Strategies and Patterns for Addressing Resistance

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Now out 😊!
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add on to the game
Fearless Journey
15 additional change patterns to help you reach your Big Goal

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My goals

- Share the latest and greatest research because we need to get better at this!
- You will leave with at least two tips – things you’re going to try 😊!
- Get feedback from you on how these techniques are related. Is it a pattern language.
How do we deal with resistance now?
This talk is about evidence (and patterns)

- In the early 1960s, Peter Wason’s research showed that when people have formed an hypothesis they focus on evidence that fits their pre-existing views.
- Wason called this the “confirmation bias.”
- Wait a minute! That’s not “those people” – that’s US 😊!
Our narrative

- The story we tell ourselves.
- But the story isn’t true, it’s our version of what’s going on.
- We think we act reasonably and we don’t like it when others disagree.
- If our idea isn’t having the desired impact, perhaps we should examine our story instead of focusing exclusively on how others operate.
AND the Backfire Effect

- Hundreds of studies find when you argue using facts and evidence, people simply reject or discount the information…
- AND, cling even more firmly to their views.
- Brendan Nyhan & Jason Reifler called this “the backfire effect.”
- Correcting people INCREASES erroneous beliefs 😞!
Cognitive Dissonance

- The results were immediately rejected by behaviorists -- cognitive dissonance at work 😊!
- Dilemma of contradictory “evidence” causes severe cognitive discomfort!
Cynics vs Skeptics

- Skeptics are useful. Every group, every team, every meeting should have one.
- Edward de Bono’s Six Thinking Hats: someone who wears the black hat.
- Cynics are negative for the sake of being negative, not to be helpful, typically focused on low-level interests, not the greater good.
Fear Less

- Pattern from *Fearless Change*
- Rests on Stephen Covey’s “listen with intent to understand,” when dealing with skeptics.
- The evidence for this approach is clear but it needs more implementation detail.
- The following techniques can all be used within the context of this perhaps too-broad pattern and might be a pattern language.
Two contexts

- Within *Fear Less* or the pattern language, there seem to be two contexts:
- You’re initiating, giving a presentation or proposing a point of view
- OR
- You’re responding, encountering a counter-argument in conversation or in response to your proposal.
Context I: Giving a presentation or proposing a point of view
Nice, clear, rational argument

- NOT because it’s convincing!
- We’re not rational decision-makers
- BUT we’re good at explaining after-the-fact why we made a decision – rationalization
- Provide a logical argument to use in their explanation
- Not just benefits: include costs, downsides, flaws in your thinking
Most commonly used technique

- For many, this is the only tool in their arsenal
- Research shows we are always willing to discuss issues because we believe that if we just explain our position, the other side will see the benefit in our point of view
- Given what we know about confirmation bias, the backfire effect, and our struggle with cognitive dissonance, it’s no wonder rational argument is so ineffective
Personal Touch

- Pattern from *Fearless Change*
- Everyone is asking, “What’s in it for me?”
- You must address a genuine user need. Data does not equal empathy. Jeff Patton
Different people react to new ideas differently

*This is new so it’s cool!*

(Innovators--2.5%)

*It’s interesting, but I want to learn more.*

(Early Adopter--13.5%)

*I want to know what other people think.*

(Early Majority--34%)

*If I have to. I guess.*

(Late Majority--34%)

*We’ve always done it this way.*

(Laggards--16%)
The IBM Mantra

- If you can’t fix it – feature it! Use it to your advantage!
- These responses seem to be hardwired.
- Don’t rush to encounter resistance. Let the natural force of evolution work for you.
- These people are smart, care, want to do their best.
- Your organization will never all be in the same place at the same time.
Caveats about adoption curve

- These are roles not people
- There is a correlation with age, both for individuals and organizations
- People can change. Your job is to encourage movement “up” the curve.
- Imagine what it would be like if everyone were an Innovator 😊!
Moral Foundations Theory

- 5 foundations to moral beliefs
- Care/Harm (being harmed)
- Fairness/Cheating (treated fairly)
- Loyalty/Betrayal (loyal to their group)
- Authority/Subversion (playing by the rules)
- Sanctity/Degradation (sullyng sacred physical/spiritual things)
It’s all about politics

- Liberals favor care/harm & fairness/cheating
- Conservatives favor loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, sanctity/degradation
- To persuade people, focus on what THEY value, not what you value (good advice in any setting)
Research on increased military spending

- M1: We should take pride in our military, which unifies us both at home and abroad.
- M2: Military spending is necessary because, in the military, the poor and disadvantaged can achieve equal standing by ensuring they have a reliable salary and a future apart from the challenges of poverty and inequality.
- Conservatives influenced by either message.
- Liberals more likely to be influenced by M2.
We are reluctant to use this technique

- Research shows both equally reluctant to use moral arguments that would appeal to the “other side.” Even when incentives for success are used.

- We are reluctant to use others’ moral views, even to influence them, which speaks to the power of confirmation bias and cognitive dissonance. It applies not only to our ideas but to our narrative.
Acknowledge Resistance

- If students paid a little more tuition, they’d get a much better education.
- Do you agree? (1 = Not at all, 9 = Very Much)
  - Study 1: Mean = 2.13
  - Study 2: Mean = 2.46
- I know you won’t want to agree with this, but if students paid a little more tuition, they’d get a much better education.
  - Study 1: 3.31
  - Study 2: 3.31
Acknowledge resistance even for a simple request

Would you mail this letter for me?

71% complied

I know you might not want to, but would you mail this letter for me?

100% complied
The myths around this technique

- We believe that mentioning the possibility of resistance gives it power and increases the possibility of push back.
- In reality, bringing resistance into the picture decreases the likelihood of resistance, helps overcome cognitive dissonance.
Trial Run

- Pattern from *Fearless Change*
- We resist change but we like to try new things if we can have some measure of control
- Influence strategies of commitment & consistency are powerful – once we have done or said something we are more likely to continue down that path
Why this technique is challenging

- Our passion can lead us to be fanatical and unwilling to compromise
- We often believe we know the one true way
- Being open to experiment suggests that we might not have all the answers
- Involving others might mean we would lose some measure of control
- Handing ownership to others is the most convincing approach we can use
Context II: counter-argument in conversation
Listen, Listen, Listen

- Customer Interaction pattern
- Silence is good, short responses are good
- Maximal body language: nod, make eye contact, use open posture
- Research shows that questions to promote discovery and insight show you are working with the speaker
- Sometimes this is sufficient!
Re-state other’s point of view

- Outline points of agreement (especially if they are not matters of general or widespread agreement)
- Your Goal: Resistor says, “I wish I’d said it like that!”
- Say what you have learned from listening to the other point of view
Self-affirmation

- Self-affirmation: demonstrate adequacy, even small accomplishment.
- Mention core values. Focus on higher aspirations.
- Let target win some point or have a measure of control in the decision.
- Building confidence makes others less wary.
Ask for details

- Ask skeptics curiously and non-aggressively to walk you through implementation details.
- “Illusion of explanatory depth,” developed by Yale psychologist Frank Keil et al.
- We believe we understand complex systems behavior, but when we try to explain how our idea works, we often realize how little we know.
Won’t work for position

- When we are asked for reasons why we are for or against a policy position, attitudes don’t change.
- Discussing an issue tends to make us more extreme.
- Articulating implementation details forces us to confront our lack of understanding.
Ask for Help

- Pattern from *Fearless Change*
- Ask for advice, a favor, loan (Ben Franklin effect)
- Arthur Helps: “We all admire the wisdom of people who come to us for advice.”
- When advice or favor is given, commitment & consistency kick in and we start to believe we must like requestor, otherwise, why would we give time or resources?
Why we don’t use this

- This works, but we rarely use it. When someone has their facts wrong, we don’t want to interest ourselves in their position or tell them they’re great. We go on the attack.
- You may have more success changing minds after making your audience feel good about themselves.
- Calling people idiots or treating them as lunatics does not make them open to hearing your point of view 😊!
Other patterns

- I have many other tips that have been captured in patterns (or not) that don’t seem to fit the pattern language structure so far.
- Please send me your tips, photos of your sketches, feedback!
Bridge Builder

- Pattern from *Fearless Change*
- Have many diverse others talk to the resistor.
- It’s often all about you so hand off the job to someone who has influence with the resistor.
Whisper in the General’s Ear

- Pattern from *Fearless Change*
- Meet one-on-one with influential resistors.
- Never talk to executives in groups!
- Many are living in fear & ignorance but have no place to go.
- Offer wise counsel and easy-to-understand answers. Use Personal Touch!
- Work on their schedule.
- Never share what goes on with anyone.
Champion Skeptic

- Pattern from *Fearless Change*
- Devil’s Advocate: Always a good idea!
- Like a good lawyer, not negative for the sake of being negative, but asking hard questions and pointing out flaws and holes.
- Side effect: resistor often tires of the role!
Pattern Language?
This is a work in progress

- Like everything worthwhile, as Christopher Alexander says, “The process never ends.”
- Please ask for the presentation or references.
- Thanks for listening!