

BUY-IN

Saving Your Good Idea From Getting Shot Down

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MAIN IDEA

How do you get people to buy-in to your brilliant ideas, suggestions and proposals?

Well, you probably start by explaining your idea to other people and then you should use a four-step strategy like this:

1. Take stock of your situation
2. Watch for the four basic attacks
3. Respond appropriately
4. Then get going making your idea happen

This method is somewhat counterintuitive. The traditional approach is to cut any naysayers out of the conversation. You do the opposite. You encourage them to take potshots at your proposal as a way to draw attention to what you suggest. And then, rather than trying to steamroll them into submission, you respond to their attacks in simple and clear ways based on common sense.

The idea of piggybacking on the back of attacks of your idea to generate buy-in for what you're suggesting is equally novel and noteworthy. It does however work in the real world where people delight in trying to shoot down the ideas of others before they can take root. Turning these attacks to your advantage is great because you harness those attacks to capture the attention of busy people and help everyone grasp the idea you have in mind. This is a smart and successful way to generate buy-in for what you are proposing. In all, it's a great way to operate.

"What if good ideas are crushed (1) twenty times per day in one single, big company (which, if it has ten thousand employees is a small number of ideas) and (2) once a day for every thousand people in a country (which also sounds very small)? Do the math and you'll find that's over five thousand good ideas per year shot down in a big company and over three million per year in North America. Three million good ideas a year, the best 1 percent of which - thirty thousand! - might have a very large effect on a few, or maybe most, of us. The numbers add up. The consequences add up. And that, obviously, is not good, nor necessary. Let's stop this needless loss."

- John Kotter and Lorne Whitehead

Step 1 – Take stock of the situation

Take stock of where you are first:

- Double-check your plan has no obvious flaws.
- Ask whether feedback has been factored in.
- Check people understand what you're suggesting.
- Determine who needs to buy-in and where they are.
- Develop your elevator pitch version of your idea.
- Talk to your supporters.
- Prepare a communications plan.
- Prepare for face-to-face meetings intensively.

What you're really doing here is ensuring your idea has been communicated clearly and thoroughly in the first place before you attempt to generate buy-in.

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Step 3 – Respond appropriately

Your response strategy will involve five steps:

- 1 Prepare for attacks – they're inevitable
- 2 Let the attackers into the discussion
- 3 Keep your responses short, sharp and packed with common sense
- 4 Show respect to your attackers
- 5 Focus on winning the broader audience over to your thinking

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Step 2 – Watch for the four basic attacks

There are really just four strategies people will use to try and attack your idea:

- 1 Fear mongering
- 2 Death by delay
- 3 Confusion
- 4 Ridicule

Watch out for them and determine what kind of attack strategy is being used here.

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Step 4 – Don't forget to get going

Once you've responded to the attacks, you need to get to work making your idea happen. It's easy to let things slip under the radar and get busy doing other stuff if you're not careful. Don't let that happen to your brainchild. Get into action.

Never forget the best way to respond to an attack on your idea is to go towards the attack rather than running away and hiding. Face your attacks head on, respond and then move forwards. Act with confidence and assurance. The fact you're attacked shouldn't be a surprise so respond and move on. Let what you do speak louder than anything else.

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