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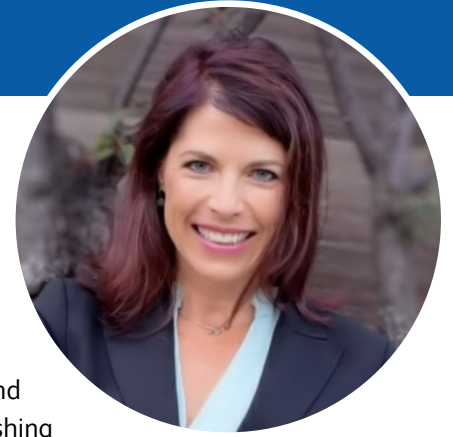


# *How Entrepreneurs Should Face Business Challenges and Manage Change*

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executives and  
entrepreneurs  
achieve results  
through a  
people-centered  
approach*

### Who Am I and Why Can You Trust Me?

I am Sara LaForest, an entrepreneur, consultant, coach, instructor, and author with comprehensive experience in the private, nonprofit, education, and government sectors.

I am on a mission to empower entrepreneurs, executives and leaders to grow their businesses and help them create flourishing workplace environments. If you share this mission, these articles will introduce my approach. I believe you will find them helpful and pragmatic.

For more than a decade, I have grown, managed, and nurtured my own companies specializing in leadership consulting, organizational development, and executive and performance coaching. My focus is on the critical—yet often overlooked—interdependencies of strategy, branding, culture, and talent necessary to foster and propel growth. My high-touch, personalized approach helps leaders improve company performance and team functioning at all levels, while facilitating a positive and productive workplace culture.

How am I different? What new perspective do I bring? My strength is combining company growth with an emphasis on the personal growth and well-being of the people with whom I work and serve. My deep-rooted commitment to human advancement is my advantage.

This article, along with many other national and international published works, was co-written with my retired partner, Tony Kubica. Our book, *Organizational Gravity: A Guide to Strategically Growing Your Company's Brand, Culture, and Talent*, is available on [Amazon](#).

To learn more about my services, publications, and speaking engagements, please visit [LaForestConsulting.com](#). You can contact me directly at [Sara@LaForestConsulting.com](mailto:Sara@LaForestConsulting.com) or via [LinkedIn](#).

## Improving Performance

## Navigating Transitions

## Accelerating Results

We've all heard it before - "if it we haven't thought of it then it isn't worth doing." "No one knows our business better than we do." This attitude is referred to as the "not invented here" syndrome. Consultants have seen it for years. Department managers and employees use it to fend off outside influence from other departments or intervention from consultants or advisors. regardless of where the invasion is coming from, protectionism is the defense.

"Not invented here" is a cliché. But like many clichés or popular beliefs, we tend to think there is truth in the statement. However, "not invented here", is a problem and it serves as a form of organizational resistance to change. "Not invented here" conveys an important message - "if I am not involved with defining the situation and working on solutions, then I am not interested in your ideas, opinions or solutions."

When an organization is facing a challenge, it has 3 options:

- Do nothing
- Understand the challenge and create solutions
- Hire outside help to assess and facilitate the solutions.

Assuming that the challenge is real and that it presents a threat to the organization?

- Option One will lead to a further deterioration in organizational performance.
- Option Two will work if the members of the organization possess the skills, knowledge, objectivity and support to identify and implement the required change.
- Option Three will work if it is combined with Option Two.

Using outside resources can be important for an organization, especially if the business leader believes that an objective third party may have broader experience in identifying potential solutions. The danger, however, is to engage a third party who has a ne-size-fits-all solution. And it is this attitude that reinforces and solidifies the "not invented here" syndrome. In fact, run quickly from anyone that has a solution to your problem before they fully understand it.

**When your organization is faced with a challenge, here are 7 steps you should take.**

### 1. Understand the Problem

Do this before anything else is done. Take the proper amount of time to talk with and listen to people (inside and outside the organization). Look at the numbers and compare it with the general marketplace, the economic trends and the trends in your industry. Objectively understand the issues. If this step is missed, a good solution will only occur by pure chance.

### 2. Identify Options

Whether it is in a brainstorming session, a general discussion in a series of meetings or in any other organized forum, it is important to identify potential solutions. At this stage it is important to identify solution options and not just one solution. Many people stop at the first or easiest solution.

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3. Select an Option

To select the best solution as determined by the group and the evidence there should be healthy discussion or even a vibrant debate. The risks and gains of each option should be vetted before an option is selected. It is at this point when the influence of the owner, unit head or outside third party should be tempered. One person's influence, especially a person in authority or an outside consultant, will solidify the "not invented here" behavior and the chance of implementation success decreases.

4. Understand What It Will Take to Implement

You need to know what it will take in time, money, personnel and other resources to implement. When a solution is chosen, detailed planning must occur so everyone involved in the implementation fully understands the investment and commitment required for a successful outcome.

5. Prepare an Action Plan

- Your plan should describe?
- What will be done (the task)
- Who will do it / who is responsible
- When it will get done
- Important milestones or benchmarks
- Resources required/anticipated

Remember, in most cases, whoever has assigned responsibilities for this project also has another job to do, as few organizations today can afford to put a dedicated team on a project. This is why an Action Plan with tasks, due dates and individual accountability is important.

6. Implementation

This needs to be managed and managed well. Regular status meetings must be held to track implementation progress. If the project is getting off track, awareness should swift and corrective action should be taken immediately.

7. Evaluation / Post Implementation Follow-up

After implementation, the working group should evaluate lessons learned. That is, what went well, what could have gone better, what was learned in the process, and did the change initiative have the intended impact (desired result) on the organization. If these steps are followed, the chance of successfully implementing a change effort will increase. It will increase because the members of the organization most effected by the change initiative will have been involved with the problem and solution identification. This is a powerful engagement and retention strategy. It's your business. It's your future. Take hold of it and "invent it here".