

UPFRONT



Culture: Change!

Get in it for the long haul, or not at all

SORRY, BUT CULTURE CHANGE is not something that will happen through sheer force of will. Anyone who's ever fought to change engrained organizational behaviors can attest to that. True culture change is finicky: It requires a clear strategic plan, leadership support, adequate resources, coordinated implementation and lots of patience. Even then, there's the possibility that change just won't stick.

To improve your chances, however, consider following the nine steps outlined in this month's cover story, "Change That Sticks," p. 22. Author Leon Spackman offers sound advice that can be applied to almost any type of organization seeking any type of desired change and hoping to secure lasting improvement.

Take social responsibility (SR), for example—a movement that has become increasingly popular among many organizations. SR is not something that will happen overnight. It requires concerted effort, time, and the education of employees and leadership to change the hearts, minds and behaviors of groups of people.

I use the SR example because in April, ASQ will formally launch its SR initiative with an event in Milwaukee. Local business leaders will speak about steps that can be taken in working toward sustainability, and noted photographer Chris Jordan will keynote (for details, turn to p. 16). Invited attendees will walk away with solid ideas they can implement within their own companies.

Another article in this issue, "Know Thyself" (p. 30), might be of help for those working to meet SR-related goals. Author Robert P. Warda discusses the differences between project-centric and culture-centric improvement. Why is it that change doesn't always stick? Warda says it's often because organizations attempt to improve processes either before or instead of improving culture:

"[Culture-centric improvement] is often the elephant in the room that no one wants to bring up," he writes. "It's easy to rally everyone around the quality flag, but it's difficult to face the fact that the organization as a whole, including its leadership, does not always walk the talk."

Spackman agrees: "Permanent shifts in organizational culture must involve all employees, and each employee must have at least a basic knowledge of what is expected and how the change will be accomplished."

Articles, anecdotes and success stories are good first steps for anyone headed down a path toward culture change. Besides the articles in this issue, you can find many more on QP's website, www.qualityprogress.com. More articles and information related specifically to social responsibility can be found at www.thesro.org. **QP**

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