



Dave Fleck, President and Principal Consultant

Personal Involvement Leads to Commitment

It is becoming more and more apparent to me how critical face-to-face involvement is to organizational success. When I see unresolved conflict, resistance and other barriers to productivity and continuous improvement, time and time again it is because people have not taken the time for the human contact necessary to get each other to be on the same page.

“Without involvement, there is no commitment. Write it down, underline it and highlight it”.
Stephen Covey

“Unless commitment is made, there are only promises and hopes ...but no plans”
Peter Drucker

“Human Conversation is the most ancient and easiest way to cultivate the conditions of change”
Meg Wheatley

“Change comes from care and commitment”

When I think of all the people representing various roles in an organization - upper management, “the boss”, employees, peers, customers, business partners, “corporate”, sponsors, and stakeholders - I can't help but think that, were we to do a better job of involving them, we could gain a much higher level of commitment and support.

In his new book, [The Answer to How is Yes](#), Peter Block asserts “...dialogue itself is part of the solution ... Commitment and accountability cannot be sold. They have to be evoked, and evocation comes through conversation.”

To me, personal involvement focuses on two important elements:

- > Dedicated time to enable people to meet face-to-face
- > Interpersonal ('people') skills necessary to effectively listen and understand, which forms the foundation to clarify roles, responsibilities and the way decisions will be made.

Following are four key organizational positions through which I've developed important learnings that I apply in my consulting practice:

> **People** – The key to gaining acceptance is to take the time necessary to truly understand someone else's point of view. Whether it is with your boss, peers or direct reports, the priorities are “face-time” and applying the interpersonal skills necessary to more fully understand the other person and to reach agreement.

> **Work Teams** – In order to gain alignment and buy-in to organizational goals, you must first take the time necessary to hear from the people you support. What do they like best about their jobs? What road blocks and frustrations do they contend with? What support could they use to address these barriers? In my experience employees will embrace organizational goals only after they feel they are being heard, understood, and are confident that resolution efforts will be supported.



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> **Project Teams** – There are a variety of individuals that a project team has to gain commitment from in order to be successful. Taking the face-to-face time with team members, the project leader, sponsors, steering team, team members' managers, and stakeholders is critical. Everyone wants to have their ideas considered, and new ideas lead to innovation. This approach will lead to greater support during all phases of the project, including implementation.

> **Upper Management** – As employees, we will be more successful if we involve mid and upper management in our planning efforts. Our suggestions about where we believe changes need to be made in the organization can help upper management become more in-tune with day-to-day operations. This awareness can assist them in their organizational planning and possibly gain additional support for us in our day-to-day responsibilities. As members of upper management, increasing organizational effectiveness and capacity begins when we take the time to ask open-ended questions, listen to the answers and support people in resolving obstacles and improving operation.

Employee Involvement... What I Wish I Knew 20 Years Ago
by Peter Grazier

- 1. Everyone has something to contribute...and will if the environment is right*
- 2. The human element of performance is more important than the technical element*
- 3. Most decisions can be significantly improved through collaboration*
- 4. People need leaders - good leaders build trust, a higher sense of mission, and a sense of worth*
- 5. Employee involvement is NOT a program, but rather a leadership philosophy*

So, what do you do? First, schedule time with the people in the positions identified above. This must be a priority and viewed as being every bit as important as any other task-related priorities being worked on. Second, develop interaction skills which will allow you to listen effectively so that others know you understand what they said and realize that their input will be considered.

You need to be able to clarify your position to the extent that the listeners understand where you are coming from. Agreement is not paramount to this process; understanding and consideration of the input are what's needed. Listen, understand, and consider others' viewpoints.

If communication becomes too burdensome, which is common between two individuals, team members, or among various organizational members, then there may be a need for the presence of an independent facilitator to advance the discussion, clarify roles, and help people to reach agreement, allowing them to move forward toward their goals.

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