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Attitudes Affect Our View of Change

Applying proven managerial techniques to your personal Life

Part III

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This is the third in a series of articles based upon *Managerial Breakthrough*, by Joseph M. Juran, 1964. The other two articles are:

- Personal Breakthrough, Part I
- Breakthrough vs. Control, Part II

This article is based upon the third chapter of *Managerial Breakthrough* titled “Breakthrough in Attitudes.”

Juran starts by focusing on the initiation of Breakthrough – an idea. He notes that the first step in Breakthrough is refreshingly simple. “It all begins because one man feels motivated by an idea for breakthrough – any man, any idea.” If you decide you want to read *Managerial Breakthrough*, you should be aware that things were much different in 1964 than they are today. Juran’s reference to “man” in this quote shows the bias that “all managers” were surely men and none were women. Juran goes on to say, “At the very start of its life, an idea of consequence must run a gauntlet of several or many men, any of one whom can dim its chances by a determined “no.”

The two points that apply to our personal lives are that we must be motivated to seek change in our lives and we must be able to overcome the negative thoughts from ourselves or others that prevent us from seeking change. I’m sure most feel that they would like to have a life free of constraints. As Juran says, “the first step is simple,” you just need to be open to such a possibility.

Juran identifies four forces that prevent companies from seeking Breakthrough. These same forces serve as constraints to seeking change in our personal lives and are paraphrased below to reflect a personal application.

1. Our personal unwillingness to accept the possibility of Breakthrough in our life is the single biggest barrier to change. As Juran noted, this step is simple. We just need to be open to change.
2. Our past record of success or failures in attempting to make changes in our life. It is important to note that failures are much more memorable than successes. Focus on the successes. The Great Discovery will show you how to identify the forces which allowed you to succeed and those which caused you to fail, increasing your odds of success.

3. The extent to which we have taken to “narcotics” to forget about our troubles – we tend to bury our head in the sand, ignoring our dissatisfaction, and become comfortable with settling with our lot in life. Juran notes, we must “Throw away the opium pipes and be alert to the dangers of thinking long-standing poor performance is normal. The problems are still there, but we are drugged into forgetting them. Unhappily the problems don’t forget us.” We become comfortable fighting the problems; but, they consume our lives.
4. The extent to which there is a preoccupation with control: Part II of this series, Breakthrough vs. Control. Control is a defensive approach which causes us to have a preference for status quo. Breakthrough is a proactive approach which causes us to seek improvement through change. There is nothing wrong with control as it is necessary to maintain achievements; however, if you are preoccupied with Control, you will be resistant to change. Juran notes, “A high proportion of managers simply have no time for Breakthrough because they cannot get off the treadmill of Control. They do not need to be convinced of the merits of Breakthrough. They do need respite from the never-ending emergencies and crises.” The same is true in our personal lives. We are so preoccupied with control and so desensitized with fending off imbalances in our life that we are blinded to the idea of even thinking about improvement. Even when you are busy fighting fires, you need to find time for fire prevention. The joint effort of Control and Breakthrough is at the very heart of the Breakthrough process.

Resistance to change and focus on control may protect us from negative consequences; but it also puts us in a position where we are unable to improve our lives in a positive way. We compromise by staying at a place in our life where we are somewhat satisfied. By maintaining our focus on holding to status quo, we are desensitized to the fact that we have dissatisfaction in our life. Often outsiders can see the dissatisfaction and know that we are setting or even in some cases that our life is a mess. Why is this? They have taken an objective view of our lives because they have not been rendered shockproof from years of control. Juran notes that one way to get managers to view things more objectively is to assign them to new situations so they have no vested interest to protect. Assignment to an unfamiliar environment allows one to put aside an over accumulation of prejudice and to view the situation more objectively. Similarly, it is important to create an environment which will allow you to view your life in an objective way so you can increase your odds of having Breakthrough in your life. You must create an environment that will permit the extensive soul searching necessary for genuine conviction that Breakthrough is an essential ingredient to satisfaction in life.

It is only a small percentage of us that do not get stuck in this state of control. So don’t be frustrated if you feel that you have compromised or settled instead of seeking something that we you believe could have made your life fuller. I love the commercial where the child is setting with his grandfather on the porch when a motorcycle goes by and the grandfather says, I always wanted a motorcycle; but, I bought aluminum siding instead. The majority of us have compromised. The Great Discovery shows us that even today many of those dreams are possible.

Juran identifies three classifications of managers:

- Innovators exhibit an itch for change.
- Conservatives are neither for nor against change. But will only change after seeing proven results.
- Inhibitors are negative toward change.

These classifications also apply to our personal lives. By understanding the characteristics of the classifications and figuring out where we fall within the classification structure we will better understand why we have a resistance to change or have pursued change with mixed results.

Only the small percent of the population who are Innovators are likely to seek Breakthrough naturally; but, they may have mixed results of success and failure. The majority of us fall into the category of Conservatives (this is not a political classification; so, those of you that consider yourselves politically liberal don't shy away.). The balance of this article will present the characteristics that represent these three classes of people. As you continue reading, do some self-reflection as to which category best fits you. If you are an Innovator, you will likely view The Great Discovery as something in which you are already aware, as it is a somewhat natural process for successful people. However, many Innovators are surprised to discover the exact process that has allowed them to be successful and if they learn to repeat the process, they can increase their odds of success and reduce their failures. Conservatives, which is the vast majority of us, will find that The Great Discovery will provide them with a proven process for breaking the bondage of control. Inhibitors likely quit reading long ago and will never realize what is possible in their life. If you think you are an Inhibitor and have gotten to this point, don't stop. The Great Discovery can open your mind to change. It is likely that you are a Conservative with Innovator leanings or a Conservative with Inhibitor leanings.

Innovators

Innovators are very receptive to and generally seek change and without them there would be little change. Innovators are a wide assortment. They include:

- The explorers – those who are so stimulated by adventure that they willingly face the risks of the unknown. They are always seeking a new experience along unknown and sometimes unplanned trails.
- The discontented – those who have concluded that that any likely change is preferable to continuance of what they are now doing. They have hit a bottom of sorts and just want change for change sake.
- The specialists – those who advocate change primarily to due to their desire to advance their specialty. These are people who are open to change but in a very narrow scope. It may provide some satisfaction but may not be comprehensive enough to provide complete satisfaction.
- The staffer – those whose full-time job is one of promulgating change. These are the people that live their lives centered on trial and error. They try this and then that hoping to find improvement.
- The inventor – Devotion to their brainchild is legendary. Yet it may not be enough to deal with entrenched attitude or fear of ridicule. The inventor often is open to change but needs support and encouragement from others.

Innovators are generally an aggressive, insistent, noisy lot, and in their less exuberant moments can make a good case for considering Breakthrough as a way of life. They are typically optimists and are not deterred by setbacks or failures. The innovator is capable, in short order, of rising to a high pitch of enthusiasm, or plunging into the depths of frustration. They can be impatient and even contemptuous of those who do not seek change as a priority. At their best, they are a refreshing, formidable source of strength. But they can also be a narrow thinking, pushing change for change sake.

Innovators are not concerned with risk and often have a high reliance on trial and error since they view failure as part of the process. As noted above, this is only a small portion of the population. Most of us fall into the category Juran calls Conservatives. Conservatives have a fear of change which is driven, primarily from a fear of failure. Innovators do not have to be convinced of the need for change. However,

there is a need to show them that while risk and failure might be part of the process, there is a way to mitigate these risks and improve the odds of success.

The Great Discovery teaches the Innovator that the odds of success can be increased and the risks decreased by employing the Breakthrough process which is a SMART process:

- **S**imple.
- **M**anageable and measurable.
- **A**ctionable
- **R**epeatable
- **T**eachable.

Innovators often view each new idea as being unique. The idea may be unique; however, the process to achieve the idea is not. Once the Innovator realizes the path to successful change is SMART, their passion for change will increase along with their odds for success.

The Conservative

The majority of us are what Juran classifies as Conservatives. Conservatives prefer a settled, stable, predictable life rather than the excitement of the chase which is enjoyed by Innovators.

The badge of the Conservative reads “Show me.” The Conservative is typically open to the idea of change; but requires more fact and enlightenment before embracing the idea. The Conservative typically lives in an atmosphere of objectivity, which is what opens them to the idea of change. However, the “Show me” mantra demands seeing results before they are willing to fully embrace the pathway to change. This “Show me” attitude serves as a stabilizer to an organization and one’s personal life. Change is accepted; but, results are required before embracing the change, slowing the process.

The general attitude is that if there is to be continuity and cohesion, we should not give up on something that works, until the thing that is to replace it has been demonstrated to be workable. In the organization, the Conservative likes to have it said that they “do a good job” and prefers “good work” over “bad work.” In one’s personal life the Conservative wants people to view them as an achiever and successful. They care what others think. The Conservative looks to their past experiences for guidance to meet problems ahead but feels secure with the status quo. They want better, but not at the expense of risking failure. They are willing to gamble only if the possibility of a negative consequence is reduced to a point where failure is unlikely.

In the managerial world, the Conservative uses utmost caution to cover his flank; they don’t want anyone saying anything negative about them. In personal life, the Conservative uses control to protect against any negative intrusions. The Conservative is comfortable with and has the experience to deal with day to day threats of the work life and personal life. These problems have become familiar; it is the unfamiliarity of the untried that is of utmost concern, which is why the Conservative uses the “Show me” mantra as a delaying tactic to fight off potential change.

The Conservative holds back until the change is tried and proven. They are not swayed by logical reasoning; but by tangible results. It is only after seeing others reap the benefits of change that the Conservative will embrace it. “The Conservative housewife does not buy a new product on the basis that

it has this or that new feature. She buys because her more venturesome friends bought and are satisfied.” The conservative is bound by the past because they are results focused and their past is where their failures and successes have occurred. They use their life experiences to establish the bounds for control. Proof by usage will open the mind of the Conservative to acceptance of the idea of change.

The Great Discovery provides a method that encourages the Conservative to think about their core values. This provides the motivation to allow them to think about their dreams. Conservatives are not opposed to change (dreaming); they are simply afraid of risk and negative consequences. The Great Discovery continues by showing the Conservative how to create a pathway which will allow them to achieve their dreams. The pathway may be fraught with the unknown which makes the Conservative reluctant to proceed. The Great Discovery provides a method for shining light on this dark path. If the dream is aligned with core values, they will be motivated to achieve their dream. When they learn how to identify potential risks and motivating forces and how to develop incremental steps that will make them comfortable with moving forward along the path to achieving their dreams, they will be able to move toward their dream one step at a time. The Breakthrough process taught by The Great Discovery is a Simple Path; a Manageable Path; a path that will lead to action; and a path that they can repeat over and over; since it is a teachable system.

The Inhibitor

The badge of the Inhibitor reads “Not Gonna Do It.” The Inhibitor is the person who has confirmed over and over again that they are satisfied with life; making it hypocritical to admit that there might be dissatisfaction. They find themselves so vested in how they have characterized the state of their lives; they aggressively defend the characterization.

Inhibitor managers view themselves as experienced and competent. While being excellent at maintaining control, they have often been ineffective in creating significant change. As individuals we might view our lives as a reasonable success and feel that compared to others we have no room to complain. Doesn't it follow that if we have not effected change to this point it really isn't possible? Besides if we are actually successful at creating change, won't people view us as a “damn fool” for not being able to do so sooner? As silly as this might seem, it is very common to settle for a compromise in both management and life rather than to think about someone possibly saying, “Why didn't you do that sooner?” Is the fear of this criticism worth giving up on improvement in your business or personal life?

Our belief system is frequently based upon limitations we have accepted on faith from our predecessors – a modern form of ancestor worship. My parents didn't go to college, so I surely am not smart enough to compete with those whose fathers are lawyers, doctors, etc.; my family has always had this problem; I've never been very good at that; etc. The Inhibitor is bound by the past based purely on dogma and is so entrenched in negativity; they are immune from persuasion through logical reasoning.

You may not be a pure Inhibitor. However, it may be that you are an actually Conservative with Inhibitor tendencies. Attitude is a matter of choice. The attitude of the Inhibitor can be modified. The Great Discovery provides a pathway for modifying this attitude in a SMART way.

Conclusion

The willingness to accept change is a matter of attitude. As Juran said, the first step is amazingly simple “We simply need to be open to change.” Only a few of us are Innovators who are willing to embark on a pathway to change with little regard for risk. Since these Innovators are so fearless they often live in a world of high risk and high reward; seeing this, the rest of us are pushed further away from accepting change in our life. Change is not something to fear. The Great Discovery provides a proven path for minimizing the risks associated with change and shows you how to become an Innovator by taking one step at a time, instead of jumping off the cliff. Maybe you will never be classified as a true Innovator. That is OK. The Great Discovery does not remove ones fear of risk; but, simply shows them how to manage it. We should not settle for where we are in life, when there is an opportunity and means for accomplishing more.