The Fear of Change

At the level of organizations and workplaces there is usually a fear and resistance to change. There are a myriad of reasons why this is so. In each and every instance there is likely to be an argument made to justify the reaction to change; be it one of acceptance or non acceptance. Whatever argument is presented, it can be contended that the basis of the argument is rooted in the individual's predisposition to change.

Those who don't have a problem with change will see as an opportunity to try, do or learn new things. Those who oppose change, are either suspicious of change, or prefer to have things remain as there are, irrespective of whatever good reasons that may be advanced. Those who would have things remain the same; and as some put it, 'maintain the status quo ante', can be said to have some fear or reservation. It is not unusual for this group to preach the gospel of gloom and doom. Leaders or persons who fall in this group need not to be ridiculed or condemned for the position that they hold, since it is grounded in the fact that they are fearful of the unknown. As some would put it, they are comfortable with the tried and proven.

This fear of change can be overridden if persons in the organization are made to understand why changes are contemplated. It is likely that there would be less resistance to change if this happens. Given it is widely accepted that change is inevitable, it is recommended that the best way to implement change at the level of the organization and workplace, is by instituting the change management process. This process simply requires identifying the change, engaging the people, and implementing the change. It is expected that all responsible and mature organizations will adopt this approach.

It is normal to have resistance to change. A change of management personnel / leadership, policies and/or practices in a workplace, could lead

to elation and or frustration. The change of leadership at the level of an organization can be lead to divisiveness. Sometimes the negative responses which emanate in any of the given instances, is tied to all the wrong reasons. From the perspective of the head of any organization or enterprise, the fear of change can be frightening, as it can be mistaken to mean the loss of control.

Change can manifest itself something in some subtle forms. Avoidance or passive aggressive behavior may fall into this category. However more drastic forms are outright defiance, hostility and sabotage. The abuse of power, harassment, intimidation, targeting of individuals, the denegation and victimization of persons, are some of the unfortunate forms of behaviour that are often exhibited. For the most part, these forms of aggressive behaviour tend to be associated with leaders.

It is reasonable to conclude that the fear of change on the part of any leader is suggestive of the insecurity of that individual. Any good leader should appreciate the fact that change is an important aspect in the life of any organization. Where there is no desire to promote change within an organization, more often than not, the organization positions itself to fail. Leaders who fail to accept change but resort to resisting it, tend to use bullying tactics to get their way. The sad reality is that this type of approach is often seen as offensive and is doomed to failure. Here is where rationality gives way to ignorance. Frank Leahy adequately sums it up by making the point that, "Egotism is the anesthetic that dulls the pain of stupidity."