

Introduction

Many even think of our ideas much like we do our children—we highly value them and are very sensitive to how they are treated. But ideas, much like children, have to be nurtured. Therefore, the following thoughts are presented as a roadmap.

Credit: <https://www.qualitymag.com/articles/93031-four-thoughts-about-selling-ideas>

1. ALIGN YOUR IDEA.

Typically ideas that are closely aligned with organizational strategic goals such as vision, mission, values, strategies, etc., have a better chance of gaining support. The more an idea is directly linked to such goals, the harder it is for managers to say no, and the better chance it has to compete with other ideas. If your idea doesn't link to organizational goals that already have management buy-in, then why is it being presented? As an example, you might believe your organization should pursue ISO9001 registration but it's unlikely to get support unless you can show how it relates to a larger business strategy. Your manager's departmental goals and plans as well as your own personal development plans represent other alignment opportunities. The main point, though, is to avoid pushing an idea. Instead, let it be pulled by a business goal or objective..

2. BUILD A BUSINESS CASE.

While business cases can at times become complex, they can also be simple and straightforward. Business cases should address three fundamental questions:

1. Why are we doing this?
2. What if we did not do this?
3. What are the expected outcomes?

The business case should offer clear logic to staff at all levels of the organization. For management it must describe the rationale for the idea and what can be expected from it. For the other members within the organization, it should also address the reasons behind the idea.

3. QUANTIFY THE IDEA.

The better you can quantify a benefit in dollars (or more precisely, the dollars gained in excess of dollars cost), the stronger the case. After all, as Philip B. Crosby stressed, the language of business is money, making more money, and not losing money. But, if this is true, why doesn't everyone do this instinctively? Usually in the quality profession we are more enamored with the technical aspects of an idea and are not necessarily skilled in attaching dollar values to proposed changes or ideas. Also, the assumptions required in the course of dollarizing an idea are frequently subject to challenge. While preparing for an executive presentation a number of years ago my team sought input from the accounting group. That way when it came time to present the idea we were armed with the necessary input to counter any attempts to challenge assumptions as being overly optimistic..

4. ENGAGE PARTNERS

Many of us associate too closely with the idea we are promoting.

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