



Managing resistance to change

Reflection guide

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Overview

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Identify the drivers of and restraints on organizational change
- Assess how individuals and teams deal with and adapt to change
- Examine communication strategies to reduce resistance to change

Key takeaways



Main points:



Learning insights:



What areas do I need to improve on?



My action plan:

Job aids and activity materials

Introduction and objectives

The natural reaction to change is resistance. If resistance to change is a normal and natural reaction, then resistance should be expected. If resistance is expected, then our change planning activities should be designed to mitigate that resistance. If our change management strategies and plans are designed to prevent and manage resistance, then we are prepared for resistance when it happens.

Planning for change is one part, the other is to support and coach people through change, especially those who are resistant. When we are dealing with change management, it is important for us to understand that change is happening and transition is peoples' response to it.

What is the difference between change and transition?

Change is:

Transition is:

“While some people embrace change and the challenges and opportunities it brings, others feel worried or stressed when the organization they’re working for is expanding, merging or changing.”

Article: Managing through workplace change

Leaders of change must:

- Share reasons for the change
- Anticipate and prepare for resistance
- Deal with individual reactions to change
- Have the proper attitude toward resistance – understand and empathize
- Realize resistance is neither bad nor good
- Encourage people to talk about their thoughts and reactions and listen actively
- Be patient
- Involve the people affected by change

Make the right decisions during change:

- View change as a catalyst for new opportunities
- Dwell on the positive and not the negative
- Build and keep a clear vision of goals/outcomes
- Keep an unbreakable spirit; get “re-charged”
- Mind your mind
- Let go of the past
- Postpone judgment

“Being involved in making and executing plans can bring employees knowledge and a sense of personal control that can help them move forward with more confidence.”

Article: Managing through workplace change

Phases of change and transition

(William Bridges change model)

Endings

What you see:

- Focus on past
- Cling to status quo
- Mourning
- Resistance
- Non-acceptance

What you feel: Responses associated with loss and grief

- Denial / disbelief
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Sadness
- Acceptance

Neutral zone

What you see:

- Lower productivity
- Decline in trust, loyalty
- Communication mix-ups
- Increased conflict
- Breakdown of teamwork
- Control seeking
- Increased absence

What you feel: Responses associated with stress

- Physical
- Mental
- Emotional
- Behavioral

New beginnings

What you see:

- Focus on future
- New vision
- New values
- New behaviors
- Return to teamwork
- Structure and stability

What you feel: Responses associated with future

- Relief
- Renewed energy
- Optimism

What are some losses that people experience during change?

Handling resistance requires the ability to:

- Recognize the signs of resistance
- View resistance as a natural part of the change process
- Listen and react non-defensively

What are some sources of resistance?

When going through change

What do employees want?

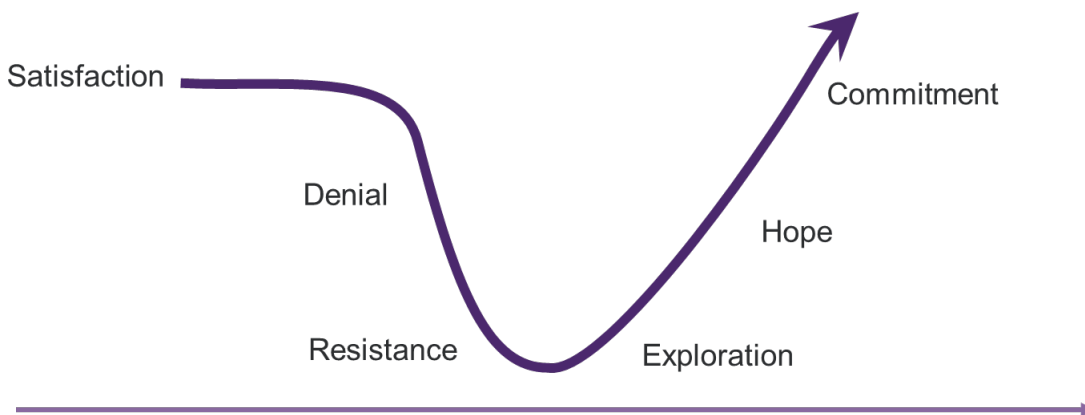
What do employees expect?

What do employees deserve?

The emotional change curve

The Change Curve is a very useful tool when managing individual or team change. Knowing where an individual is on the curve will help when deciding on how and when to communicate information, what level of support someone requires and when best to implement final changes.

Each person reacts individually to change and not all will experience every phase. Some people may spend a lot of time in the initial stages, while others who are more accustomed to change may move swiftly into acceptance or commitment.



Support people through change

Denial

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Resistance

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Exploration

Hope

Commitment

Denial

- Strengthen relationships
- Divide change into manageable small steps
- Concentrate on collaboration

Resistance

- Validate anger; acknowledge the loss of control
- Provide a support network; include resources that will help them cope with stress (EAP)
- Increase reciprocal communication
- Encourage ownership of the change piece
- Focus on opportunities

Exploration

- Test options in the new situation
- Collaboration with others

Hope

- Acknowledge progress
- Embrace growth

Commitment

- Reward progress
- Identify wins and embed them in the new change management

Three c's of communication

Context

Why make these changes? What is happening with our organization, with the external market etc., that make these changes so important for us?

Content

What exactly is it that we are changing? What is the scope, nature and timing of the planned change?

Consequences

WIIFM if I demonstrate either defiance, compliance or an alliance with the proposed change initiative? What are the consequences within the organization if we don't change?

Communicate during change

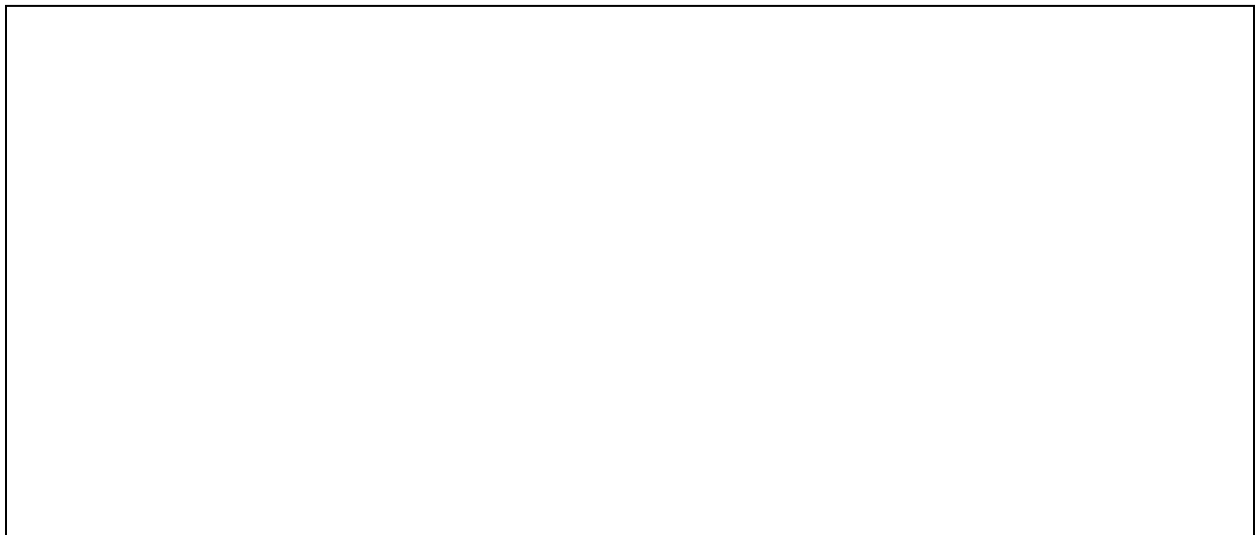
- Tell employees everything you do know and be honest about what you don't know
- Sell the change by involving employees in making and executing plans
- Encourage employees to ask questions or see support
- Set aside time for talking and venting
- Gain employee input on what the changes mean for the group
- Provide clear direction and help employees set priorities
- Work with your employees to keep customers in the loop

Dos and don'ts of communication

1. Don't imagine that it is enough to answer them once and then simply say, "we already answered that."
Rather answer them again and again, in different ways, using different communication methods.
2. Don't tell them to "trust us."
Rather tell them when you run into a delay; explain why it occurred; and tell them what you are doing about the problems connected to the delay.
3. Don't tell them to "be loyal."
Rather tell them you know that this is a hard time for them.
4. Don't tell them to "stop complaining."
Rather give them time to vent and share with co-workers.

Move forward

What's your plan forward now that you have the tools to help overcome resistance to change?



"As a manager, your ability to build team success is directly affected by how well you can create a highly motivating work environment for each of your employees."

Lifeworks article, Manager tips: Ways to motivate employees

Strategies to manage resistance

- Understand the change yourself: if you are managing people through change, you must be a master of the process from beginning (idea and justification) to end (the desired new status quo)
- Stay focused: Change can affect work productivity and our concentration. The increased focus allows you to stay on top of your regular duties as well as help your employees focus and work through the changes
- Respect all levels of resistance: “Respect” means understand
- Keep everyone involved and Communicate and gain input: essentially the same thing. Solicit opinions and make use of the input we get
- Provide information/training/coaching: coaching is a form of training and can prepare employees for change with new competencies
- Set goals to ensure accountability: how will we know if we’re succeeding unless we have measurable goals and individuals responsible for achieving them?
- Engage and motivate: communicate, invest in your employees (i.e. training), involve your people and recognize successes and people will work toward organizational goals
- Recognize success: reward behavior change, milestone achievement, active involvement in change and the willingness to pilot new approaches to work
- Be a change champion and model it: facilitate change, believe in and advocate for the change while supporting your employees
- Cultivate an adaptable culture: change is constant. Create an environment in which change is expected and well managed

Build resilience for change

Bring a positive mood and mindset to work. Studies show that moods can have a strong effect on performance. Research has also shown that moods are contagious -- people can “catch” moods from each other. One upbeat, enthusiastic person can help energize the whole group. Be that person for your team.

Limit negative thoughts on your team. Encourage employees to focus on questions like, “What would make things better? What can I do today to improve my outlook? What’s my first step?”

Help people stay focused. Encourage employees to focus on the tasks at hand, on the things they can control. The simple act of getting things done will make people feel less overwhelmed.

Encourage employees to focus on solutions, not problems. Instead of focusing on what they feel they may be losing, remind employees what they may gain because of the change.

Build employee confidence. Help employees reflect on how they successfully handled other changes and challenges.

Build a continuous learning environment in your work area. Prepare employees and build their confidence for current and future changes. Use classes as well as on-site and off-site training programs. Post or send news items they should see. If helpful, encourage them to use social media to keep up with what their peers at other organizations are doing. Assign those who learn some things quickly to help co-workers who need assistance. And when it comes to learning, don’t neglect yourself. The best leaders today are themselves continuous learners.

As appropriate, encourage employees to take advantage of the programs and benefits your company offers to help reduce stress. And take advantage of them for yourself as well.