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How to Deal With Workplace Change

Businesses evolve to maintain success in an environment of changing technology and markets. While business leaders may embrace change, it is not always welcomed by employees. Anxiety over new or modified roles and responsibilities can result in unhappy, unproductive and stressed-out workers. Dealing with changes at work is easier when small-business owners carefully manage the presentation of the change and monitor its effects on employees.

1: Present plans for change to employees early and clearly. Changes are more likely to be well received if employees have some time to think about them and ask questions. Break them down into steps to make the changes easy to understand. Resistance to change in the workplace is often the result of confusion, misinterpretation and concern over current roles.

2: Continuous communication between management and staff is crucial when implementing change. Schedule regular updates on upcoming or ongoing developments and communicate to your employees as a group. Email weekly newsletters or breaking news as required, and if suitable set up a billboard of a timeline for a graphical representation of the project or impending changes. Arrange individual meetings to address concerns or questions your employees may wish to keep private.

3: Identify your employees' individual coping strategy. Some employees view change as a positive challenge and react by taking control of their role in the project. Others may react by avoiding or escaping the situation, and will require more individual attention. They may display physical symptoms of stress such as anxiety, fatigue, depression, headaches and high blood pressure and begin taking more sick days, resulting in lower productivity for the business.

4: Help employees deal with stress. Highlight the strengths of the individual and how they will be beneficial in the new environment. Encourage the idea of teamwork and collaboration as necessary for success and acknowledge their contribution to the business. Ask what they are worried about and answer concerns promptly and truthfully. Implement a company stress-reduction activity such as a 10-minute morning stretch at the end of the daily meeting or after conference calls.

5: Tell your team you are confident in their ability to rise to the challenge. Highlight opportunities for cross-training, learning new skills, developing creative solutions or mastering technology. Changes at work are most effectively implemented when business leaders or owners model a positive attitude, so consistently model an upbeat attitude to help change the employees' interpretation from a negative development to one that is positive and full of potential.