

A Fitness Coach Approach to Change Management

Another in a series of articles (in this case, an excerpt from the STAR Collaborative blog) intended to drive dialog, collaboration, and benchmarking among a small group of leaders.

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Sad, but true

While it is difficult to admit, I must confess that I'm addicted to late night infomercials for fitness equipment and exercise programs. I think I've watched Chuck Norris and Christie Brinkley pitch the Total Gym hundreds of times over the last ten years (and, as a result, I must conclude it works on some level since they have not aged a day in the intervening years!). Luckily for my wallet (and sadly for my waistline) I just watch them with rabid curiosity, and have never ordered a single product...with one lone exception.

Several years ago, after catching the infomercial repeatedly over several days, I broke down and ordered the Bowflex SelectTech® Dumbbells. When I unpacked them at home, they were as fascinating and exciting as they looked on TV. Over the first few weeks of ownership, I used them almost daily, with uncharacteristic fervor and discipline since they were going to deliver the sculpted muscles my hard-earned money had purchased. Of course I skipped reading the instructions or watching the accompanying training DVD - what was there for me to learn? Everyone knows how to use dumbbells, right?

As you can predict, the promised muscles did not manifest themselves, and my enthusiasm quickly waned. Other infomercials beckoned my notoriously short attention span, and I moved on to new activities. The investment that I made in the dumbbells went unrealized, and they became excellent dust catchers.

Recently, while looking for something else, I rediscovered the training DVD that Bowflex had provided me. With nothing to lose, I popped the DVD in and watched it. Much to my surprise, it was incredibly helpful, and showed me the proper form and exercise sequences to maximize my workout. Had I leveraged this tool from the beginning, who knows where my fitness program would be today?

This is a painful and expensive lesson and is applicable to any transformational activity within an organization. How many IT projects have you seen delivered within the parameters of the 'iron triangle' of cost, schedule and quality, yet are never adopted by the end users after the go-live date? Are you spending your company's hard-earned money on cool new technology, only to have it collect dust like my dumbbells?

When working on a major transformational supply chain project for a leading retailer, we benchmarked other companies to see what their benefit realization was for similarly-styled IT deployments. When we completed our research, we were flabbergasted to find that the results were, on average, 50%. This was mild compared to the shock we felt when we learned that our internal rate of return was just 30%! While unacceptable then during a good economy, results like that today would bury any company, no matter how well positioned it is.

Luckily we found a way to reverse this trend and to increase benefit realization of our transformational projects by creating a fitness coach approach to change management.

Caveat emptor

Most people understand the people/process/technology elements of change management in a business environment. Some are even savvy enough to leverage the ADKAR model or throw around Kubler-Ross' name and draw a change curve or two. There are a ton of different, off-the-shelf toolkits you can buy to get 'change management in a box' (heck-we'll give you ours if you want it). STAR Collaborative's point of view is that they are a dime a dozen if you don't know how to leverage them within the culture of your organization.

We propose that you leverage a change management fitness coach to help you with your transformation.

Like the instructional DVD for my dumbbells, we found that deploying a change management professional on a project can help you navigate your organization, insert the change activities into the proper points of the business rhythm, convey the value of the work, and show how to get the maximum benefits with minimal effort. Like a fitness coach at the gym, we will help you with your form, sequencing, and will hold you accountable to your stated results.

More importantly, we are passionate about knowledge transfer, and will help you create a change program that is flexible and scalable to any project within your organization. We'll even help leverage existing programs and tools you're already using (PMBOK, ADKAR, Lean Six Sigma, ADM, EXP, etc.), plus we'll do it in your company's own language, norms and morays.

With that said, maybe the fitness coach metaphor is not entirely accurate. We're more like the aerobics instructor who is setting the pace and sweating along side of you while you work out. We're the weightlifting spotter who helps you when you need that extra lift. We're not just knowledgeable on theory; we can and will do the work with you.

Isn't it time to realize greater benefits from your transformational efforts? Give us an opportunity to do a change readiness assessment with you on your organization to set your project up for sustainable success. We guarantee you will be satisfied or your money back!

If only fitness equipment or a gym membership came with the same offer!

Ed Lefkow and Dan Olson have created and led change management practices within Fortune 100 companies. They formed a consulting company, STAR Collaborative, to leverage their expertise and provide customers the best strategic tools and resources possible.