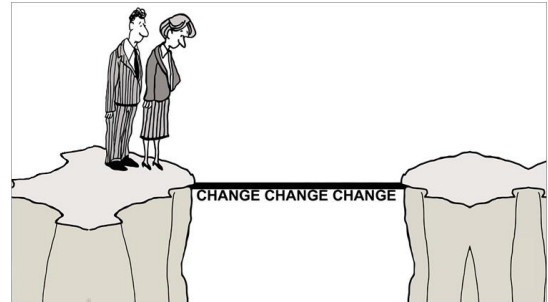


Change is hard.

by John Tabar

We have all heard the person who talking about their local weather says, “If you don’t like the weather here wait 10 minutes, it will change.” I think the same could be said about the car business. The car business isn’t for the faint of heart. It is a hero to zero environment that is fueled by a never-ending drive for results.

In the attempt to take full advantage of every opportunity, salespeople, managers and dealers are always looking for an edge. And that sometimes means a change. A change in process or procedure, perhaps a new DMS or maybe a new technology and yes, sometimes in people.



You would think that in the car business with so much change happening all the time we would be good at it, right? Not so much, the reality is, we are all just human.

It doesn’t matter your background, race, gender or country of origin, as humans none of like change. I think Mark Twain said it best when he said, “The only person who likes change is a wet baby”.

There are three truths when it comes to change.

1. Change is hard.
2. Change makes people uncomfortable
3. Change is inevitable

In automotive retail you can be a more effective manager if you understand the dynamics of change. People naturally resist change and we all go through a common process or emotional stages when confronted with change. It’s something we all share and if we have a better understanding of what our teams are going through when we introduce a change, we can manage the change more effectively.

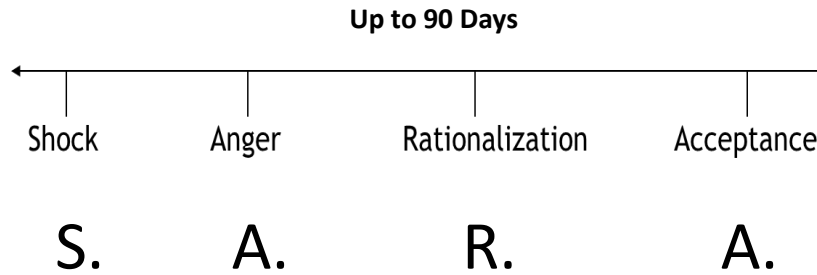
As a manager there are four things to remember when managing a change.

1. Change isn’t easy, it takes commitment.
2. Change is a process.
3. Change is a transition, not an event.
4. Change comes faster with a team approach.

Keeping this in mind, be sure that you are totally committed to the change before you begin.

The stages we all go through when presented with a change is Shock, Anger, Rationalization and Acceptance or the acronym, S.A.R.A.

Stages of emotion when going through a change



Shock- “What is happening here!” “OMG, they moved the coffee maker.”

Anger- “That’s it, they have crossed the line.” “Today could be my last day, I mean it this time.”

Rationalization - “I guess it’s not that bad, it actually works better here”

Acceptance – “I can’t believe we had the coffee maker over there for all those years”

There are many reasons people resist change. It could be the fear of the unknown, insecurity, not wanting to start over or perhaps failure of previous efforts. What ever the reason we all go through the stages of S.A.R.A. at different rates.

Some get to acceptance quickly, others seem to take forever. Research tells it can take up to 90 days for some to accept even a simple change. If that is true, and we are going to implement a change in the dealership, we better be serious about it and we better be ready to outlast them!

The good news is there are some proven techniques we can use to create a better way to change.

First identify all the key people that will be needed to make the change work and get their buy-in. Create an awareness of why the change is needed. Demonstrate value as it pertains to them, not you.

Include them if possible in the decision process. Then communicate the why, what, when and how of the change you are going to implement. Clearly define what they are expected to do. When they are expected to do it and most importantly, what they can expect from you. Follow through to ensure the change is put into practice. Let them know that you are totally committed to the change and prepare them to outlast the resistance.

Finally, introduce all involved to S.A.R.A. Define what S.A.R.A. means and that you understand what people go through during a change. It helps for these emotions to be discussed without it being personal. For example, “Hi Fred, it looks like you are going through a little S.A.R.A. this morning.” “Let me know how I can help you get to the Rationalization stage.” If they understand S.A.R.A. it helps the conversation and can speed up the process for most.

Or, you could always be the kind of manager that takes the “It’s my way or the highway approach” with their team members.

Unfortunately, with that approach most of the good ones choose “the highway”.

