

# LEDGEROCK

## CONSULTING

### Embracing Resistance

The German poet Heinrich Heine once noted that a person “only profits from praise” when he “values criticism.” The ability to value criticism plays an enormous role in embracing resistance. In most industries, you face resistance daily, even hourly. That finely honed skill enables you to create opportunity when confronted with skepticism, irritation, complaints and negativity.

Nothing in nature grows without resistance. The tiny rabbit faces resistance as well as the majestic elephant

If you have not had the opportunity to read a little book called “The Starbucks Experience”, may I suggest it for your next easy read. There is a fascinating chapter entitled **Embracing Resistance** from which I have extracted some interesting facts. Starbucks only purchases around 4% of the coffee sold world wide; yet they typically draw greater public scrutiny than the far larger buyers like supermarkets. They are front page when fair-trade markets are mentioned; they are often noted in news articles for monitoring websites which receive about 5000 visitors a day...which they deny. The leadership has taken a relaxed approach choosing to listen rather than react. Successful leaders choose to not hide from challenges but rather take the resistance as another reason to adjust.

So where is your greatest resistance coming from? How can you listen and adjust?

So, has Starbucks faced this type of resistance? Their first attempt in Beijing was met with a “corporate America rolling its tanks into town” mentality. Two months into the contract and after significant expense, the local officials considered revoking the business license. The leadership did not panic, rather listened to the criticism and adjusted. Since the usual 80% to go/20% to stay was reversed in the Chinese culture; they needed to change how they did business. The Beijing Starbucks would become a “destination restaurant” as opposed to a beverage provider. In our own American city of Pittsburgh, the Starbucks in Squirrel Hill a highly populated Jewish community, met with customer resistance. They quickly changed how they delivered their products adding kosher coffee, replacing red and green decorations with blue and silver and changing Christmas music to meet the needs of a specialized community.

Resistance? Have you looked at it and changed how you do business every day. Have you listened and changed how you deliver your service?