

Status Quo Pep Talks That Can Threaten Your Leadership

by Brent Filson

Organizations live and die by results. Yet most organizations get a fraction of the results they are capable of. There are many reasons for this: poor strategy, poor leadership, insufficient resources, etc. But one main reason is overlooked by most leaders. Many organizations stumble because they are permeated with a robust status quo.

The trouble with the status quo isn't that it gets poor results. After all, if you know you're getting poor results, you can do something about it. You can start taking steps to turn them into good results.

The trouble with the status quo is that it gets mediocre results but represents them as good results. And poor results are less harmful to an organization than mediocre results misrepresented as good results.

The status quo is simply the existing state of an organization. You might ask, "What's wrong with the existing state of an organization?" My response is, "A great deal." In fact, the status quo is always ... not sometimes ... always wrong.

Leadership is not a measure of results. Results are a measure of leadership. A leader should be getting not average results but more results faster, and "more, faster" continually.

The status quo is the enemy of the "more results faster continually" because the status quo is in business to be the status quo first and get results second. Its number one priority is always self-preservation.

Of course, without the impulse toward self-preservation, organizations would quickly fall apart. But when the impulse hijacks the need of the organization's leaders to adapt to changing circumstances, the status quo is a threat.

For instance: For years until the mid 20th century, IBM flourished by having their machines perform calculations using punch cards. But then the digital revolution came along. However, during the late 1940s and early 1950s a strong status quo of employees were wedded to punch cards and were convinced digital would lead to disaster.

As IBM CEO Thomas J. Watson Jr. said in his book, "Father, Son & Co.", "There wasn't a single, solitary soul in the company who grasped even a hundredth of the potential the computer had."

It took his strong leadership to fight off the status quo and move IBM into the digital age. If the status quo had prevailed, IBM would have been out of business in a few years. Still, the status quo put up such a fight that switching the organization from punch cards to digital processes nearly destroyed the company.

The IBM example is not the exception but the rule: The success or failure of any organization hinges to a great extent on how its leaders deal with the status quo.

No question about it, if you try to get into the realm of achieving more results faster continually, the status quo will attack you. The question isn't, "If " but "How?" and "When?"

One way it attacks is through status quo pep talks to gain ardent support. When you are ready for them, you are better able to deal with them and get ahead of the curve in thwarting the status quo.

Here are some phrases that may be used in status quo pep talks to rally people against anyone threatening its existence.

"Pretend to go along and they'll go away."

"Just do your job and nothing more."

"Agree with anything they say but do what you want to do."

"Let it die a natural death."

"We tried that before and it didn't work."

"I'm too busy."

"That's not my job."

"Wait 'em out."

"You're the leader. You take care of it."

"That's not the way we do things."

"You'll ruin this organization."

"You don't understand me."

"You don't understand what I'm doing."

"You don't understand our organization."

"It's more complicated than you think."

"I'm doing the best I can."

"Give me a break."

"You're not being realistic."

"You'll squeeze me dry."

"Don't you have better things to do?"

"I've got too much on my plate."

"Don't bust a blood vessel."

"I'll help -- if you do me a favor."

"It's not in my job description."

"It all pays the same."

"Why don't you quit while you're ahead?"

"Let study it some more."

"Don't go off half-cocked."

"Too much, too far, too fast."

"We need more facts."

Now that you have an idea of what the status quo is and how dangerous it can be; don't let its pep talks dissuade you from your mission as a leader of achieving more results

faster continually.

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