



# AGENDA

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## Turn *Whine* Into the Bottom-Line!

By Patti Hathaway, CSP

**Y**our agency's greatest enemy is NOT in the marketplace! Investing in the latest technologies, new faces, and new management strategies cannot turn around the numbing bottom-line crises found in many of today's MR/DD agencies. Just because you're not hearing employee whining doesn't mean resistance to change isn't affecting your organization.

Failing to get a real grip on what can and cannot be controlled keeps your agency's employees unproductive. In order to relieve the stress caused by change, your managers need to develop a passion for employee whining and resistance effectively. Many managers ignore whining, hoping the resistance or the people whining will go away. A different approach is for managers to begin to understand that the agency will only succeed if they can uncover and break through the resistance and whining as it occurs.

Consider the magnitude of change in the MR/DD field over the last couple of years, including the Models for Person-Centered Planning which leads to greater "choice;" the Supported Living movement with emphasis on dignity of risks issues; the state's "Removing the Mask" resulted in local administration which in turn has led many agencies to reorganize; a Managed Care Model holds implications of greater efficiency; the Welfare Reform Act increases job competition for consumers; the likelihood of more partnerships between school systems and county boards; and "Self-Determination" leads to piloting of "voucher" systems with persons with disabilities; to list a few. *The Result?* County boards of MR/DD and agency management *must* become facilitators and leaders for change.

The impact of such major shifts or changes can result in employee whining because people are experiencing several types of loss and pain. Their pain is similar to what players on a sports team may experience. Employees and/or players may grapple with one or several of these concerns:

### EVALUATING SKILLS AND CONDITIONING

Perhaps an employee used to be a "franchise player," now they wonder if they have the skills to succeed in the new ways of doing business. Staff question reorganizations that include combining positions make them "generalists" versus "specialists". It's hard for people to admit they don't know how to do something or that they lack the skills to succeed on the team. They may be asking themselves, "*Has the game passed me by?*" or "*Do these changes mean we've been 'wrong' all these years in how we've dealt with consumers?*"

### POSITION

There is an uncertain feeling about the position they will play. Many players (and employees) have the tendency to protect their turf and territory and not contribute to team play. Some staff are concerned about a change in their perceived status when their position title is changed (although their job has not). One Ohio county is shifting from multiple job descriptions to one - "do what it takes." How would your county fare with such a significant philosophical shift? A critical question your staff is grappling with is, "*Am I more concerned with my own statistics/position or the team/agency's success?*"

## Bottom-Line

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### GAME PLAN

When a new federal/state mandate comes down, the players often question what the direction of the organization is and where they are going. Many administrators fail to ask for the players' input on how to introduce and/or implement the new concept(s). This results in resistance at the staff level. *"Does the coach/administrator recognize my skills and talents? Will I get the opportunity to provide input to him/her?"*

### TEAM UNITY

Oftentimes staff in different departments function in a "silo" - completely separate and apart from the other departments which all serve the consumer. When an organization reorganizes and shifts from specialist to generalist, these "silos" are affected. Change can cause dissension between departments which may result in finger-pointing. It is clear that new relationships and teams will need to be forged in the new way of doing business. All employees want to feel significant and that they have value on the team. They may be asking themselves, *"How can I contribute value to my team and how do I fit the larger organization?"*

### MAKING THE PLAYOFFS

Will the team/agency be successful? Even if the team or agency succeeds with all these changes, will I be cut from the team and put on waivers? You don't feel like you are in control and you don't know where you stand on the team or within the agency.

Perhaps you have asked yourself these questions as you've experienced change in your agency. They are gut-wrenching questions which can be painful to consider. It is important for employees to really FEEL the pain that

change is causing them before they can begin the healing process. I believe that if you can feel the employees' pain you can heal the organizational pain of change. On the other hand, if you ignore the pain or an injury and don't take time to understand what caused it, you won't know what and how to begin the healing process. Remember the old adage, "no pain, no gain!" That is true of organizations in change as well - there will be employee pain before there is organizational gain.

In future articles, we will look at how you can help your agency deal with employee pain and how you can gain momentum in change.

*If your agency is undergoing change and could benefit from Patti's customized program which would help your managers and employees resolve personal resistance and enhance organizational productivity and morale, please call her office at 800-339-0973 to discuss your specific needs. Patti also offers a free e-mail or faxed newsletter which is available at her website:*

<http://www.thechangeagent.com>

*Patti Hathaway is the Keynote Speaker at OPRA's Spring Conference on May 5-6, 1998 at the Holiday Inn East in Columbus.*

