



By KIMBERLY ALYN, Ph.D.

# The Change-Resistance Myth

## Firefighters Want to Be Part of the Change Process

*If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."*

—Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Many experts have tried to convince managers and leaders that, generally speaking, people resist change. Countless books have been written directing people in the process of helping others to overcome resistance to change.

Change resistance is a myth. People don't resist change in general. They resist change that:

1. They don't perceive to be beneficial.
2. They don't perceive the benefits of the change to be worth the sacrifice necessary to achieve the change.
3. They didn't help create.

I see all three of these in fire departments across the globe. Normally, when you eliminate number three, you eliminate the first two as well.

If your firefighters are helping to create change within the department, they will normally see it as beneficial and they will see the sacrifice that needs to be made worth the benefits of the change. Of course, you will always have that handful of firefighters who

will moan about everything and go out of their way to sabotage change, even if the change is best for them. Don't waste your time and energy trying to convince this group. They are usually part of the negative cancer that spreads in the organization and hopefully some strong leaders are encouraging them to start taking the higher road.

But for the rest of the fire department, you have a lot of amazing firefighters who just need to be part of the change process.

I was recently speaking at a fire service conference and I discussed this topic. At the end of the presentation, a firefighter approached me and said, "You hit the nail on the head. We have been asking for a new engine for years and we finally got it not too long ago. Everyone hates it and we all call it 'The Chief's Engine' because the fire chief designed it without any of our input. When he saw how mad we were, he was indignant and said, 'I thought this is what you wanted!' And we responded, 'Well, how would you know if you nev-

er asked us?' He never gave us any input and because of that, everyone hates the change."

Plenty of experts have asserted that allowing followers to provide input and letting them find their own solutions is much more effective than barking orders at people. The old command-and-control style of leadership is still employed throughout many organizations, and for some leaders, it's just plain easier to tell people what to do than to let them decide for themselves or have in-

*If your firefighters are helping to create the change within the department, they will normally see it as beneficial.*

put into the process.

Some leaders and managers actually have good intentions when handing solutions to people or solving problems for them. Unfortunately, when you dictate solutions or processes, it is very difficult to get buy-in. Maybe you've noticed that people will often rebel when you do this. Well, there is now scientific proof that shows why it is much more beneficial to give people input and let them make decisions for themselves.

Neuroscience is the study of the nervous system, including the physiology of the brain. Psychology addresses the study of behaviors. By combining the two in conjunction with brain-imaging technology, researchers are able to

KIMBERLY ALYN, Ph.D., is a best-selling author and an international fire service speaker. She is the owner of Fire Presentations ([www.firepresentations.com](http://www.firepresentations.com)), a company dedicated to keynote presentations and training workshops for the fire service. Dr. Alyn has conducted the largest known fire service study on the topic of leadership and works with fire departments across the country on firefighter and officer development. She is the author of 10 books and a variety of CD/DVD productions. Dr. Alyn holds a bachelor's degree in management, a master's degree in organizational management and a doctorate degree in management with a specialty in leadership. Dr. Alyn can be reached at 800-821-8116 or [kim@firepresentations.com](mailto:kim@firepresentations.com).

For more on leadership and command, visit: <http://www.firehouse.com/topic/leadership-and-command>.



◀◀ LEADERSHIP LESSONS

determine how people respond to being told what to do.

Functional neuroimaging takes pictures of the brain while it is functioning and in action. The brain-imaging technology shows us that when someone tells us what to do or gives us the solution, the intelligence centers in our brains receive very little stimulation, although there may be stimulation of the emotional triggers in the brain (and remember, anger is a strong emotion).

Conversely, if we think through the problem and can determine a solution on our own, new linkages in the intelligence centers of the brain are created. As we focus on either creating our own solutions or giving input to solving problems, the brain is releasing endorphins that create a sense of well-being and that causes us to feel good. As a result, this reinforces our thought process and facilitates a deeper level of self-motivation.

The brain-imaging technology shows us that the opposite effect is created in our brains when thoughts or solutions are pushed or forced on us. The brain resists and instead of feeling a sense of well-being, we may find ourselves feeling frustrated. The brain also resists change that is forced on us versus being allowed to create change or be a part of the process of deciding change.

Letting people have input into creating the solutions to the problems you are facing will not only create more buy-in, but it will also increase morale and generate much better solutions. Let your firefighters be a part of the change you are trying to create in your department.



Kimberly Alyn, Ph.D., will present "Cultivating Exceptional Leaders in the Fire Service," "Master the Discipline Process" and "How to Give a Butt-Kicking Presentation" at Firehouse World 2011.

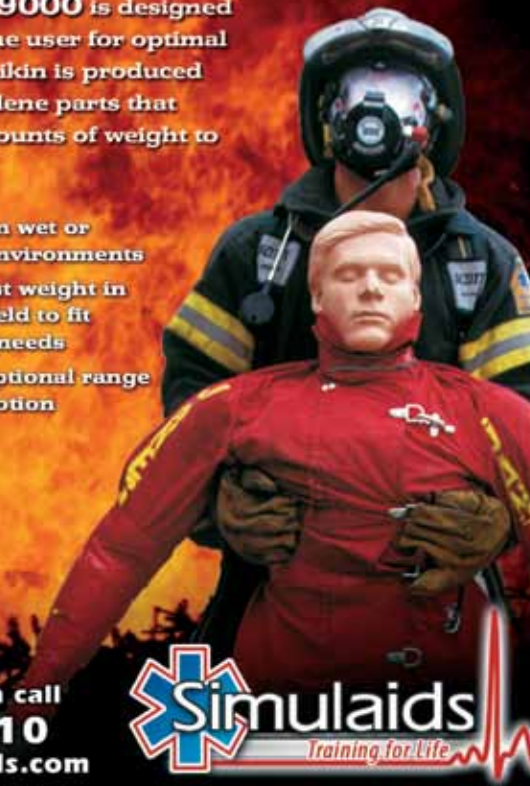
**FEB. 26 - MARCH 2, 2011  
SAN DIEGO, CA**

# Realistic. Versatile. Durable.

The weight of Randy 9000 is designed to be customized by the user for optimal training use. The manikin is produced from rugged polyethylene parts that allows for varying amounts of weight to each of the pieces.



- Use in wet or dry environments
- Adjust weight in the field to fit your needs
- Exceptional range of motion



For more information call  
**1.800.431.4310**  
or visit [www.simulaids.com](http://www.simulaids.com)



Indicate 122 on Reader Service Card

## UNIVERSAL BATTERY STATUS INDICATOR



**LEDS INDICATE BATTERY CONDITION**

**3 DIGIT DISPLAY SHOWS BATTERY VOLTAGE**

**WATERPROOF ENCLOSURE**

**LED FLASHES WHEN LOW OR HIGH VOLTAGE IS REACHED**

**3 YEAR WARRANTY**

This universal indicator works with all Kussmaul Electronics Battery Chargers as well as indicating voltage on vehicles without a charger.

**LIST PRICE \$119.00**

MODEL # 091-189-12

**KUSSMAUL ELECTRONICS CO., INC.**



170 CHERRY AVENUE WEST SAYVILLE, NY 11796-1221, TEL: 631-567-0314, FAX: 631-567-5826, TOLLFREE 800-346-0857, WORLD WIDE WEB: [www.kussmaul.com/ad.html](http://www.kussmaul.com/ad.html) E-MAIL: [sales@kussmaul.com](mailto:sales@kussmaul.com)

Indicate 123 on Reader Service Card