



## Changing Minds

The Fourth in the Second series of: ***An Executive Summary for Busy Managers.***

Changing Minds... everyone tries to do it, only some are successful at it. Leaders must be able to change minds and maintain the confidence of their group or nothing gets done.

**Guten Tag! The Fortune 500 list was finally updated for 2006... no, I am not going to harp on the scandalous fact that big oil beat their way to the top with record profits. However, I am going to mention that the Green Mermaid from our beloved Starbucks moved up about 30 spots to Number 338!!! \$6.4B in revenues and \$0.5B in profit... at \$2.00 per cup; now that is a lot of coffee!!! Just wait till ExxonMobil starts charging commensurate prices for gasoline.**

*If you are going to sit on Mahogany Row, the ability to change someone's mind to a new way of thinking is an absolute requirement. The best leaders do it through persuasion ---- the rest through intimidation.*

Howard Gardner, acclaimed Harvard Psychology Professor, has authored a book titled, Changing Minds – The Art and Science of Changing Our Own and Other People's Minds.

My sole objective for these summaries is to help people in leadership positions or those who desire to be in leadership positions wade through the muck that exists on the shelves of the local bookstores. So, when I came across a book about changing minds I thought this might contain some value added knowledge that could help advance careers. Speaking of muck...

It does not take a Harvard degree to be an all-star 'Monday Morning Quarterback' (just look around at your Fantasy Football Team colleagues). All it really takes is a little research and a good recollection of events from the past. The issue really becomes whether or not you can begin to implement the knowledge and wisdom gained from history in a proactive manner. Gardner focuses on many issues from the past, but never really clearly states what he would like the reader to take away from the book. However, he does spend considerable time critiquing the way others have handled situations.

If you were to sit down and wade through the pages of this tome, you would eventually get the one or two worthwhile pieces of advice that Gardner puts forward. However, no one outside of a Federal penitentiary should be subjected to the solitary confinement that you will feel as you try to digest the text.

Changing minds is important. ***How else can a leader in a company get their team to sell, design, fabricate, or service more?*** The goal of every for-profit company is, "to make more money now and in the future". The word "more" implies that new things must occur otherwise the status quo would be sufficient. Anything other than the status quo is by definition CHANGE! Simple exposure to the evening news allows us to realize that the profitable companies are doing things different than their competitors.

So how do we change these minds? Every leader has their own little way of changing minds. Some unfortunately

use intimidation. Some use cajoling. Even more use simple, logical facts. What works best? It depends...

The most important thing that Gardner passes along to the reader is that a leader must be able to adapt to the situation. His example of President Bill Clinton comes across loud and clear. President Clinton could sit in a room full of disadvantaged, down and out individuals and talk and empathize with each and every one of them either individually or as a group. Fifteen minutes later, President Clinton could be walked into a room of scholars and put on an air that would allow him to be seen as a peer to the smartest and most educated of individuals. This ability to adapt to the situation allowed him to get people to pay attention as he spun a tale with the intent of changing their minds.

This brings us to the next focal point in Changing Minds... the ability to tell a story. The term story has a negative connotation to it. However, this is exactly what we all do when we try to change minds. Think about the last PowerPoint presentation that you gave. You probably put together some slides with facts and figures to use as visual aides. But, you had to weave a tale (hopefully not a fictional tale) that would keep your audience interested! Every one of us has sat through the typical “dry” presentation where someone recites facts and figures and then promptly sits down. B-O-R-I-N-G... and typically not very effective at getting the audience to do what is being requested. In contrast, hopefully we have all had an opportunity to sit through a presentation where the speaker had the entire room

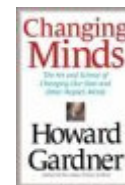
on the edge of their seats the entire time. I am willing to wager that the audience was much more willing to accept the idea this presenter was peddling. This “acceptance” is the “changing mind” paradigm. The ability to get people to pay attention is as important as the ability to develop the strategy. After all, if they don’t actually listen to what you have to say about making an investment with a payback period of five years, they will never approve the expense.

Of course we need to make sure that our integrity prevents us from peddling snake oil and taking advantage of other people just because we can tell a convincing story...

Something to consider – ***Have you ever thought about sending your team to training to become better story tellers?***

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Just my opinion and we all know what “they” say about opinions...



Thanks  
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