

People protest outside of high street store for free bags

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Ok you've got me the title isn't actually true but there have been similar headlines like this all over the country since the introduction of the five pence charge to carrier bags. Some of the most recent have included Tesco's adding security tags to their 'bags for life' to prevent theft, Iceland adding poles to their trolleys because shoppers prefer to take a trolley rather than pay the extra five pence and apparently when Obama visited the NATO summit in Wales he objected to paying the additional costs (I have my doubts about the last one but still it's an amusing thought).

So why am I prattling on about carrier bags and some peoples disappointment to the additional charge? As someone that specialises in the behaviour of how people manage change this scenario is classic 'resistance to change'. The very next day after the added charge had been executed 'The Independent' ran a feature on how Twitter users were taking in the reality of having to pay more for their shop and #plasticbags began to trend and continued to do so the next day. Customers claimed to have prepared by stockpiling, some tried to escape the charge without paying and some went to the extremes of blaming the till staff.

I have used some very specific language in the paragraph above to express how people reacted; disappointment, executed, reality, pays more, escape and blame. These words are just some examples of what people experience when they are presented with a change that they are not ready to psychologically manage. It's probable that the disappointment was because they felt the change was imposed on them and it was executed almost immediately without giving them a chance to think about whether they agreed with it or not. Then there's the reality of always having to pay that additional charge and the additional fee amount itself. Lastly the only thing they feel they can do is either escape the price or blame someone else. Escaping and finger pointing are really high on the list of how negative people will react. The first one means they don't have to deal with it and the second gives them a reason for why they believe they are feeling this way, you will hear them say things like 'it's your fault'.



So how do you manage this behaviour? The best thing you can do is go to plan A, use clarity in communication, ensure everyone is included and speak to people one on one if need be. You will really benefit by not complicating things, if you can keep things simple it would be much better for you and your team in the long run. Simple is easier to understand, digest and it usually encourages peers to promote the change bringing others with them. Then all you need to do is leave plenty of opportunity for questions. Some questions may come across as challenging but remember it may well not be intentional on their part; it is how they are feeling inside. In truth most people will respond well to this approach as they will feel you are doing this with their consent.



The unfortunate reality is that there will be those who do not respond well and continue to blame or avoid talking about the change, for those sometimes everything you do is not enough. When this happens you have to remember you can't change the world. If this occurs refer back to plan A, use clarity in communication, ensure everyone is included and speak to people one on one if need be. Change is about consistency and it's likely that if you show this from the way you do things others will respectfully begin to follow. They will then slowly start to accept the change.



Again the unfortunate reality is that there will be those that refuse to change and continue to blame and avoid things. When this happens it is 'them' that need to make a decision on whether they move along with the change or decide it is too much for them to deal with.

When you are aware of this reality managing change is much easier, as good people we believe that there must always be a way of managing things correctly and kindly and when we do the world will be a bed of roses. But sometimes the other person will conclude it is not for them this is all part of change.

Progress is impossible without change and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything

George Bernard Shaw