

Mindsets of Change

Research shows that the #1 factor that determines success or failure of organizational change is “Executive Sponsorship.” Most often, once an executive thinks through and sanctions or names the program, he or she thinks everyone else gets it. It’s as if somehow psychically their thought waves are transferred directly into the minds of everyone else in the organization. Maybe this is a bit of an exaggeration, but most senior leaders hold a mindset that “I’m the boss, it’s my job to decide.” In contrast, employees typically say they feel surprised, confused and out of the loop.

Here are four powerful mindsets and practices to mitigate this disconnect:

- 1) **The mindset of storytelling.** People love stories. Build your change story like you would a great commercial and repeat it over and over. Repetition works, and it keeps you excited too. See our tool: “The Executive Storyteller”, on <http://jacksonandschmidt.com/pubtools.html>
- 2) **The mindset of conversation.** Ask people constantly for input: "How will this impact you?" "What's important about how we do this?" Don't let your fear that you “won't like the answer” stop you. This practice creates buy-in, and also builds excitement. The more conversation you generate around a topic, the bigger the wave of collective enthusiasm.
- 3) **The mindset of candor.** Create monthly "employee-leader vision forums" – in which people take the gloves off and are invited to ask about, brainstorm, and discuss whatever they want. "Best meetings I've ever attended" say people who do them.
- 4) **The mindset of curiosity.** "I don't know" are the most powerful 3 words a leader can learn. People love it when their leaders talk to them even when they don't have the answer. (Maybe especially when they don't have the answer.) It will often work better if you don't know, show up and ask employees what's on *their* mind.