

## Practicing the craft gives practitioners more job security.



The fear of losing an assignment or even employment leads change practitioners to sometimes cater to clients' wishes rather than stand firm on what they believe to be in their best interests. You must be solidly grounded in "who you are" as well as "what you do" to hold your ground when clients want you to engage in something you know is counter-productive to the realization of their objectives.

It's imperative for each of us to adopt an existing approach to change execution (mindset, methodology, terminology, tools, and skills) or build our own. **Mastery** in this or any field is impossible without allegiance to a mechanism you believe in that provides consistency for your clients and competency development for yourself. With a model to guide diagnosis and interventions, you are able to offer clients your best thinking. If you believe as a change practitioner you are in the **high-impact** category, it's vital to be as clear, forthright, and unequivocal about your recommendations as your adopted approach and skills allow. If clients want an easier or less risky course of action, you can accommodate them, but only if they make the necessary corresponding adjustments:

- You can support them if they lower their change expectations to match their current mindset and resource investment, or
- You can support them if they advance their mindset and resources to match their aspirations.

In either case, you are standing firm by the principles of your chosen change approach. The benefits of such a stance are paradoxical in nature. By placing a higher priority on maintaining the integrity of your professional convictions than on keeping your clients comfortable (and protecting you), you'll generate significantly more value to them. The more value you are associated with creating, the more secure you'll be professionally. The intriguing twist here is that by standing firm on *practicing the craft* as the foundation for your work rather than *helping* when clients ask for the wrong things, you are more likely to build a strong following of people who want to work with you. (This is true for internal practitioners as well as outside consultants.)

Granted, this way of relating to clients doesn't always make you popular with those looking for someone to just do their bidding. However, in my opinion, this is the best way to find people who are seeking change practitioners with deep convictions and the courage and discipline to be honest about what it really takes to successfully change.

*Helping* is when we curtail our guidance to be consistent with what clients will see as acceptable. *Practicing the craft* is bringing forward, with unvarnished truth, what our chosen implementation approach calls for. The less we "help" and the more we practice our craft, the better it is for our clients and ourselves.