

Almost 80% of organizational change fails. Maybe you have noticed it personally and professionally. A major consulting firm is contracted for huge amounts of money, the “consultants” come in and provide executives with all the information required for the change to transpire, an implementation process occurs and for a short time, work behaviors change, but only for a short time before it is “business as usual.”

Michael Everett, PhD has been part of organizations where those exact situations happened and has been fortunate to do graduate research in a large Midwestern healthcare organization during a major change initiative. Unfortunately, or fortunately, the change failed and the CEO was “relieved” of his duties. Dr. Everett identified that the “top down” change process was limited by middle management who viewed the change as another “special project” and prevented the dissemination of communication to their followers thereby preventing the process from occurring.

Dr. Everett noticed that during interactions with administration most middle managers would demonstrate pro-change behaviors, but their behaviors would revert to “normal” when administration was out-of-sight. Behaviors were demonstrated when and where expected but regress immediately when there was no need to act pro-change. They have “seen it come and go” before and did only what was expected when it was required.

This led to Dr. Everett developing the concept of $A + C = B$, where “A” refers to affective (feeling) and “C” stands for cognitive (thinking) that leads to “B” behavior. He realized that for change to be lasting and real you have to address and embrace what those are being asked to modify, their core values. It is paramount for administration to measure organizational feeling (affective) and ensure that followers understand (cognitive) the reason for change before lasting behavioral change occurs.

A major reason for failure in organizational change is the lack of identifying and incorporating informal leaders in the change process. These individuals are found throughout organizations and have as much, if not more, influence than formal leaders. These are the people that others seek confirmation of policy and procedures that are implemented within any organization.

As an Organizational Psychologist Dr. Everett advocates that any change process that is to be undertaken in an organization it is vital that members throughout the organization be included in the entire process from the very beginning. Using science-based assessments these individuals (courageous followers) can be identified. Having “ownership” in the process addresses the affective and cognitive components of the human psyche leading to permanent behavioral change.