



Keyword: Resistance

What to Do When People Don't Like You

by Kevin Eikenberry

First, let me be clear, this is not a how-to piece to get everyone to like you. While your life will be more enjoyable and satisfying when you have many strong relationships, sometimes as a leader people will not like you.

Why?

Because, as a leader, you are challenging their comfort zones, encouraging change and expecting improvement. It wouldn't matter what you did or how you did it, when you expect more than status quo some people get rattled. And there are some on your team whose environment growing up led them not to trust "management" in any case. Most of the time, remember it isn't about you at all, it's about the role you represent.

But there are times when you are the real cause of the resistance – or more accurately how others view you. Think about it, have you ever resisted something just because of the person promoting or leading the change?

Often this type of resistance goes unresolved because its cause isn't surfaced. This is a very personal type of resistance and sometimes hard to think about, but when you are addressing and exploring resistance you need to consider that this might be part of the issue.

Once you determine that the source of the resistance might be related to your relationship with the other person, here are six steps to help overcome that resistance, and perhaps improve your relationship as well.

The Six Steps

Ask if that is the issue. If you are working through resistance with someone and you suspect that relationship issues may be the cause of the resistance, ask if that's the issue in a direct yet caring and open way. People will typically respect your directness (assuming you have asked tactfully). Sometimes people won't even understand all of the sources of their own resistance themselves. In these cases asking this question may help them recognize the real cause of the resistance.



What to Do When People Don't Like You (continued)

Ask this question from the perspective of the change or resistance. Remember (and let them know) that your purpose is only to explore the resistance. By keeping it focused on your ultimate goal you will be more successful and will lessen the likelihood that you (or they) will become defensive or hurt.

Talk about those relationship issues to determine root cause. If a person is open and says that they have a problem with you, your style or something else personal, explore those briefly. Sometimes there is a simple misunderstanding about something that can be resolved which will both lessen the resistance and improve the relationship all at once.

Address as appropriate. If the relationship issues can be resolved or a plan can be put in place to work on them, great! Remember though that this conversation is about reducing or resolving the resistance more than 'fixing' the relationship.

Separate the change effort from the relationship. This is the biggest key. Once you have identified that the resistance is due in part to the relationship, work with the person or group to segregate or divorce these two separate issues. Dealing with resistance can be challenging enough without multiple issues merged together. By helping the other person separate them (and separating them yourself) you can move forward more productively.

Discuss the other sources of resistance. Once you get mental separation, you can focus on the resistance and create greater mutual understanding and most likely be far more successful in managing the resistance – which is what you wanted to do at the start.

The benefits of dealing with relationship resistance in this way often go far beyond the exploration and resolution of the resistance. It can be the first step towards improving a working relationship, and perhaps even eliminating the "I don't like you" feeling.

Through a humble and open dialogue you hopefully can build the trust that ultimately builds a stronger relationship.



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