

# UP THE CREEK

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## Acting on Change

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“Change is such hard work.” -Billy Crystal

Much is written about leading change. Perusing the literature, there is an abundance of research offering leaders the best steps to ensure successful change, but let's face it, nothing ever goes as planned. With the acceleration of change ever increasing, the down times that allow us to catch our breath are few and far between. Could it be that leading change requires a change in ourselves more so than changes in our staff?



Theater provides us lessons on leading change that involves self-discovery, courage and practice. Using theater as a lens to see people management is a refreshing look. The work of managing people involves a heavy dose of our own humility and courage to practice a new technique even before we have it perfected.

To learn more about what theater can teach us, I spoke with Danette Olson McCarthy. Danette has spent 20-years in the field of Arts Administration working as a manager and theater artist. Currently, she uses her expertise to bring theater infused training out into the world. Her insights gained from theater provide us with a helpful lens on leading change.

**Carol:** What have you learned about how leaders get hung up when trying to lead through change?

*Danette: I have witnessed, in myself and in others, a big hang up when it comes to really owning the impact of change on self. It's so common to put one's head down and try to muscle through the change when the healthier choice is to keep one's head WAY up! As leaders, our personal needs can feel very different during change. We might feel the need to protect our team by offering too little or too much information;*

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## In This Newsletter

Supervising employees and leading in an organization is a tough job. This quarterly newsletter provides helpful research based articles with practical ideas to help you grow and flourish in your leadership role.

## Business Quote

“Example is not the main thing in influencing others, it is the only thing.”

*Albert Schweitze*

## Fun Fact

Banging your head against a wall burns 150 calories an hour.

*we might feel the need to show our ultimate cool-headedness during difficulty, thereby missing our own stress indicators. We can feel very alone as leaders, especially during change.*

**Carol: What ideas and best practices could you share to help leaders lead during tumultuous change?**

*Danette: My work in the world of theatre provided so many lessons for managing change. The cycles of selecting plays for a season, hiring the artists that bring those productions to life, filling seats, opening and closing the shows, and conducting the post-mortem conversations, all provide enormous opportunities to “show not tell” the attributes of conviction, flexibility, active listening, encouragement, and leadership. This translates to other workplaces as well because, as Shakespeare says, “All the world’s a stage.” When I allow myself to get too busy to attend to the ways in which I communicate, I miss the opportunity to maximize the gestures needed to navigate change.*

**Carol: Say more about your “show don’t tell” practice.**

*Danette: It was the opportunity to create a Youth & Family Theatre project within our suite of programs and services that most tested my knowledge as a manager and a theatre artist. I felt strongly that if I could demonstrate – show – the important differences in working with youth rather than hold meetings to discuss those changes – tell --- then the entire process would have greater impact and offer the adult teaching artists opportunities to reflect together on our experience. This was an ambitious approach and it worked! By modeling, I was making clear the core values and strategies that would become our program’s trademark and the impact was very high.*

**Carol: Are there other tools from theater you have used to manage change?**

*Danette: Yes, there is a wonderful improvisational theater approach called the “Yes/And” rule. In an improv situation, you must always respond affirmatively plus ADD something. It seems so easy, yet frequently it is not! In the workplace, especially during times of tumultuous changes, what the “Yes/And” rule does is help everyone slow down and really hear each other. By removing the impulse to negate the statements and viewpoints of others, leaders can be much more attentive and present to concerns that might otherwise go unnoticed. While “Yes/And” doesn’t alter the need for a clear path through the change, it does help harmonize different ways of navigating change.*

Developing a new skill to lead through change takes a commitment. Remember practice comes before perfection; don’t be afraid to try a new approach. Also, we wanted to make you aware of a theater infused workshop we are now offering which gives you another tool as a leader. The “Challenges of Change Workshop” includes a professionally acted short performance followed by a time of participant learning. You have resources here at Sand Creek, give us a call at 888.243.5744 or visit us online at [www.sandcreekeap.com](http://www.sandcreekeap.com).

## About Sand Creek Workplace Wellness

Sand Creek is a women-owned small business specializing in providing exceptional workplace wellness services to support the human spirit at work. We embrace our core values of service, hope, trust, compassion, and wisdom in each interaction, there by upholding our mission of providing helpful solutions to improve productivity and shining a light in the darkest of moments.

Our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is designed to offer face-to-face counseling and consulting to those that voluntarily reach out to us. We are not simply a phone counseling service or online tool type EAP. Thousands of professional counselors form a worldwide Sand Creek network available to deliver personal care and support to you in your community. Our services are administered nationally, but delivered locally.

Sand Creek supports the relationship between individual health and overall organizational health. Our Organization Assistance Program (OAP) service extends the reach into the organization and provides work teams with a systemic approach to improve the health and well-being of an organization.