

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/gaining-emotional-buy-in>

Hemant Shah, co-founder and CEO of RMS, emphasizes the importance of engaging colleagues at a human, emotional level to get buy in and support change. A balanced approach, Shah says, blends the optimism and upside of a new business strategy with the reality that "the status quo is not risk free."



Transcript

Getting people - the first mistake I made was overly intellectualizing the strategy.. Of course, it makes sense.. It's so evident.. Here is the logical argument and didn't engage people enough emotionally and why there was a need for change and engage people as human beings emotionally around why should they, as people, buy-in to a new strategy and why that strategy doesn't alienate them from the business that they love, and they made the choice to come work here.. And that was something that I feel like if I do this again, I will spend far more time on that aspect getting emotional buy-in from the team as opposed to just trying to cram it down top-down because it makes intellectual sense.. Another thing that was maybe some unfortunate statement on human nature, but in the early days of the change management process which I guess is the proper way to refer to these things, it didn't seem like much like a process at the time but initially the change management process, I spent a lot - I am a very optimistic person.. I am a glass half-full person and I saw the need for change in very aspirational, these are huge opportunity.. I found that also when we realized as a leadership team that we needed to balance the need for change with, it's going to be great if we pull this off and the opportunities are much more, but also that the status quo is not risk-free.. So human beings, we always think the status quo ex-ante is the risk-free option and change is risky.. It's very hard for us..

I think a lot of social science suggested to cognitively realize that the status quo carries a lot of risk.. So we started talking about the downside and the risks that if things that can go terribly wrong if we just keep sticking to our knitting and - we didn't overdo that because again I'm a very optimistic person but we started dialing in maybe a 22% weight on the downside, supposed downside, and that really tipped people's minds that there is a need where the status quo isn't tenable.. We have to change and the risk of change is balanced against the risk of not changing as oppose to just a great stuff that's going to happen if we successfully pulled it off, balance against the fear that if we fail, we're going to screw up what we already built...