Respond to employees who say, 'We tried that before'

Change resistance comes in all shapes and sizes, but the most common form is the seemingly innocent phrase "We tried that before, and it didn't work." It's possible that it was, indeed, tried before and that *at that time* it didn't work. That doesn't mean it can't work now or that the idea shouldn't be reconsidered.

To put an end to this type of change resistance, follow this advice:

Agree with them. "Ya know, you're right. I understand your hesitation. When we attempted this before, we didn't experience the outcome we hoped we would." Simply acknowledging their concerns moves the conversation in a more positive direction.

Gain more understanding. Especially if you weren't around when the team tried the idea, ask questions to learn more and fully understand their perspective. For example, "What exactly did you try? When? What didn't work? What was the outcome?" You'll gain deep insight that will help you plan your approach.

Remind them what has changed since their first attempt. How has the organization, industry, market or world changed? What resources do you now have available that will help ensure a success this time around?

"Force" them to make the idea work. Don't let them off the hook. Instead, say "If this was our only option in the world, what could we do differently to ensure that it does work this time? Require them to bring solutions to the table.

— Adapted from ["How to Respond to 'We've Tried That Before,'"](#) Kevin Eikenberry, Leadership & Learning, http://blog.kevineikenberry.com.