

READINGS ON RESISTANCE

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Only one of these books is strictly about resistance, but don't let that stop you from reading the others. Each will give you a fresh perspective and lots of guidelines for dealing with the resistance you encounter in your organization. And as a bonus, you'll learn many other ways to create positive change along the way.

Geoffrey M. Bellman. *Getting Things Done When You Are Not in Charge*. New York: Fireside/Simon & Schuster, 1992. ISBN: 0-671-86412-2. If the title alone isn't enough to entice you, here is a quotation from the preface. "You work with [...] people, searching for opportunities to pursue what you believe to be important to the organization and yourself. You often have great clarity about what these 'other people' ought to do and are baffled about how to get them to do it." If that sounds like you, this book will give you lots of good advice you can put to use immediately.

Peter Block. *Flawless Consulting: A Guide to Getting Your Expertise Used*. San Diego: Pfeiffer & Company, 1981. ISBN: 0-89384-052-1. This book is a classic in the consulting field, partly because of the two definitive chapters on resistance. In one chapter Block describes the many ways resistance shows itself, and the underlying concerns people have that lead them to resist. The following chapter explains how to detect resistance and what to do about it. The two chapters on contracting are also helpful in showing how to prevent resistance before it happens.

Thomas F. Crum. *The Magic of Conflict: Turning a Life of Work into a Work of Art*. New York: Touchstone/Simon & Schuster, 1987. ISBN: 0-671-66836-6. Resistance and conflict are close cousins. This book shows how to *embrace* conflict (resistance or otherwise), turning it into an opportunity to learn and grow. Crum bases his approach on the Japanese martial art of Aikido. The purpose of this gentle and powerful discipline is to resolve physical conflict by making an attack harmless without doing harm even to the attacker.

Jeffrey Goldstein. *The Unshackled Organization: Facing the Challenge of Unpredictability through Spontaneous Reorganization*. Portland, OR: Productivity Press, Inc., 1994. ISBN: 1-56327-048-X.

Goldstein offers a very helpful way of looking at resistance: “employees response to change is viewed more effectively as an *attraction* to positive values than a negatively conceived opposition to change.” Using ideas from the fields of chaos and self-organizing systems, Goldstein explains how “whatever maintains a condition of resistance [...] is the same process that leads to change.” He goes on to describe many ways to release the tremendous power locked up in the resistance. Of all the books in this list, this is the one I recommend most highly.

Carol Kinsey Goman. *Change-Busting: 50 Ways to Sabotage Organizational Change*. Berkeley, CA: KCS Publishing. ISBN:

This seriously funny little book gives fifty sure-fire ways to make sure your change project will fail. Ignore these gems at your peril! An example: “Announce a change of values while continuing to reward the old ones.” Most of these sabotage strategies are illustrated by Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Signe Wilkinson. As far as I know, the only way to get this book is to order it from the author at Kinsey Consulting Services, P.O. Box 8255, Berkeley, CA 94707, (510) 943-7850.

Naomi Karten. *Managing Expectations: Working with People Who Want More, Better, Faster, Sooner, NOW!* New York: Dorset House Publishing, 1994. ISBN: 0-932633-27-7. If you can get better at managing expectations—yours and your customers’—you will have a lot less resistance to deal with. If you absorb the lessons in this book, you will get better at managing expectations.

Rick Maurer. *Beyond the Wall of Resistance: Unconventional Strategies that Build Support for Change*. Austin, Texas: Bard Books, Inc., 1996. ISBN: 1-885167-07-5. This is the first book I know of to focus solely on resistance to organizational change. Maurer emphasizes the importance of maintaining your relationship with those you are asking to change. The book gives many excellent suggestions for how to preempt resistance, and how to transform the remaining resistance into support for change.

Peter Senge. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York: Currency Doubleday, 1990. ISBN: 0-385-26095-4. The “fifth discipline” in the title is *systems thinking*. If you want to gain a deeper understanding of the resistance that happens in organizations, read everything you can find about systems thinking. The “Laws of the Fifth Discipline” Senge describes in chapter 4 are a great place to start. Learning about the other four disciplines—personal mastery, mental models, shared vision and team learning—will also increase your ability to create positive change.

Dr. Seuss. *Green Eggs and Ham*. New York: Beginner Books, 1960. ISBN: 0-394-80016-8. Did you think this old classic was about a grumpy guy who refused to try something new? Take another look. It’s actually about the blundering efforts of Sam-I-Am, a world’s most famous agent of change. Read it again, and pay attention to all of the ways Sam-I-Am gets in his own way.

Gerald M. Weinberg. *The Secrets of Consulting: A Guide to Giving and Getting Advice*

Successfully. New York: Dorset House Publishing, 1985. ISBN: 0-932633-01-3. This is another book for consultants. In his chapter on resistance, Jerry expands on ideas from Block's *Flawless Consulting* and adds many lessons he has learned from his own experience. You will also find the rest of this book very helpful in your role as a consultant. If you don't see yourself as a consultant, consider Jerry's definition: "Consulting is *the art of influencing people at their request*." If that's what you do, this book is for you.

Gerald M. Weinberg and Daniela Weinberg. *General Principles of Systems Design*. New York:

Dorset House Publishing, 1988. ISBN: 0-932633-07-02. The Weinbergs' treatment of systems thinking is both broader and deeper than Senge's. After reading this book, you will see into systems, including problems and organizations, with far more clarity than before. You will recognize the principles of systems thinking everywhere around you, especially in the resistance you get to your proposals. When you understand and apply these principles, the changes you design will generate less resistance and will have greater impact.

Carl D. Zaiss and Thomas Gordon. *Sales Effectiveness Training: The Breakthrough Method to Become Partners with Your Customers*. New York: Plume/Penguin, 1993. ISBN: 0-452-27241-6.

Part of creating positive change is being able to sell your ideas. For most of my life, the very idea of having to *sell* my ideas made me uncomfortable. If you're like me, this book will give you a more positive view of what selling can be. You will begin to see selling and helping as not only compatible, but inseparable.