



THE WORK LIFE COMPASS

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WORK/LIFE MATTERS



Overcoming Your Fears During Workplace Changes

By Dagmara Jurikovicova and Veronika Holikova

In the business world, change is unavoidable. Some changes are small and barely noticeable, while others may have a great impact on your professional and private life. For example, you may not notice that the office furniture has changes, but you would certainly be alert if your company decides to downsize. No matter what kind of change comes your way, being able to embrace it and cope with it effectively is an important skill to possess. In other words, it is about being 'change ready'. Change readiness is the ability to continuously initiate and respond to change in a way that places you at an advantage, minimizes risk, and sustains performance.

You may want to consider a few questions to see how ready you are for change:

- Are you flexible in accommodating change?
- Are you ready to try innovative ways of managing situations?
- Can you pre-empt situation that may need you to change?

A survey in the Journal of Applied Psychology on dealing with change shows that personal stability and resilience was related to higher levels of change acceptance. Three specific factors (information received about the changes, self-efficacy for coping with changes, and participations in the change decision process) were found to be predictive of higher levels of employee openness to change. Lower levels of change acceptance were associated with less job satisfactions, more work irritation, and stronger intentions to quit.¹

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Here are some tips to handle change better:

1. Recognize the worst

Change is usually connected to difficult feelings and unknown situations. Often, without conscious prompting, our imagination can get carried away with terrifying scenarios. Sometimes, by looking at your worst fear from an external perspective, you may be able to plan a path towards a solution, which can put you at ease and enable you to be more empowered to handle the change.

2. Take charge of your actions and thoughts

When a big change happens, whether planned by you or not, you may feel that your world has been turned upside down, and you may start to be anxious about having no control over the situation. Taking too much time to think about what you cannot control will deplete your energy and you may find yourself in a rut. Understanding our role in

the process of change and focusing on the parts that we are able to control will give us a feeling of fulfilment, capability and stability.

3. Think positive

Assess your actual mindset and thought process about changes in general. Do you have a tendency to be sad? Do you get confused and upset? You may have many different feelings or conflicting thoughts or you may be unsure how you will react when the change is implemented.

4. Take care of yourself

We already know this one. What are you actually doing to feel better when you go through the process of change? Improving your ability to handle stress will go a long way in helping you with changes.

Recognize the worst

Action point: Try to figure out the worst scenario that can happen to you and look at it as a problem solving task. Is there anything you can do to be more prepared, or even prevent it?

Take charge of your actions and thoughts

Action point: Try to focus on a solution by answering - *What can I do to cope with this change?* Make a list of your ideas and try to be as specific as possible. For example, taking time to think about what I really want to do, improve my CV, skills I want to acquire, etc.

Think positive

Action point: Take the time to think about the change that is being presented and write down your thoughts and feelings. It will bring more clarity to your attitude. Try to reframe your thoughts in a positive way. Your attitude and mindset will predict how you respond to the change and whether you are able to adapt to it.

Take care of yourself

Action point: Listen to your body and calm your mind. Set up a balanced diet, exercise, get enough rest, learn to relax, spend time with your friends and focus on your hobbies. This can help you decrease stress and improve your emotional health.

References:

¹ Wanberg, Connie R. and Banas, Joseph T. Predictors and outcomes of openness to changes in a reorganizing workplace. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol 85(1), Feb 2000, 132-142. Retrieved from <http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/apl/85/1/132/>

DEAR COACH



Understanding & Managing Emotional Reactions Associated with Change

By Anna Sovicova and Gabriela Bohacsova

Dear Coach,

"I have recently been transferred to a new team with a bigger portfolio of responsibilities. I am juggling the new tasks while constantly feeling that I will not be able to meet the organization's expectations. I am also not able to connect with the new team members, as they seem quite distant. How can I better handle the situation?"

Even though you may be enthusiastic about your new role, Change, whether self-chosen or imposed, can be very challenging. However, if you ask yourself "what benefits can this change bring to me?", you may be able to find an upside. A new role can direct you towards growth, and when handled correctly, can bring excitement and positive energy.

Here are some suggestions for you to deal with the present changes in your life:

- **Collect information** – Actively search out avenues to become more familiar with your new role; get an overview of your responsibilities and demand clarity on expectations.
- **Face your fear** – Write down your concerns objectively and look for solutions one at a time. This will help reduce perceived threats.

- **Let go of your past** – Give up what you no longer need (like old work habits or working styles) to create space for the new learnings. You may need to reprioritize your daily tasks, change your style of networking with team members or learn new technical skills to match the new profile.
- **Know your team** – You may want to ask yourself: "What can I do to know my new team members better?", or "How can I show them my interest and care?", or "How can I actively contribute to the wellbeing of the team or to the relationships at the workplace?".
- **Think positively** – During change at your workplace, it is very easy to say, "I might NOT be", or "I WON'T" as natural responses to a challenge. These fears emerge from our self-defeating thoughts and hence it is important to check them and change them. Eliminate negative self-talk and motivate yourself to give change a try!

If you would like to work on handling change better or on relationships at the workplace, please do contact your Work Life Coach.



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MANAGER'S HELPDESK



Implementing Change Despite Employee Resistance

By Miriam Lachova

Many managers have to deal with resistance to change from their own team members. Some changes may be small, such as a change in desk allocation. Some may be large, such as a change in job role, or the company being bought over. The impact of change may be negative or positive, and it is good to be prepared in advance to manage resistance.

1. Embrace change with flexibility

Change is a process that needs to be embraced with a willingness to be creative and innovative. Every person deals with change differently and even a positive change may find its opponents.

2. Choose ambassadors of change in your team

These ambassadors are influencers who help in creating a momentum that will help other employees accept change. Good ambassadors to choose are those who have a large network of friends within the organization or participate in company events.

3. Effective communication

Effective communication means constant reinforcement about the meaning of change, how it affects people financially, and their job scope. Weekly meetings are recommended to keep the team members informed and to deal with any emotions, which may be part of the change process. It is important to be available to address questions, coach team members through change through open conversation, and build employee morale and faith in change.

4. Prepare for resistance in advance

Managers can help those who need more time in understanding how the change will affect their job. They can foster trust within their team in order to help in difficult situations through the following: share values, empower people, be honest, listen deeply to others, acknowledge fears, expect the best in people, search for opportunities, be forward-looking and lead by example.

5. Evaluate the outcome

Employee surveys may be useful to see how changes affect employees, how they feel about: management support, trust and respect, their own successes, and how likely they are to stay with the company over the next two years. These anonymous surveys will provide a better picture about the atmosphere and is a measure of change success.

Change is not easy. However, when we embrace it with flexibility and a positive mindset, we can accept change as something that can improve our lives. May you find that place in your life. Work Life Coaches are here to help you through the process of change.





Adjusting to Post-Organizational Restructuring Changes

By Jana Karelava

Martin had been experiencing emotional distress for a few weeks. He was a team leader with an IT company, with which he was employed for the last nine years. Recently, his company was acquired by an industry giant leading to multiple changes implemented in quick succession, which frustrated him.

Martin decided to approach a coach to help him with the issues. He contacted me, as someone outside his personal and professional circles, to discuss his concerns confidentially. I made an effort to build good rapport with him to create a space where he could speak freely about the problems he was facing.

In the initial sessions, we addressed his growing uncertainties about coping with the changes at work like the lengthy takeover process, delayed decisions, the new company culture, and the future direction for himself and his team. We discussed the source of the anxiety around these changes and understood that his frustration lay in his perceived loss of control over the processes and the lack of complete and timely information.

He was encouraged to accept the situation as it was and realistically modify his expectations about his involvement in the course and speed of change implementation. We looked back on how he had dealt with major life and work changes experienced over the past nine years with his company. He realized that focusing on the task at hand, breaking his work into smaller units and seeking answers to specific questions from the right sources would

help him gain the control he wanted. He also brainstormed and arrived at some personal coping techniques for stress management, like restarting his gym routine and spending time with his children.

Martin's aim was to stay calm and focused throughout this period of change. Coaching sessions helped him to view the problem from a different perspective, apply the identified solutions and grow as a person. He also decided to use some of the coaching principles discussed in motivating and supporting his teammates going through similar feelings.

It was an inspiring process for me as a coach. I gained more confidence in supporting others by delving deeper into their existing resources to find their personal and unique ways to cope with life and work challenges. I met Martin a year later and found him well-settled and happier with the changes brought in by efficient management practices, a new company culture and new opportunities made available to him and his team.



This article is based on a true story. Personal data has been changed to safeguard confidentiality.

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