

Development Suggestions for Flexibility

Suggested Readings

Title	Author/Publisher	Learning Mode
Who Moved My Cheese? An Amazing Way to Deal with Change in Your Work and Your Life	Johnson, Spencer and Kenneth H. Blanchard / 1998/ Putnam Pub Group	Book
The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People	Covey, Stephen A./ 1990/ Free Press	Book

Activities

1. Reframe issues and problems in cognitive rather than emotional terms. Sometimes the way we think about a change can lead us into a cycle of despair and hopelessness. Negative thoughts can often immobilize us. One technique for dealing with such self-defeating thinking is called reframing. Reframing involves challenging the assumption that the problem or issue has only negative impacts. In reframing, you focus on what is positive and controllable about the situation.
2. Identify paradigms that prevent you from being more flexible and responding creatively to changing conditions. Assuming there is only one solution to a problem is an example of a paradigm that can prevent us from taking risks or seeing the opportunities for creativity in a situation. When we think, "This is the way I've always done it," we are prevented from seeing other solutions. Likewise, thinking only of what's wrong with an idea or decision will keep us from incorporating any of its good points. Examples of other paradigms are:
 - Information is power, so why share it.
 - If it isn't broken, don't fix it.
 - Creativity is only necessary for those in advertising agencies and software companies.
 - If you make a mistake, it will follow you forever.
 - We have to follow rules.

List the paradigms that prevent you from being more flexible and adapting to changing conditions or unexpected obstacles. Ask yourself if each paradigm is valid. If not, identify what you can do to challenge the paradigm and change your behavior.

Development Suggestions for Flexibility, continued

Tips

1. Consider how you have adapted to change in the past year. Are you flexible and willing to change, or do you tend to continue to do business as usual?
2. Develop multiple contingency plans so you are not locked into any single course of action.
3. Know yourself and your reactions to last-minute crises. Build in extra time up front if you are uncomfortable with last-minute changes.
4. Analyze your leadership style. Is it flexible? Realize that different people need to be interacted with in different ways and be willing to adapt your style.
5. Make a habit of thinking “outside the box.” Look for novel and nontraditional solutions.
6. Keep a daily “to do” list and divide your duties into high, medium, and low priorities. Do the next day’s list before you leave work.
7. Avoid creating rigid systems that are difficult to change. The objective is to design systems that can be constantly adjusted around the changing needs of the organization.
8. Volunteer for a temporary assignment in a work unit that is known to have a “pressure cooker” environment because of intense pressures and the fast pace of the tasks.
9. Realize that most people are resistant to change. Try to develop ways to overcome that resistance.
10. Analyze how you have adapted to changes in the past year. Are you flexible and willing to change, or do you tend to continue to do business as usual?
11. In implementing change, first identify the problem or opportunity that necessitates the change, decide what changes are needed, develop and choose alternatives, and then make the necessary changes.
12. Keep up-to-date through reading about emerging economic, legal, and technological changes that could necessitate change in your organization.
13. Whenever reaching a decision, always consider the downside if the expected does not happen. Make plans in case the decision doesn’t work out, or new information becomes available.

Development Suggestions for Flexibility, continued

14. Consider using a team approach to problem solving: use the team to structure or define the problem and to brainstorm over solutions.
15. To the extent possible, suggest a disciplined decision-making structure within your work group so that there is a routine around decision-making, and decisions can be made rapidly if the need arises.
16. Look at issues and problems from all possible angles. Generate a list of all alternatives.
17. Make a list of all the problems facing you. Rewrite each problem as an objective.
18. Participate actively in professional organizations, and stay current in the professional literature to keep track of the newest developments in your field.