

are grounded in the familiar and in what is proven to work. Exploring is only for the few, not the many. There's only *one* Columbus, *one* Edison, *one* Hillary. Even *questioning* existing beliefs feels dangerous to most people.

Therefore, the first reaction to learning is often resistance. In order to understand what you need to overcome in order to present new information at work, to bring others to accept it or wish to change anything, let's look at some basic obstacles to listening and learning.

Threatened

The daily ongoing business of keeping up—let alone getting ahead—at work requires tremendous effort.

Status, Usefulness, Acceptance, Money, and the other factors I talked about in Chapter 1 push us to try to maintain some sense of security or stability at work while we gather our forces and plan our assault on the next rung or pinnacle. We climb only when we feel ready and strong enough. For someone else to move into our path and say, "It's time for a challenge now," can be threatening. Of course, there are individual variations based on levels of skill and personal confidence, but most people think:

"I've just about figured this level out. Why do I want to change now? I can picture the present scene, but not the new one being presented. Better play it safe till I can figure it out. 'The devil I know is better than the devil I don't know.'"

So our tendency is to push against new ideas or systems, not to welcome them.

Intimidated

Our universal need to save face, to appear confident and competent, to seem grounded in our lives and unflappable, is intensified at work. That's the dangerous, get-ahead place where everyone's watching, waiting to pounce and move in or up—over you. Look at the concern that can be created when someone else (especially someone in charge) comes up with a new idea or imperative. We think:

"*You* dreamed it up, so *you* understand it and know how to do it and why. But *I* am not at all sure that *I* can understand it or be able to do it, especially do it well."

We hark back to our early experiences in the learning game. Most people's school experience was not stellar. We still remember the smarting embarrassment of being found wrong or wanting in the early