

Half Full, Half Empty

How an organization views itself will help determine the success of change initiatives.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ron Wiens is a Partner in Totem Hill's Ottawa and London offices. To contact Ron, send him an email at RonWiens@totemhill.com

Half full, half empty – what is the difference? Is there a difference? The answer to the second question is a resounding YES! – There is certainly a difference! Appreciating this difference can have a profound effect on the lives of individuals and the organizations they inhabit.

"YOU MOVE TOWARDS, BECOME, THAT WHICH YOU HOLD UPPERMOST IN YOUR MIND."

Lou Tice

This simple phrase expresses a driving force for change and accomplishment. When an organization views itself as half empty, “empty” is held uppermost in the organization's collective mind. From this perspective, the organization tends to focus on its shortcomings and failures. In half empty organizations, you hear talk about the walls and barriers that have kept the organization's glass from being more full. Issues and problems are rooted out and held up as warnings about the difficulties involved in any attempt to make the organization's glass more full.

When an organization views itself as half full, “full” is held uppermost in the organization’s collective mind. From this perspective, the organization focuses on its accomplishments and successes, and people within the organization talk about positive factors that led up to the accomplishments and successes. Organizations that focus on “full” tend towards a deeper appreciation of the root causes of success. This appreciation creates belief in both the future and the organization’s ability to achieve that future.

So what is the difference between half full and half empty? When an organizations holds “empty” uppermost in its mind, it moves towards becoming more empty. When it holds “full” uppermost in its mind, the organization moves towards becoming more full.

Organizations that focus on “full” tend towards a deeper appreciation of the root causes of success. This appreciation creates belief in both the future and the organization’s ability to achieve that future.