

Managing Change

Practice Guide



The need for change in any organisation is constant. On a personal level, change is necessary so that we grow and learn as individuals. For organisations, change is required

to fulfill legal and moral responsibilities, meet the expectations of clients and to enable the organisation to grow as a business or service.

People respond to change in many different ways - with excitement, cautiousness, anger or denial. Commonly, a very normal reaction is to resist change. Resistance is a defence mechanism caused by frustration and anxiety about what the change means for them, their role, workload, values or security etc. However, resistance is not always negative; in fact it is usually helpful to encourage insightful and well-intended debate and questioning about why change is being implemented.

While some resistance is natural, a change process is usually more successful when staff are open to change. People who are open to change are more likely to have the cognitive and emotional ability to look at change as an opportunity. It may be an opportunity to learn something new, or improve service delivery, for instance. People who are open to change commonly have a flexible and optimistic attitude. They are reflective learners and believe that opportunities and actions result in success.

The Manager's Role During Change

Articulate a clear and shared vision to staff and key stakeholders about why the change is happening.

Manage people with patience, gentle humour, grace, persistence, pragmatism, respect, understanding, and support.

Create a plan for involving as many people as possible, as early as possible, in the change process.

Give everyone a role and a sense of responsibility to help the change become a success. Even if staff cannot affect the overall decision about change, involve them in small meaningful decisions and discussions.

During change, people can lose co-workers, known ways of doing things, status, security, stability, or confidence. Managers should recognise loss, help people express their feelings and then assist them to move on. Never underestimate how large the impact of dealing with change can be, so inform staff where they can access further individual support like supervision or counselling.

Create small successes as early as possible and celebrate the small wins.

Communicate with staff regularly and honestly. You will reduce their concern and resistance when they are treated with respect, have the facts and know the rationale for the change.

Throughout the centuries there were men who took first steps, down new roads, armed with nothing but their own vision.

Ayn Rand

Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.

Leo Tolstoy

Leaders establish the vision for the future and set the strategy for getting there; they cause change. They motivate and inspire others to go in the right direction and they, along with everyone else, sacrifice to get there.

John Kotter

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The Manager's Responsibilities

- 1 Ask questions and know why changes are being adopted. This will then enable you to believe in the change yourself. Remain positive about it when communicating and engaging with staff.
- 2 Become a change champion and walk the talk. Managers must build and sustain strong enthusiasm about the change. This includes reminding everyone of why the change is occurring and the benefits that will come from the change process.
- 3 Challenge complacency. Complacency hampers change and prevents people from acting. It is crucial that staff feel a sense of urgency to share their problems, opportunities and commitment to act!
- 4 Make it as easy as you can for people to take the actions you desire. Using various options, give people as many incentives as possible to make the change.
- 5 Do a risk assessment early on and have a specific management plan for all the major risks. How will you identify people who need specific support, and how will you build the morale of the team through the change process, for instance? Good plans shape good decisions.
- 6 Plan the training and supervision required for each individual team member in order to help them gain the competencies to adopt the change and overcome any fears and concerns about coping with the transition.
- 7 You cannot allow the nay-sayers to continue being negative forever. They sap the organisation of time, energy and focus eventually affecting the morale of the team. The key is to know when enough is enough.
- 8 Like an express train, change can often sweep through and leave staff wondering what happened. In order to maintain new ways of thinking and doing, there needs to be constant monitoring and maintaining the change. Once the wheels are in motion, managers must support staff to maintain the new standards and become 'action learners'.
- 9 Self-care becomes extremely important during change. Change can create stress and emotional distress if not managed well. Stress can take the form of depression, anxiety, irritability, anger and isolation. Know the signs, talk it through and use self-care strategies to avoid burn out.

REFLECT



How are you supporting staff to be open to change?

How are you managing resistance to change?

How are you engaging staff in the change process?

What is your communications strategy?

How are you going to determine if your change management process has been effective?

What are you doing to self care through times of change?