



Moving your business to the next level

People do not resist change

We all know about change. It's part of life's journey. We are introduced to it the instant we leave the womb, if not before. As true experts on the topic, why do we often consider change such a challenge? Why do we fear it so much, even when we want it? And why do we spend so much time and effort resisting it, even when we know that it could be for the better? In my experience, it's not the change we're resisting – it's something else.



My epiphany came in 2009 as I was trekking up Mount Kilimanjaro, the world's tallest freestanding mountain. Depending on your route, the distance from the base of the mountain to its summit is approximately 40 kilometres. On a six-day journey, that's less than 7 kilometres of trekking a day. And yet, of the 30,000 hikers

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attempting Kili's summit every year, nearly 12,000 fail – a whopping 40 percent. What is their body resisting? Certainly not the distance or the difficulty of the non-technical terrain. The culprit is the altitude. Or is it? At an altitude of nearly 6,000 metres, there is less than 50 percent of the oxygen available at sea level. But if altitude were the obstacle to summiting, why would 60 percent make it? Research has shown that fitness has nothing to do with it – the answer lies in one's ability to *transition* to the higher altitude. It's about the transition, not the change.

Change is what happens around us. Transition is what happens within us (physiologically or psychologically). The first is situational; the second is experiential. Business owners, leaders and managers spend much of their time anticipating, planning for and acting on change; that is, the operational side of change. "What needs to be done if x happens or y is introduced, who will do it, when will it be done and at what cost?" Yet, little time is spent managing transitions – what I call *the people side of change*, or the way people perceive and react to change.

Whether you're managing a pharmacy or a multinational organization, you know what I am talking about. New government regulations, growing competition, more demanding consumers are changes that have placed unprecedented pressure on organizations and their people. Chances are you have already instituted change to keep your organization at the top of, or simply in, the game. Strategic planning, restructuring, downsizing, introducing new policies, or even buying or selling businesses are all part of how business leaders deal operationally with market forces or manage a new business vision. But by focusing mainly on the operational side of change, many organizations fall short of achieving what they're after – *real* organizational change. And if they do achieve the desired change, they do so at a very high financial and human cost: a loss of productivity, irate customers and suppliers, decreased employee morale, not to mention implementation delays, unexpected implementation challenges, and inevitably, revenue loss.

Implementing change can be expensive if transition is overlooked or minimized. Managing the *people* side of change is the linchpin to achieving *real* and cost-effective change. Not doing so presumes that because the course has been charted and people have been told what

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Transition is what happens within us.

to do and how, they will all reach the "summit" and make the change the organization wants. A reasonable assumption, perhaps, but one you definitely shouldn't count on. The truth is that people do not resist change; they resist transitions. If that were not the case, then all 30,000 would make it to Kilimanjaro's summit.

In the next article, I will share with you the process of transition and how you can apply it to your life and business. **PB**

Before creating Transition Consulting Services, Hani Kafoury spent more than 27 years in the corporate world. His experience spans family-owned businesses to multinationals, where he worked his way from a sales representative to senior leadership positions in sales, marketing, government relations, communications and corporate affairs. He holds an M.A. in psychology, is a certified leadership coach, and a certified Myers-Briggs practitioner.