

Critical Thinking and Change

By Richard V. Michaels

Regarding Critical Thinking and Change, to my knowledge there is nothing written specifically on this topic, but I would say in general that “How you think has everything to do with how you deal effectively with Change.”

In Critical Thinking most of us use pairs of the thinking modes; we are either:

- Active/Strategic
- Active/Emotional
- Systems/Strategic
- Systems/Emotional

Depending on our personal thinking preferences one or the other of these paired traits will dominate our actions. For now I'll leave Quantum out of this because it is an advanced aspect to all the thinking modes. Let me use for a general example a person's ability to deal with Stress that is induced by a major change taking place in their life.

When Stressed:

- The Actively Strategic thinker will withdraw, become quiet, will not participate with others, but will be trying to figure out what, why, and how to deal with the situation from a logical/rational point of view. They seem to become obsessed with finding the answer for themselves.
- The Systemically Strategic thinker will also withdraw and not participate with others, but their tendency will be toward escape; they will engage in other activities to take their mind off the stressful situation. At their worst, they will wait for the right “creative moment” to figure the problem out but if it doesn't happen, they are just as happy to run away and find a less stressful environment.
- The Actively Emotional thinker will seek to find comfort in controlling what they can control and will have a tendency to only look at pieces and not the whole of the problem. Specific answers, actions, and seeing little successes in the new environment after the change are very important to maintain this individual's motivation. They generally abhor change!
- The Emotionally Systemic thinker will want to talk with everyone about what's going on and what they think is going to happen because of the new Change. Even after their questions appear answered, they will have more to ask. By talking about all the possibilities they find personal comfort with the change but they also rationalize their need to talk by saying it's for helping others.

Because of dominate traits there are obviously more combinations such as Strategically Active, Strategically Systemic, etc but this gives you a look at the

impact of different thinking modes to subordinate human behaviors & motivators that occur as a result of or as a precursor to Change.

To think critically about a Change Initiative you need to start by identifying the subordinate and super-ordinate aspects of Change. And to do that you need to qualify what you mean by using the word Change in your business environment. Are you meaning it in a Proactive or Reactive sense? In other words, do you want members of the organization to be proactive Change Agents or good stewards of the Change Process? Then in either situation, but with emphasis on the specific environment you are creating, you must define the subordinate and super-ordinate aspects of the initiative and analyze contribution and hindrance of the modes of thinking. Why? Because in the end, it is the working individual who must implement your Change initiative if the organization as a whole is to enjoy success.

Thinking about how THEY will think about the initiative you seek to implement is your starting point for a successful Change Initiative.

About the Author:

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