

YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 49

If we consider how change will affect people in detail, we are likely to avoid their resistance...

Make Transformation Simpler ...

"The national budget must be balanced. The public debt must be reduced; the arrogance of the authorities must be moderated and controlled." Cicero 55 BC



"Use pigs instead of dustbins"

When creating transformation, how might you make it easier for people?

Imagine you are roused by the sound of somebody rifling through your dustbin. You tell them politely to "clear off" and they retort that their actions are legal, they are a council official investigating if you have mixed a plastic bottle in with the garden waste. You return to bed, sure that you are having an Orwellian nightmare.

Welcome to my local Council's world. Recently, they informed us that we must now recycle all waste and separate it in to three bins. If we contaminate a bin with the wrong material it could result in a fine of £1000.

I empathise with the recycling cause and the reason for the change (the cost and environmental impact of dumping waste) but this was a classic example of poor change management. Three symptoms are:

- They gave one week's notice of the change
- They didn't gear up to take questions about the change, so the local media gleefully reported complaints from householders who, like my wife, waited forever when telephoning the council

- The only permissible recyclable food waste bags (sole distributor, the Public Library!) are not available until three weeks after the scheme's introduction

We have found it awkward to implement the recycling mandate. I waste five minutes sorting the rubbish to empty my office bin, so need to buy two more bins. The food waste reeks without a bag and the non-organic waste overflows the too small box.

Over time we will adjust, but by not considering (or ignoring) the detailed affect on householders and by threatening legal action, the council alienate people who might support the change.

SO

You will likely see the parallels with change in organisations, so what lessons can you learn from this example to help your change programmes?

Virginia Satir developed a model of change. In it she identifies that a change, a "foreign element", interrupts the status quo. After a spell of resisting, a person experiences a period of chaos until a "transforming idea" helps them to reach an improved status quo.

I wonder if the Council view this model as a prescription, "You will experience chaos and suffer great stress!" rather than seeing it as a description of symptoms of a typical change?

My colleague Caroline Harvey and I have adapted the [Satir Model](#). In our version, we suggest that by introducing the "foreign element" well, people can accept change more readily and suffer less chaos, enabling them to

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achieve the intended change objective more quickly.

Every situation is different but four ideas for the Council to improve its change management are:

- Always give plenty of notice of the change
- Make sure that everything required to facilitate change is in place in good time
- Trial the change with a few people (if possible), observe how the change impacts them in detail and build in "help mechanisms" to ease the transition
- Hold off from threatening that fire and brimstone will rain down on the heads of miscreants until you understand the level of resistance ~ people may surprise you with their attitude if you encourage not coerce

What ideas might you add?

ACTION

Think through an anticipated change. How might the change owner improve its introduction?

TO CLOSE

I wrote this article during a flight and wondered on finishing the "Action" section how I might sign off. Putting my PC aside, I flicked through the newspaper and found in it a news item about the first ever case of a Council prosecuting a woman for contaminating her rubbish bin with the wrong rubbish (Daily Mail, 11 July, 2006). I believe Carl Jung called such coincidences "Synchronicity".

In the item, a Council photograph proudly displays the criminal contents of her bin that an official had rooted out. The court found her "Not Guilty", the council being unable to prove that she had deposited the "illegal" items in the bin.

You couldn't make it up... Returning home last night I glanced at the local newspaper. The headline story (not much excitement in our town) revealed that the council had reached the limit of recyclable waste it could dump, weeks

before it introduced the compulsory scheme. So the carefully separated recyclable waste is all going together into one large landfill site!

This disproves, I believe, George Orwell's assertion that "all pigswill is equal, but some is more equal than others." Sorry George.

May the dustbins of life sparkle for you this week.

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