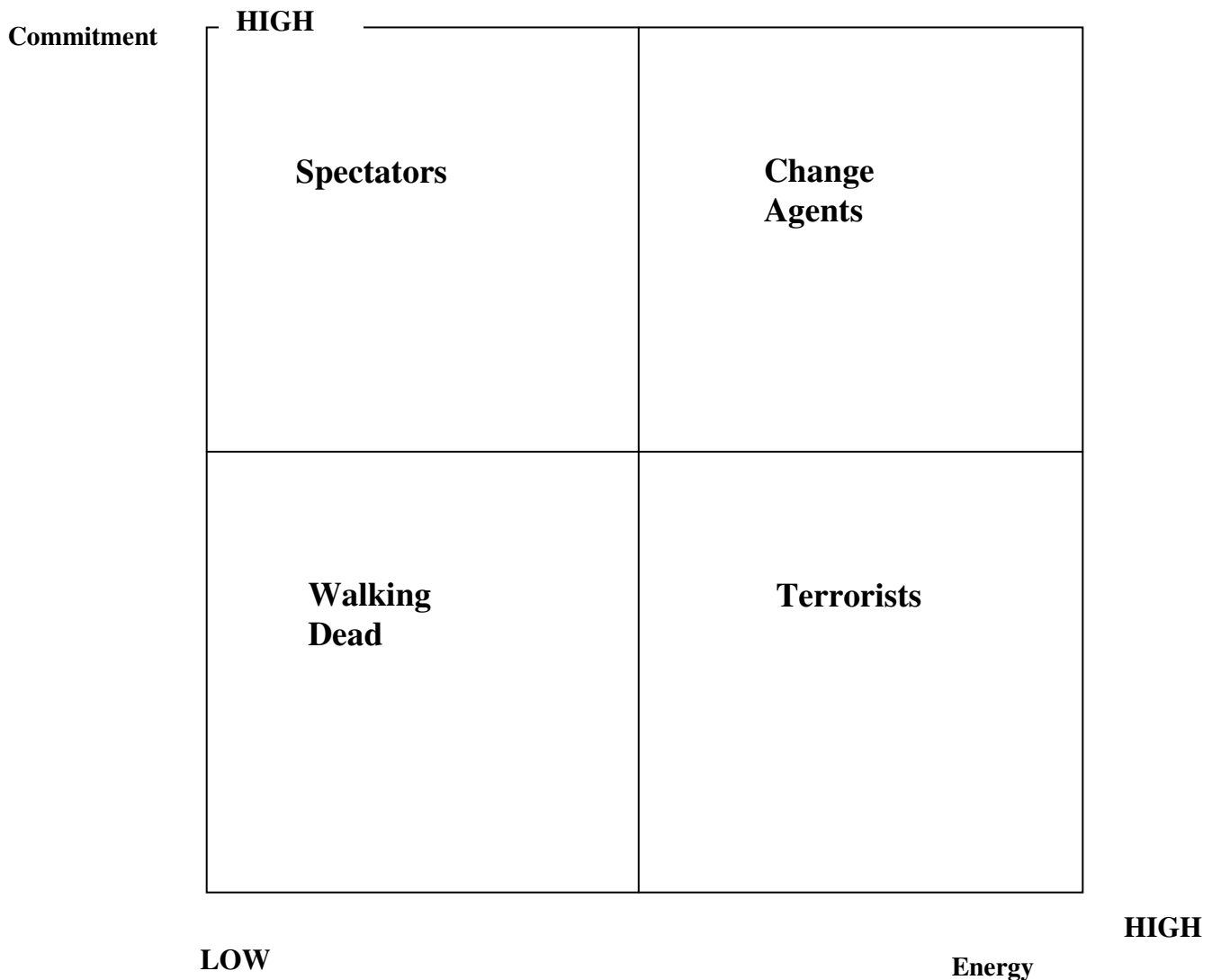
- **People will not change unless they want to!**

Sure, some people will make all the right noises; some will actually make a token effort to change their approaches, behaviours or attitudes. But dig deeper and you will find that their motivation could be to just keep the boss off their back – not to fully embrace the change, or to keep their jobs.

- **What makes people want to change?**

People react in different ways to change. Here are four common reactions (see diagram below).

1. The Walking dead – these folk will do as little as possible in the face of any change required of them.
2. Spectators – they talk the talk and say all the right things but look for any evidence of them putting their shoulders to the wheel of change and you will be disappointed.
3. The terrorists – these people will do everything they can to sabotage change, or indeed any initiative that comes from ‘management’.
4. Change agents – the small group of people who have the energy and commitment to take on board not only what is needed but understand why it is important to make the changes. They will be the ones to adopt new working practises – they’ll walk the talk.



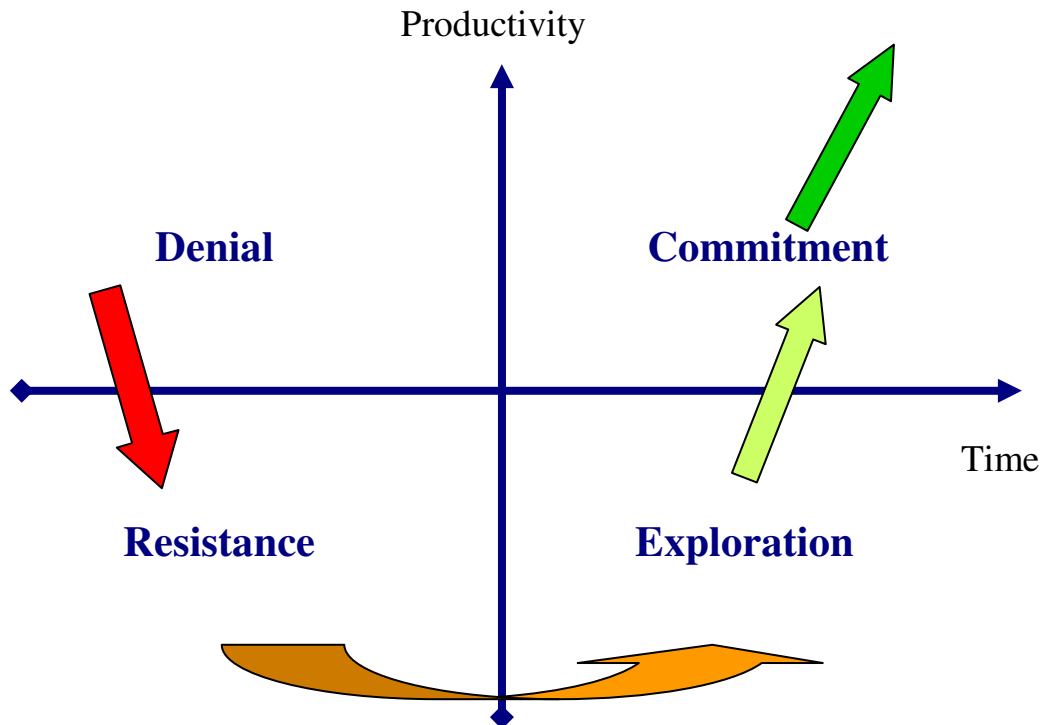
- **Managing different people takes different approaches.**

Too often, change programmes promote a single way of managing change. We can see by the above four responses, that they will require very different techniques to implement and sustain change. Unsurprisingly, there are other aspects to people that also need to be taken into account.

1. Some people want to move on to bigger and better things – some want to avoid experiencing distasteful aspects of their jobs and are not interested in company goals and vision statements.
2. Some people learn to do things in different ways – by watching, by reading, by doing or by listening.
3. Some people can experience a new method once and be able to replicate it straight away, others require a number of times to practise it, others need to try it over a period of time before they can 'do it' to the satisfaction of either themselves or their manager or supervisor.

- **The time factor.**

We have seen how people react differently to change. We can also say, with confidence, that in another aspect, people react in the same way. They will go through a series of responses that tend to follow the same process.



In so many areas of life, people take different amounts of time to reach the same end result. One person might take four times longer to go through the above curve than another. Therefore if person A (the slower person) is in Denial, person B (the faster person) could well be in Commitment. How will they be treated? Like A or B? What could the implications be?

If you add up all of the above different ways people react to change, you'll see that there can be many variations of reaction, behaviour and attitude. How many change programmes take this into account?

If we assume a 'one size fits all' approach, it is easy to see that, at best, we will only match with a fraction of the types of people who are in actual fact, the only way that change will happen.

The result? Insufficient critical mass, unsustainable change, the programme takes too long, it costs too much, the benefits are not realised – we can go on!

- **Oh! And how about performance?**

How realistic is it to expect people to perform at the same level in the new way as they did in the old? Try this simple experiment. Cross your arms so that one hand is on top. Now, un-cross them and cross them so that the other hand is on top. Did your 'performance' suffer? How much will your employees' performance suffer as the result of a change programme and how long will it take to get them up to speed in the new way? Have you built the implications of this into your change programme?

- **The answer?**

There is no simple answer, but one approach that can make change much more sustainable, help to address all of the different types of employees involved in the changes and bring achievement of benefits closer, is a combination of a well thought through change programme coupled with a people oriented approach.

- **One component of this 'people oriented' approach could be coaching.**

Coaching is all about helping people understand what needs to be done, helping them have an input in the implementation plans, taking into account their individual types and getting them to formulate how they are going to manage their parts of the change programme.

Coaching taps into their own motivational styles and allows them to structure how they will attain the new targets. It is about helping them to unlock their own potential – because they want to – not because they have to.

Coaching will help individuals through their own, unique performance dips by getting them to explore how they need to do things differently and what they need to do to be as productive – or more so – than they used to be.

Because the ideas, motivation and plans are the result of the employees' thoughts and efforts, the level of change that is achieved and sustained can be much higher, costs are correspondingly less and benefits greater.

None of us like being told what to do.

None of us like being treated like faceless workers.

None of us like being presented with a 'done deal'.

In most instances, the people who are going to have to operate in the new way know far more about what could and couldn't work than the senior managers who are trying to push through the changes.

- **Training managers helps too.**

We believe in helping our clients to help themselves and become, and remain self-sufficient.

Training those managers who will be involved in any change programmes to understand how people differ and how best to assess those differences – and then adapt their approaches is something we specialise in.

We can train managers in this new approach and combine it with or train them separately in coaching skills which will not only address your current need but help to sustain a more people oriented approach in the future.

About the author

Roy Scott is a Senior Training Associate for Exceptional Training. He regularly publishes interesting and relevant articles from the world of training. As well as being a qualified and licensed NLP coach. Roy uses his vast experience of coaching senior managers to enhance the delivery of all his training solutions.

Popular courses include:

- **Building Rapport.**
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- **Managing high and low performers**
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