

Leading Others Through Resistance

Every leader must deal with resistance at one point or another.

The resistance shows up in these four words: Yes, but it's difficult.

Sometimes it's five words: Yes, but it's so difficult.

Sometimes it's six words: Yes, but it's so very difficult.

You get the idea.

As a leader, you get the same kind of resistance when you want an employee to grow more than he's willing to grow.

So how do you deal with the resistance?

You find the fulcrum point of change.

The fulcrum point of change is that state of willingness. What you are trying to find as a manager or leader is what are they willing to do? When they complain about how hard it is, they aren't willing. When they give excuses about why it can't happen, they aren't willing. When they tell you a story about how life is hard, they aren't willing.

Being attached to and focusing on the difficulty is what perpetuates the resistance.

Where you get off track is buying into their drama. You know you've gotten trapped when you find yourself playing a game of ping pong:

"But it's difficult!"

"No it isn't, if you would just try.

"I HAVE tried."

"You haven't tried hard enough."

"You give me no credit!"

What you want to do instead, is to use the fulcrum point of change by continuing to ask “Are you willing to...”

Here’s how it goes:

“But it’s so difficult.”

“Yes, it’s difficult. Are you willing to try anyway?”

“I’ll try but I might get rejected.”

“Are you willing to risk getting rejected?”

“Well, rejection doesn’t feel good.”

“True. Are you willing to feel some discomfort in order to grow?”

Do you see how the method is to keep agreeing with their reality and then sort of closing the gap so that you are narrowing in on what you want them to do? Nothing changes until there is willingness. As a leader, find the place where they are stuck and then ask the “are you willing question” and stay with it until you get movement. If you can’t get movement, then it’s your turn. You might have to be willing to have a difficult conversation, put someone on suspension or even let someone go. You can do it, but you have to be willing.

I hope you’re not thinking, “It sounds difficult...”