



# Corsini's Point of the Week™

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## Managing Change: The 20-50-30 Rule

Since the beginning of the year, we've been asking executives, "How's your current business plan working?" It's not a trick question. **We want people to stop and realize that what it took to be successful 18 to 24 months ago might not work as well today.** Based on what our clients are telling us, achieving the results they want is twice as hard as before, and it takes two to three times as long to get a deal done these days.

**This market change (and the harsh, new reality that goes with it) calls for a major change in the way people plan and work.** New habits need to be embraced! This goes for everyone—from the people in the field to the managers in the office.

**Today, let's talk a little about managing—particularly managing during times of change.** When you make changes in the way you want employees to behave, you'll almost always encounter resistance. That's just the way it is. However, you don't have to let this resistance deter you from your goals. I recently read a great book by Price Pritchett called *Resistance: Moving Beyond Barrier to Change*. In the book, he offers the "20-50-30 Rule" when dealing with difficult change.

Pritchett writes:

"We're dealing in generalities here, but the breakout usually goes about like this: **Some 20 percent of the people are "change-friendly."** They're clear advocates who willingly embrace the change. You can depend on them to help drive the program. **Another 50 percent of the folks sit on the fence.** They assume a so-called neutral position, trying to figure out which way to lean. They're not necessarily hostile to change, but they're not helping like they should. **The remaining 30 percent are the resisters.** They're antagonistic toward change and often deliberately try to make it fail.

"Guess which group makes the most noise? And who do you think soaks up the most management time and energy?"

Pritchett goes on to say that **the resisters are the ones that give you the least return on the effort you invest.** Like bratty children, attention will only reinforce their problem behavior.

**Your time is far better spent wooing the fence-sitters.** While they are undecided, you have a much better chance of winning them over. Also, **don't make the mistake of ignoring those people who are definitely on your side** and willing *right now* to make the changes you want to put in place. **Give them the attention they deserve;** don't take them for granted. Let them help you convince and recruit those fence-sitters.

## Quote of the Week

*"The secret of managing is to keep the guys who hate you away from the guys who are undecided."*  
— Casey Stengel

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“Romancing the resisters, to a large extent, is a distraction,” Pritchett says. “Sure, you can put the change effort on hold, and focus on turning these people around. But how long will that take? Can you actually pull it off? And is it even essential?”

Pritchett points out that **what you're really after are “hard results.”** It's not your job to make sure people are “happy about what's going on.” Don't waste time worrying about buy-in either. That will come later (if it comes at all) after the results are in. And **these results will prove that the change was appropriate, necessary and successful.**

“You must be willing to let squeaky wheels squeak,” he says. “Save your grease for the quieter wheels that are actually carrying the load.”

## CORSINI'S POINT

Times are tough. So are our jobs. Too often we have to do twice the work to achieve the same kinds of results that came so easily just 24 months ago. This “new norm” work reality requires major change in the way we work. Executives must champion change—even, or maybe especially, when it results in resistance. Focus your attention on the 20 percent of your people who are “change friendly” and the 50 percent who are “fence-sitters” and are willing to change. (Salespeople can apply this same idea to clients; focus on those clients who are most open to change. Don't waste time with resisters.) And remember: *The Times, They Are a-Changin'*.



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