



# How to bring about change, *positively*

## 8 tips on how to share your ideas & initiate change while keeping feather ruffling to a minimum!

So, you have attended a P&C meeting and realised that things are simply not impressing you.

For starters, the agenda is non-existent; people talk out of turn; the Treasurer's Report is an ATM statement; and the plans for the end of year school fete are nothing short of a logistical nightmare!

The incumbent executive has been in place for years, they may even be best friends outside of the P&C. People have tried to make changes in the past but have failed.

This needs to change. It is your school P&C too. You have paid your membership. What do you do?

**1 Always start off on a positive.** Negative comments and criticisms immediately put people offside and place you on the back foot. Find some great things about the committee or its processes and praise those things. Be genuine about it. If you can't find anything good to say, perhaps this is not the place for you.

**2 Negotiate.** Discussion at your P&C meetings is not a zero-sum game. Though you may have strong opinions about something - so do others. It is impossible to find a person who knows everything (not even you), so you may have to concede ground on some issues to gain support for others. This is called negotiation.

**3 You catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar.** This can be considered in a couple of ways. First, be nice, be polite and be genuine. Second, express the ongoing benefits of your idea instead of using threats.

**4 Show your alignment with them.** You are on the same team and have the one goal that drives you - everything is done "for the good of the children". Your choice of words is very important in showing this. "We should try this" will be received a lot more favourably than, "You should try this".

*Tact is the art of making a point without making an enemy*

Sir Isaac Newton

**5 The 55%.** Over half the messages we convey are expressed through our body language. Disappointment, anger, frustration, acceptance, happiness, enjoyment are all shown through our posture, limb movements, eye contact and facial expressions. Once you have a good understanding of non-verbal cues and body language you should be able to have improved and successful interactions with others.

**6 "The squeaky wheel ...annoys people".** Some people just like to talk and pay little attention to the far more important aspect of communication - listening. If you suggest something or express an opinion, be ready for feedback and take notice of it.

**7 Make it their idea too.** Including other people in the development of ideas is more likely to garner acceptance as they are likely to feel part ownership of the creation. Instead of "I think you should..." try, "What do you think would happen if we did it this way?" or, "What do you think about..?"

**8 Know your stuff.** Turning up to a meeting and making a suggestion is difficult enough. Making a suggestion that goes against established policy or legalities is just plain embarrassing. Before you think about pushing for change, make sure you are familiar with the Constitution and By-laws of your association.

### And remember:

Some of the most experienced negotiators, politicians, and business people in the world use these tactics, but still fail to get their ideas across or their proposals accepted. P&C meetings are a democracy, a majority vote always decides the outcome of any proposition.