

UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

Total Talent Management

Change Management – Understanding Change

BE BOUNDLESS



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Understanding Change

Change is constant and will always occur, and understanding its components on an individual level can help us relate it to an organizational level. Change is important to understand, as it affects many facets of an organization. Its effect on the individual is of great importance as it will filter through and influence all levels of the organization. Organizational change can create fear and uncertainty, it is important to understand these influences; what is expected when they do occur, and preparing for them when they happen.

Influences on Change

Typically causes of change can be split into two categories: Internal and External. No organization is an island and external forces are always influencing and interacting with its existence. Individuals and organizations may have very little ability to influence such external factors such as politics, culture, economy, societal changes, or technology. It is important to understand that if the change is the result of an external factor, accept the change, and then modify any internal processes or items that are affected by the external influence. Internal factors are very numerous, as almost any item or event can influence change within an organization, but some of the more influential ones are employees, policies, organization structure, managerial, and financial. With internal causes of change we have the most ability to control and prepare the outcomes of such events. The benefits of this are numerous as we can prepare with education, communication, training, and support. These tools will help mitigate any negative outcomes which may occur as a result of the change.

Common Reactions to Change

- **Denial:** If a change is announced some people may feel that the change is not necessary. They may be reluctant to listen or deny any facts or information presented to support the change.
- **Resistance:** With any change there will always be people who resist the change. Resistance is very common and stems from a fear of the unknown. Not knowing how an event is going to turn out can be a scary event for those who go through the change.
- **Anger:** When change occurs and the norm is uprooted, people can experience anger. People may lash out and become uncooperative during this time. Humans are creatures of habit, and when that changes people can become angry.

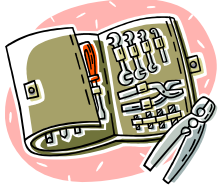


- **Indifference:** People just may not care, or the change may not have an impact on their routines or work. Be wary of this, as the change may be intended to have an impact, if the individual is indifferent about it the change then they may not understand or accept it.
- **Acceptance:** Changes generally occur for the better and have a positive influence on those involved. Even with positive change acceptance may not happen right away, but should occur quicker as opposed to when the change is perceived to be negative.

Suggested Activity

Estimated Time	10 minutes
Topic Objective	To describe some common reactions to change.
Topic Summary	Common Reactions to Change People will experience change in different ways, and not everyone has the same reaction. Understanding these reactions is essential to help identify why people experience them.
Materials Required	None
Planning Checklist	None
Recommended Activity	Discuss the group's reactions in regards to the following scenario. Your company is implementing a new schedule for its workforce. They are switching from a normal 8 hour shift Monday through Friday to a 10 hour shift Monday through Thursday. Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who feels it is a positive change? • Who feels it is negative? • Who in the group would feel upset or angry about the change? • Who in the group is indifferent? • How will the change affect people's personal lives?
Review Questions	Why is it critical to understand the different reactions people will have to change?

Tools to Help the Change Process



Preparing for the change is very important as with preparation comes more chance of success. These tools will help facilitate the change process and provide it the best chances for success.

- **Communication:** Keep the lines of communication open before, during and after the change as on the fly changes may be needed. This will help with any unforeseen events that occur during the change. It will also help to learn for the event which should make future changes occur even smoother.
- **Education:** Educate all parties the reasons for the change, and what the expected outcomes will be. People want to know why a change is occurring. It will also help to stop and clear up any rumors that may have been spread.
- **Training:** Make sure all parties are trained and up to date with any and all material required for the change. A very important step if the change involves adding or removing any pertinent in the business.
- **Flexibility:** When change is planned for not all events can be foreseen. Be flexible and ready to modify or update the current plan to account for any unforeseen events.
- **Affected Parties:** It is especially important to have the individuals that are involved in the change participate in the change process. They may be able to shed light into the subject from an expert's point of view.

These tools will help battle any negative reactions when they occur, and with more preparation the change should be smoother.

Further Study

To learn more about change management, consider our in-person offerings such as, [Navigating Change in a Complex World](#), and [Courageous Collaboration](#). Further trainings to develop Organizational Excellence will be shared here in the Leadership Café, on all of the competencies found in our [Competency Guide](#). Subscribe now to [The Learning Lab](#), an online platform featuring Business Skills & Productivity, Leadership Development, and Office 365, powered by Skillsoft Percipio and customized for UW learners.