

Lead More, Control Less

Eight Change Strategies
For Disrupting Your Organization

With Sandra Janoff & Marvin Weisbord,



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In this session we introduce 8 ways people can make themselves into better leaders. They form the foundation for our new book to be published in 2015 under the above title. We will go more deeply into those issues that interest you. Where possible, we invite you to join us in experiencing the strategies in action.

1. Control Structure, Not People

Situation: Problems, projects, and programs demand functional cooperation.

Soft Response: Appoint “people persons” as leaders to motivate performance.

Hard Response: My way or the highway.

Strategy 1: Set up structures that support mutual learning, self-discipline, and self-management.

2. Make Everybody Responsible

Situation: People delegate upward, defer to authority and must be told what to do.

Soft Response: Coach and coax performance.

Hard Response: Intensify external supervision.

Strategy 2: Give coordination and control to the people doing the work.

3. Welcome Anxiety

Situation: Crisis—leadership change; merger; market setback, etc.—heightened tension, increased dependency, rumors, paralysis.

Soft Response: Reassuring speeches and press releases.

Hard Response: Precipitous layoffs and budget cuts.

Strategy 3: Turn paralyzing anxiety into creative energy. Accurate, timely information; dialogue at all levels.

4. Head Off Conflict

Situation: People fight and polarize, withhold ideas and feelings.

Soft Response: Conflict Management seminars, mediators.

Hard Response: Forced suppression and compliance.

Strategy 4: Validate all views; assure allies for potential disrupters.

5. Encounter the “Whole Elephant”

Situation: Fast solutions or decisions needed with broad support.

Soft Response: Consultants, advisors, experts supply advice.

Hard Response: People in authority issue orders based on limited knowledge.

Strategy 5: People at all levels educate each other before acting.

6. Include the Right People

Situation: Action requiring diverse stakeholders to succeed.

Common Response: Meetings involving leaders “cascading” from top to bottom

Strategy 6: Use “Whole system” initiatives involving people with Authority, Resources, Expertise, Information, and Need.

7. Discover 100% Agreement

Situation: Divisive issues polarize people, precluding prompt action.

Soft Response: Debate, interpersonal “style” seminars, diversity training, etc.

Hard Response: Suppress discussions; unilateral decisions.

Strategy 7: Distinguish agreements from value differences; act quickly on what’s doable.

8. Avoid “Taking It Personally”

Situation: Emotional ups and downs in reaction to others’ words and deeds. unnecessary suffering with co-workers, bosses, customers, suppliers, family.

Soft Response: Withdrawing.

Hard Response: Attacking; confronting.

Strategy 8: Become aware of how you create “reality,” increase range of choices.