When Will All This Change Be Over?

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I was the Employee Relations Manager at a large manufacturing facility. Our company was installing a new, complex set of benefit options. Team members would now be free to apply benefit dollars where they best met their personal and family needs.

My team was considering how to educate individuals about each of the opportunities. After handling benefits improvements for several years, the Benefits Administrator exclaimed, “When will all this change be over?”

I looked at her and smiled. I suggested, “We’ll not see the end of change while you and I are employed. In fact, these changes keep you and me working here!”

I sensed her frustration. I realized she would be the one to handle unending questions. I followed my comment with an expression of empathy, acknowledging her feeling of being overwhelmed. I promised to be there to handle the questions with her.

I’ve never forgotten that situation. I marvel even today at the truth that had slipped out of my mouth. As a leader, you may have felt similar anxieties: “When will all this change be over?” Likely, never.

Customers demand an improved product. Team members resign; new ones must be found, require orientation. Mothers go on maternity leave and a backup must be trained. Raw material costs go up, so alternatives are tested. New laws are passed, and adjustments must be made. An injury dictates that new methods be investigated. Your organization must adapt to all the changes going on "out there."

Hopefully, much change comes from internal improvements. Change seems always to be with us. Is it really? Will change always be a part of our lives? Yep, change is the only constant we can expect!

Why? Is there some reason besides “That’s just the way it is?”

Sure. There’s always a reason. We live now. It’s the ONLY place we CAN live. We cannot live in the past or the future (though some seem to try!). “Now” is a unique place. It lasts only an instant. The time you spent reading this sentence has moved from “now” into “the past.”

Yet “now” is where “the past” suddenly becomes “the future.” “Now” is and always will be a time of transition. And “transition” is merely a synonym for “change.”

Change comes in two forms. Some change is unanticipated, thrust upon you by conditions outside yourself and your organization. Other changes are initiated internally, usually because you want to improve your results, so you are continually improving the methods by which you generate them.

The best organizations are looking for improvement continuously. That means that the worst of the past is made better, and the best of the past is improved when possible. This continual state of change requires that you prepare leaders to handle an ongoing demand for planning, execution, and growth.

Some organizations live with “good enough,” hoping to avoid having to cope with so much change. They find, however, they ultimately must face significant change because of the unacceptable pressures coming from outside the organization.

If you seek continual improvement, your changes will feel more manageable. You’ll control the pace. You’ll establish criteria for measuring progress toward your vision of “what could be.” You’ll make corrective adjustments as you implement your opportunities for improvement.

Your role as the leader is to clarify the vision of what is possible, enrolling every contributor in moving toward that more captivating future state. Continuous improvement means enhancing even the vision. The closer you come to achieving “what could be,” the more challenging you choose to make it!