

## Leave My Department Alone

Every leader who has tried to make significant improvements has heard this. Turf protection is the single biggest reason why improvements are not made within companies. Understanding how to avoid and overcome this obstacle is essential if you want to have an effective organization and if you want to be an effective change agent and executive. Here are some ideas that you may find useful.

First, you need to understand that wanting to protect your department and preserve your job is what good managers are supposed to do. It helps ensure that poor and disruptive decisions and changes are not foolishly made. The problem comes when this protectionism gets in the way of making important improvements that are good for the company.

Many companies will try to overcome this problem by including these managers in the analysis or re-design effort. The theory is that including them from the very start is fair and the best way to get them to buy into a change that will have a significant impact on them. This approach sounds good, but it is usually a mistake. The flaw is that these people will almost always scuttle the analysis before it has a chance to get started.

A better approach is to form two teams of people to work together to develop the new, significant changes you need. The first team is usually called a Steering Committee. It is made up of senior people who generally have positions above the departmental level you expect may be threatened by potential changes. Their role is to set the overall goals and objectives for the project and then to oversee and guide the project to a successful conclusion. They spend a limited amount of time on the project, usually no more than one or two hours a week.

Since the Steering Committee does not have either the time or the detailed skills to be involved in all of the analysis and work of developing the new changes, we need a second team to do this work. This team is called a Design Team. The Design Team is made up of between seven and ten key people who are generally at a level below the departmental level. They should be among your "best and brightest." They should have both excellent experience and high potential.

Depending on the amount of change you need and the significance of the expected improvements, you will also probably need professional facilitation of this process. In most cases, this is a good idea and one that is easily cost justified. Remember, your people only know what they know. If you want new and creative ideas considered and analyzed properly, you need help from someone who has done it before and has broad industry experience. This does not lessen your people's involvement or ownership. It enhances their results.

After the analysis and recommendations have been developed to the point where they are reasonable and their logic can stand on its own, then bring in your departmental heads and others to review both the changes and implementation plans. This has two benefits. First, it ensures that the changes are sound and practical. Secondly, it gives the departmental heads the benefit of seeing the big picture before they take positions for or against them. This puts them in a fairer position and one where they can more clearly see where opportunities lie, instead of just threats. Good managers will deal well with this.

We started our consulting firm almost 15 years ago to help insurance companies make fundamental improvements in the way they operate. We do the facilitation described in this letter. Please visit our web sight at [McDonaldConsultingGroup.com](http://McDonaldConsultingGroup.com), where you'll find further explanations of these ideas in our Concepts and Ideas section.