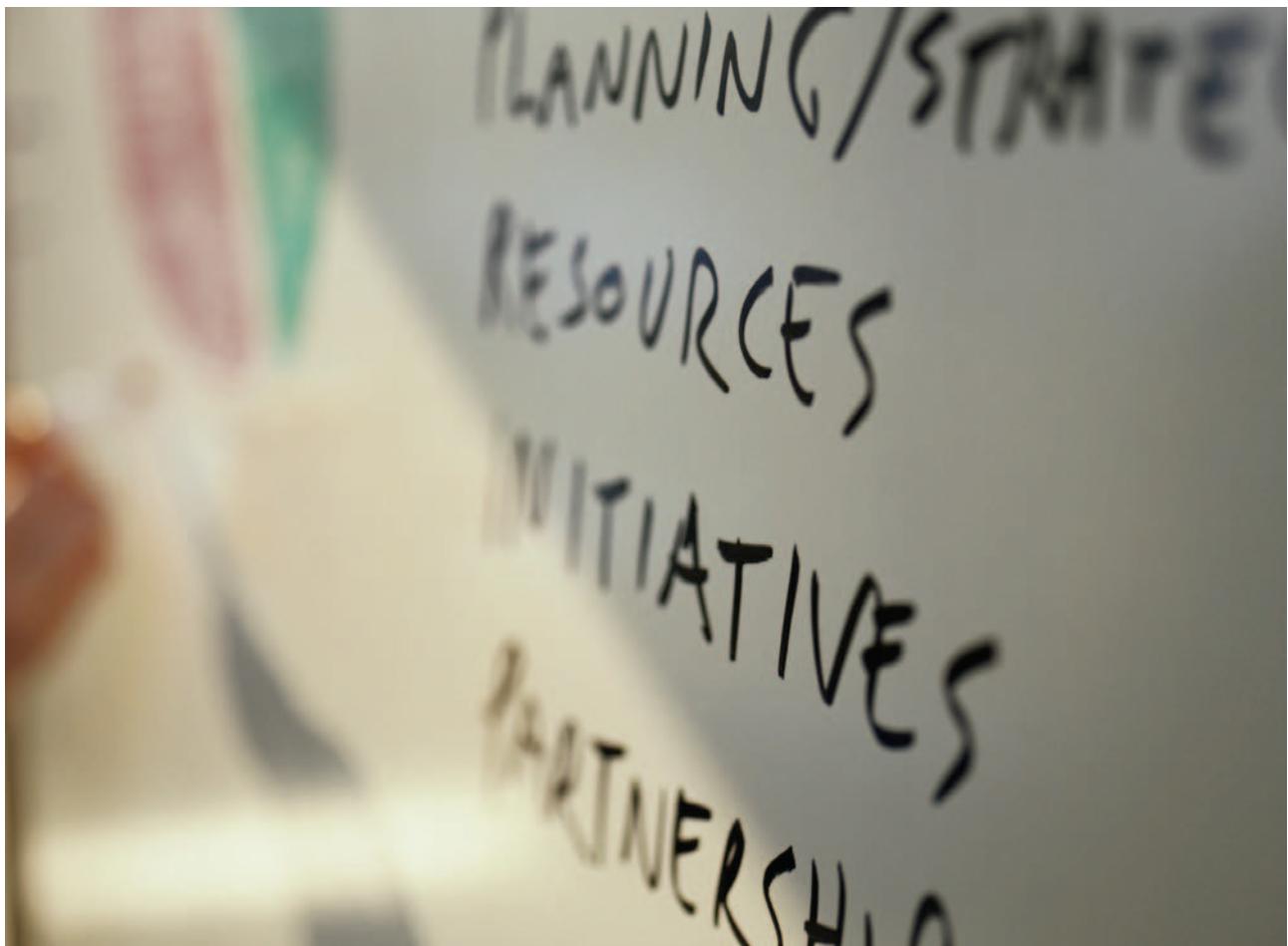


*Rapid* Skill-Builder®

# Change Management



The ability to anticipate and respond effectively to change is a key life competency. These skills are even more critical in today's fast-paced and competitive work environment, where everyone from the newest recruit to the most senior manager is expected to demonstrate some "change agent" skills. These skills enable us to lead ourselves, individuals, groups and ultimately entire organisations in implementing actions that can help transform a personal or collective vision into a positive reality.

This booklet has been designed to:

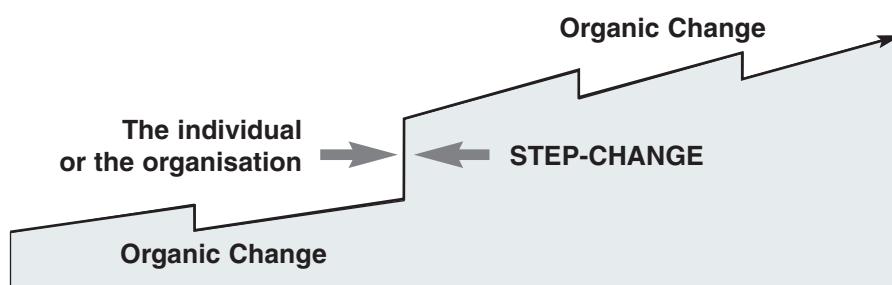
- Help individuals to understand change and how they might approach it more effectively.
- Promote understanding of the dynamics associated with managing innovation and change.
- Provide an introduction to a few tools and techniques that contribute to the successful handling of change (personally and when helping others through the change process).

Change management is a large and complex topic. To help us to navigate our way through this subject, we will use a six-step approach to change management: **Identify, Involve, Inform, Initiate, Implement and Inspect**. This system can be followed as a personal or an organisational process. It can also be used to help steer people through major life changes at work or at home.

# ▼ Identify

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Change takes many forms. Sometimes it is highly personal, relating to a significant shift in circumstances and perspective about people, or about life in general. At other times, it is initiated by an organisation with which we are associated, that may be facing internal or external forces that will drive dramatic shifts in course or direction. Change can be small in scale, affecting individuals or small parts of the organisation, or it can be large-scale, impacting on the organisation in its entirety. Some changes are evolutionary and incremental (often called ORGANIC change), while others are dramatic and transformational (or what is often called STEP-CHANGE).



**Organic change** is relatively easy to handle. It usually only involves small adjustments to our work or home lifestyle. In fact, this kind of change often occurs slowly over time and can go unnoticed. We usually “take it in stride”. **Step-change**, by definition, is highly different and noticeable; it might even come as quite a shock to us. Objectively, the change itself may not be earth-shattering but compared to past experience it is significant nonetheless.



Whatever the scope, size or source of change, we usually have to adjust to new situations that impact on things such as the skills we require, the practices we adopt, the technology that we use or the customers that we serve. We might not think that we have the luxury of time to prepare, but failure to do so will ultimately result in mistakes, unnecessary waste, rework, over-runs, increased costs, stress and frustration.

On the other hand, the return on investment of time spent preparing for a change can be enormous, because it often makes the perceived challenges associated with the change much simpler to manage.

Once you are clear about the nature of the change that you are about to face, you will be tempted to rush out and take action, just to get things moving. However, it is critical that we focus our efforts on the right issues.

One of the ways to make sure we focus on the right things is to conduct some sort of an assessment. We do not expect a doctor to rush into prescribing a course of treatment before conducting a full diagnostic assessment of a patient. A change assessment is a diagnostic check to put the issue or situation into some kind of perspective and help us decide what to do about it.

Have you ever wondered why some visions and supporting strategies for major change fail to realise their full potential? Or why so many well-thought-out visions and strategies get filed away to gather dust? One of the reasons for such unrealised potential is a failure of people to assess the current situation of the individual, group, organisation, system or process that is about to be changed.

It is normal for organisations to start developing strategic plans to manage change before they have adequately assessed everything.

Do not forget to evaluate these things:

- **The present position:** What is the current state or situation as we understand it?
- **Available resources:** Have we got enough resources to cope for as long as necessary?
- **Time available:** Some organisations fail to factor in the degree of change already underway when planning the timing of another change.
- **Personal preference:** Some changes might not fit the expectations, needs, wants and desires of employees, suppliers or customers.

Of course, it is of no surprise that these assessment headings are exactly the same in both very basic and highly complex change situations. If we make a complete assessment, however, we can quite accurately appraise the need for change and the relative effort that it is likely to entail.

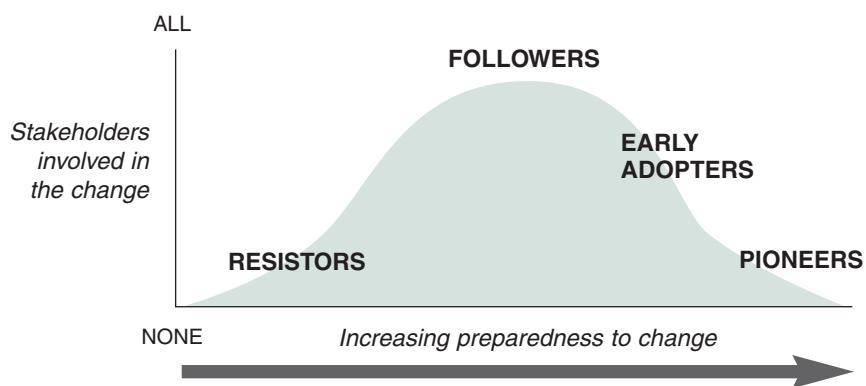


# ▼ Involve

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Regardless of whether it relates to new work practices, innovation, interpersonal skills, behaviour or some other kind of shift, change is often greeted with a range of different responses, of which resistance is only one.

Research shows that the different responses can in fact be represented by a distribution curve made up of four major categories of response: pioneers, early adopters, followers and resistors.



- 1 Pioneers.** At one end of the response curve, we find people who respond by adopting the behaviour of a pioneer. They are right at the forefront or cutting edge of change, usually the first to embrace a new product, service or idea. They will be allies of the change, the people who often have a positive vision of what the future can be after the change. To them the rewards are likely to outweigh the risks.
- 2 Early Adopters.** Not far behind the pioneers on the response curve are the early adopters. **These are the cautious allies.** They really are in favour of the change but realise that in Westerns, pioneers get shot. They just want to know how many arrows are out there before they subscribe to the change!
- 3 Followers.** The majority of people in most change situations are followers. Located at the middle of the distribution curve, they often form a critical mass. Followers only subscribe to change when it is commonly adopted (or plenty of people have already "crossed the bridge").
- 4 Resistors.** At the opposite end of the curve are the resistors. If these people ever accept the change, they will probably be the last to do so. **They are likely to be adversaries to the change.** As such, resistors tend to have little or no interest in thinking about a changed situation as being any better than the one that they currently enjoy.



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There are six important points we need to keep in mind about preparing a distribution curve of responses to change:

- 1** Every individual is capable of assuming the different positions described on the distribution curve.
- 2** It is possible for each individual to assume a different response, depending on the situation and the people involved.

For example, a person who might have been a pioneer when it comes to the introduction of new technology might well be a resistor to the concept of self-managed teams, and a follower when it comes to quality accreditation. Someone who was an adversary in one situation might be an ally or a fence-sitter in another (and vice versa).

- 3** People are not stuck in the same response pattern. For change to be successful, we need to influence the resistors, fence-sitters and early adopters to move to the point at which they can take action.

However, be aware that if you do not affirm the desired behaviour exhibited by pioneers, it is possible that they and others will be influenced to move in the other direction, away from the preferred action for change.

- 4** While it is helpful to be aware of these different responses, it is important to suspend judgment about them. You may be tempted to consider the argumentative responses as bad and the action-oriented responses as good, but this over-simplifies the issue.
- 5** Sometimes those at the pioneering end of the curve are so action-oriented that they move too fast for the organisation or team and its available resources. They might not adequately assess opportunities for the change or even plan the implementation strategy. The challenge in this case is to harness this energy without killing off the pioneers' enthusiasm.
- 6** At the other end of the spectrum sit the resistors. Their argumentative nature can be difficult to live with, but the "devil's advocate" perspective will help the change process. The challenge is to be prepared for it and to listen.



# ▼ Inform

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It is always tempting to leap straight from the identification of deficiencies or opportunities to developing strategies that will enable the change to be implemented. At this point, we should consider three levels of analysis before finalising any plan of action. These are:

## 1 Describe what is or can be possible

This stage involves brainstorming possibilities related to the change process under consideration. Questions to be posed or issues to be considered when brainstorming for possibilities are:

- **When I/we have executed our plan, there will be...**
- **I/we will have...**
- **Looking down from a helicopter, I/we will see...**
- **There is...**

These questions or issue statements help us to visualise the future. We imagine ourselves and the organisation as a whole successfully managing the change.



## 2 Develop an agenda based on these possibilities

In order to capitalise on the creative outputs achieved from the brainstorming stage, our informal strategies need to be translated into a viable agenda. Translated from its Latin root, the word “agenda” literally means “that which is to be done”. Vision, possibilities, images and pictures create enthusiasm, but specific agendas or action checklists of things that people should tackle are the practical tools of implementation.

## 3 Secure commitment

At this stage, we should have a clear idea of what we want the future to be like when we get there – a sense of **what** needs to be done. Each individual or group (and ultimately in large scale change, the entire organisation) needs to be sure that the sponsors of the change process are serious, and prepared to commit themselves and the appropriate level of resources required to implement the change-handling strategy and agenda.

The questions to consider at this stage of the process are these:

- In order to be successful in implementing this process of change:
  - What kind of financial commitment do we need?
  - Who are the players whose commitment we require (employees, customers, suppliers, managers, employee representatives, shareholders, etc.)?
  - What other resources do we need (time, materials, equipment, etc.)?
- If I do not have the authority to approve some of the things that we need, how do I inform the appropriate people and gain their support?

# ▼ Initiate

The change is now broadly understood and quantified and we have prepared ourselves as best we can for the likely impact. The critical requirement now is for firm leadership.

Leadership is an extremely broad topic and plays a significant role in the success of change implementation. For the purposes of this booklet, we are looking at people at the top of the enterprise taking leadership roles that are **clear, strong and unequivocal** from the outset. Let's look at each of these in turn.

- 1 Clear leadership.** It is almost impossible to lead organisational change if you have not been in the forefront from the beginning. The uncertain nature of change and the potential roller coaster ride means that the leader's role has to be as close to the action as possible. The leader must be in a position to make decisions that are quickly relayed and clear to people.
- 2 Strong leadership.** Change leadership is never a place for the faint hearted. Significant change is often de-stabilising and brings with it many fears, anxieties and trepidations. Most people will look for direction from their leaders to allay their concerns. The leader might share the concerns but his or her responsibility is to be a strong role model and appear to be in control. This does not mean being inflexible, loud and arrogant. Firm decisions need to be made and then implemented with as little delay and hesitation as is reasonable.
- 3 Unequivocal leadership.** Extensive research has proven time and time again that our actions speak far more loudly than our words as indicators of what we actually think or believe. For the leader, this means that words must be matched by deeds. The change leadership must be entirely committed and consistent at every step. This can often be achieved by using techniques such as "management by walking around". This demonstrates that leaders are prepared to engage directly with individuals and teams, and to listen to feedback and adjust strategies as necessary. This is a lot more effective than issuing commands from the proverbial ivory tower.



# ▼ Implement

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Along with employee resistance and the need for strong leadership, communication ranks as the biggest problem area in successful change efforts.

Fundamentally, **communication is a process aimed at developing shared understanding so that people are influenced to take some desired action.** Some might argue that not all communication is meant to lead to some action or consequence (such as when we greet someone or when we are simply passing on information). However, most communication (even in these examples) is an attempt to send a message that we hope will be received and clearly understood.

If communication is only selective, individuals and organisations can easily be uninformed, unaware or confused about the changes that they face. They either will not receive the message at all or will not fully appreciate its meaning or significance. They may even incorrectly interpret the message and potentially take action the wrong way.

Look at ways of developing shared understanding between you and the person or persons with whom you are communicating. Ask questions like:

- Who are the recipients of this message?
- What communication medium is most appropriate to their needs?
- How should I construct the message so that it appeals to them? (Think about the styles of learning or understanding.)
- What communication style is likely to work best?

The next step is to think about what needs to be done to motivate the recipient(s) to move from commitment to advocacy. Ask:

- If I were in the receiver's shoes, what would be the desired response to the "What's in it for me?" (WIIFM) question?
- How do I incorporate their WIIFM in the message?

Don't forget that when the message has been communicated, you must also solicit feedback about the effect that it is having.

If the message is on track and achieving the desired outcome, the communication has been successful. Shared understanding exists.

If the message is not on track, it is time to consider ways of repairing the situation. A critical issue at this stage is not to let frustration at this breakdown interfere with the achievement of the communication goal.



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In order to maintain momentum throughout the change process, it is also important to create an environment in which the people involved feel motivated at all levels and in all areas.

This includes individuals or groups with specific challenges or needs. Examples of these could be:

- people with a physical disability (whose needs may be significantly different if the office layout is to be redesigned)
- those with child-caring responsibilities (think of the effects of changes to working hours on this group, for example).



It is important to consider everyone involved rather than assuming that every person or group will be affected by change in the same way. Setting measurable goals for performance, or reaching targets and milestones, is also crucial.

The behaviour that each person chooses in any situation has a consequence. Establishing incentives that encourage people to choose the behaviour desired, with respect to the improvement process rather than any behaviour that might detract from it, is one way to channel positive responses. This involves the identification of performance incentives and associated reward and recognition mechanisms to help make the future change more attractive. You want to reward the behaviour you desire. This strategy may also aid in assimilating change more quickly, and with less opposition.

Many people will be self-motivated, but individuals or groups with special reasons to feel more fearful and threatened by change, will need greater incentives or more attention in terms of motivation.

In order to feel motivated over the long-term, everyone needs some kind of encouragement or promise that desired performance will be appropriately recognised and rewarded. Some of these incentives will be **extrinsic** or externally controlled. For example:

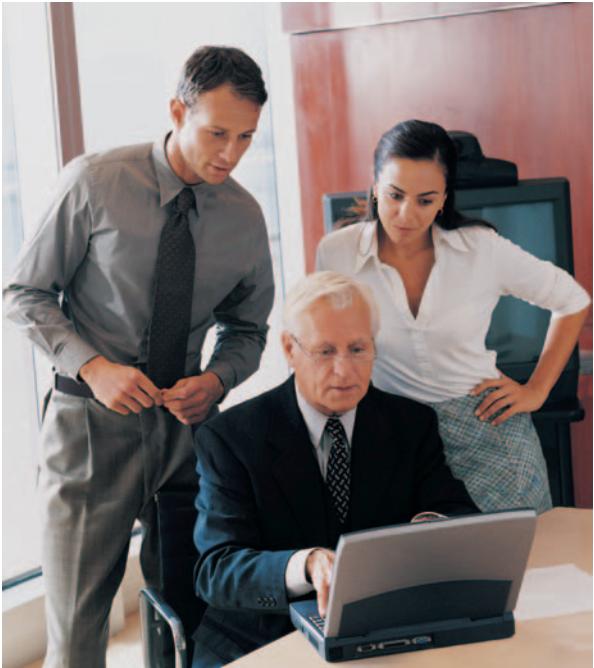
- pay
- promotion
- profit sharing.

Others will be **intrinsic**, received by an individual as a direct result of task performance. For example:

- the feeling of achievement associated with meeting a significant challenge
- the enjoyment of seeing an idea successfully implemented
- the pride that is felt in producing high quality outputs.

# ▼ Inspect

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Most of us have heard the saying “perception is reality”.

Can you recall a time when the same situation, behaviour or event was viewed totally differently by different people? A classic example of such differing perceptions can be found in witness statements taken by police at the scene of an accident or crime. Sometimes the statements made by witnesses to the same event are so far apart, you'd think they were describing two completely different situations.

What some people perceive as negative, others perceive as positive or even neutral. Try to recall a situation where you found quite varying perceptions to exist and reflect on how you might now manage such situations.

Some people will look at an event as a success, while others look at it as a failure. Can you remember having been really pleased about some achievement, only to be surprised when another person perceived that same situation as a failure?

There is nothing particularly revolutionary about this concept. Four hundred years ago, William Shakespeare wrote:

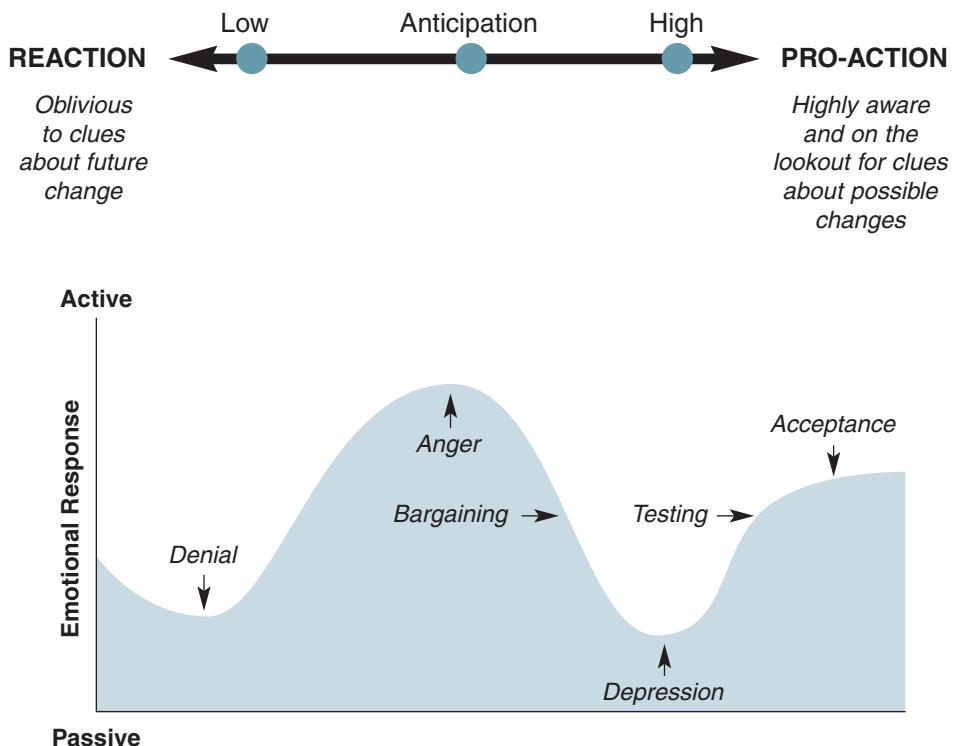
**“Nothing is good or bad – only thinking makes it so.”**

This statement demonstrates that our perspective, or attitude, toward change has a lot to do with its ultimate outcome. The stakeholder analysis process should help us recognise that:

- There will always be a range of different responses to change.
- Attention needs to be focused on the people who are taking desired action.
- You can be open to input from people who have a contrary perspective about the change, but you don't have to feed or accept undesirable behaviour.
- Judgment should be suspended about what is right or wrong.
- Short-term resistance might give us time to accept the change.
- The behaviour we observe might well be symptomatic of some other underlying issue.
- We must avoid accepting a superficial diagnosis of any situation.

All of these considerations (and many others that we can generate) help us to appreciate that people need time to come to terms with change. Their first reaction is unlikely to be their last.

One of the first things you need to realise about your personal ability to manage change is that **reacting** to it when it comes along is always more difficult and potentially wearing than preparing yourself for future change or being **proactive**. Although there is no readily applicable formula for doing this, what governs the relationship between being reactive and being proactive is that very elusive skill, ANTICIPATION.



Sometimes, many changes hit us all at once, leaving us overwhelmed and unable to manage it all. Consequently, in order to be effective, we need to try to establish some sense of order by adopting a **planned approach** to managing change.

The first step in taking such an approach is to recognise that significant change is a lot like a roller coaster ride in terms of people's emotional response to it. Initial **denial** is usually followed by **anger** or **resistance**. However, individuals will start to **accept** the change, even if it takes time for their emotions to become positive.

It would be excellent to find a foolproof recipe for success in managing organisational change. The reality is that there is no magic formula. Each process of change is unique because it is a product of the dynamics associated with the **people** and the **situation**. However, developing a repertoire of change-related skills and being aware of the issues involved (which have been covered in this booklet) will assist you.

The template on the following page provides a format for managing and preparing for change.

# Change Management Skill Building Template

