

HANDLING RESISTANCE Pocketbook

A pocketful of techniques
to overcome rejection of
your ideas, resistance to
change and objections
to your proposals

Mike Clayton



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THE HANDLING RESISTANCE POCKETBOOK

By Dr Mike Clayton

Drawings by Phil Hailstone

"Using thought-provoking frameworks supported with examples and insightful asides, Mike Clayton brings his talent for providing clarity to a challenging and essential topic. Anyone seeking to influence or lead change will benefit greatly from this work."

**Nick Alcock, Corporate Learning & Organisation Development Manager,
Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea**

"A handy resource of tools and hints, relevant to virtually all walks of life. Practical without taking itself too seriously!"

Mark Holmes, Deputy Director, UK Department for Business, Innovation & Skills



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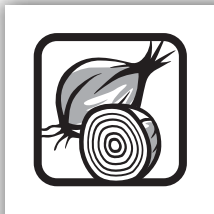
AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS THIS BOOK ABOUT?

Resistance: it is something many of us dread. When people want to get an idea across, or sell a product, or introduce a change, it is the fear of resistance that often holds them back. If you have ever felt this sense of foreboding, or wondered if there was another way you could have handled someone's resistance, then this book has a pocketful of practical suggestions.

You will get four things from the Handling Resistance Pocketbook, to help you engage with resistance positively:

1. An understanding of the nature of resistance in general and some powerful principles for handling it.
2. A wide range of techniques that can work in a huge variety of situations.
3. A detailed look at resistance in the specific contexts of change and sales.
4. An exploration of what to do when you move beyond resistance into conflict and game-playing.



UNDERSTANDING RESISTANCE

UNDERSTANDING RESISTANCE

RESISTANCE IS INEVITABLE



New ideas, challenging propositions and suggested changes in circumstances all evoke some form of startle response, such as an intake of breath, a mental freeze or a look of horror.

This is our reflex response to **threat**: first *fright*, then either *fight or flight*. The ancient parts of the brain kick in and try to protect us, so the next reaction you'll observe in someone faced with a new idea or the need to change will be irrational and defensive, driven by emotion. If the idea, proposal or change is seen as threatening, that emotion can be powerful – you might expect any of anger, sadness, bitterness, frustration or fear.

But being rational creatures, our emotion will subside. It may be quick in some circumstances and can take a long time in others but, inevitably, what will follow will be reason. We will rationalise our initial response with a dozen good reasons why the idea, proposal or change is wrong, stupid or downright dangerous. This is **resistance**.

Resistance is inevitable. It is hard wired into us, like hunger, sleep and sex.

UNDERSTANDING RESISTANCE

RESISTANCE IS INEVITABLE

... SO EMBRACE IT



Don't take resistance as a negative thing: accept it as a part of the process: welcome it, embrace it, and engage with it positively.

'We resist only what is inevitable'

Henry Miller

Otherwise, you will find yourself pursuing one of these natural, but pointless responses:

1. You **shoot the messenger** – you behave vindictively when you feel the resistance as a personal attack.
2. You apply the **super-tanker** approach of ignoring the resistance – you keep on going and mow down anything in your path.
3. You argue until you are **blue in the face** – you adopt one argument and use it inflexibly until either your resister, or you yourself, is totally exhausted.

UNDERSTANDING RESISTANCE

RESISTANCE IS INEVITABLE

... SO EMBRACE IT (CONT'D)



4. You take the **just-for-me** approach of tugging at heartstrings and appealing to old loyalties.
5. You try your hand at **bunko**, using sleight of hand and manipulation to hide what you are saying and make it appear more palatable.
6. You become a **street-trader** and try to do deals, trading favours for compliance.
7. Or you become a **street-thug**, resorting to threats and intimidation.
8. Or, if all that seems too hard, you just roll over and **play dead**.

This is not a resourceful set of techniques, so let's leave them behind. None of them puts you in control – which is where you want to be. And you know well that if you do ignore the resistance, it will not go away. So you have to turn to the only tenable approach.

You have to engage with the resistance.

UNDERSTANDING RESISTANCE

THE ONION MODEL



If you want to engage positively with resistance and handle it effectively, you must first understand it.

Resistance is like an onion

Whenever you have handled one layer of resistance, there always seems to be another layer beneath it. And that layer will always seem hotter and harder to handle than the last. Some would even say that, as you peel away the layers, the onion can make you cry.

The layers of the onion start simply, with confusion and misunderstanding, which can be addressed by improving your communication. The levels get hotter as we descend, because they are more personal and internally driven. The scope of the resistance moves from understanding to real resistance, passing through a fear-driven visceral reaction to arrive, finally, at an irrational hostility based on history, not the matter at hand at all.

