

Resistance to Change

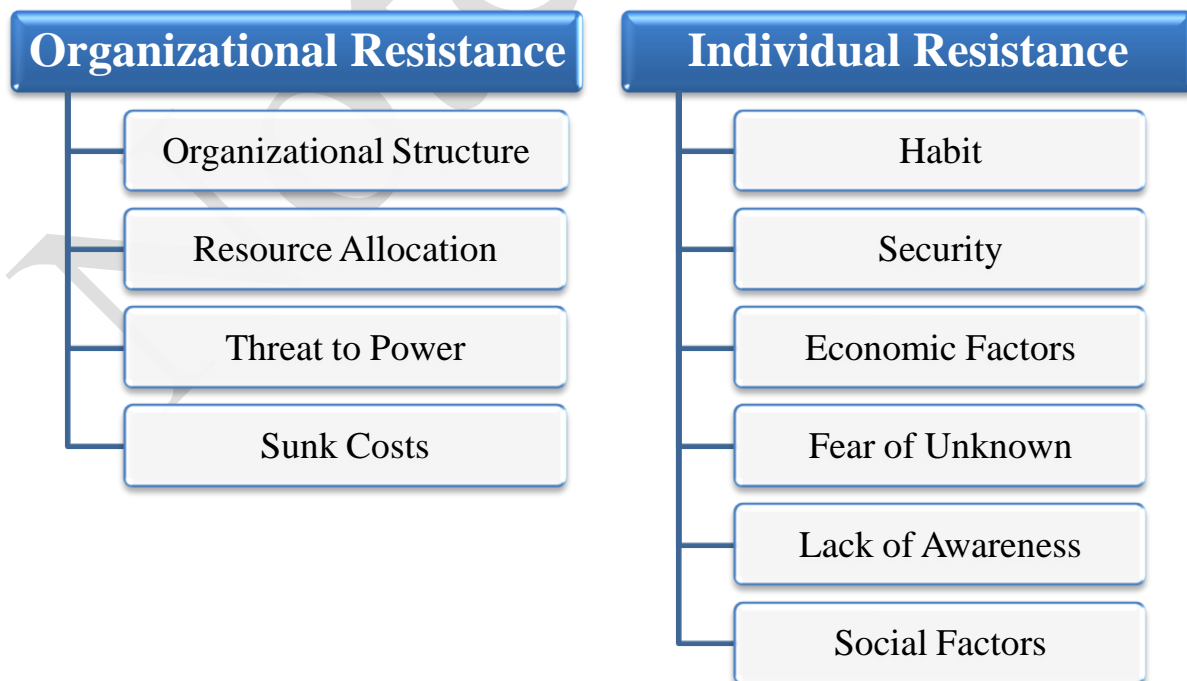
Organizational culture and structure change is inevitable due to the constant change in technology, customer and markets, social and political pressures, as well as demographic characteristics. Resistance to change is an emotional and behavioral response by the affected employees to actual or imagined threats to an established work routine. Organizations must manage change and subsequent resistance to survive.

CAUSES OF HUMAN RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

People resist changes to protect themselves from the real or perceived effects of change. Man by nature resists what is unfamiliar to him. This is partly because he fears the new and unknown and partly because adopting of new ideas in a painstaking process. The resistance to change or opposition to change may be logical and justified in some cases. Sometimes, people do not resist change. They may oppose the change agent or mode of implementing the change.

Human resistance to change may take the form of passive acceptance, subtle sabotage, aggressive refusal, complete breakdown of work and so on depending upon the situation. Resistance in any form is not a good sign of industrial relations in any undertaking. It is the duty of the management to restore and maintain the group equilibrium and personal adjustment which change upsets. Change requires individuals to make new adjustments for which they are not prepared. This causes resistance on their part.

Resistance to change may be caused by:



1) Organizational Resistance

At the organizational level also, change may be resisted. The main reasons for this are under:

- a. **Organizational Structure:** Every organization has built in mechanism for resisting change or to maintain stability. In such an organization structure, the existing employees may not accept the change when it is proposed.
- b. **Resource Allocation:** Some organizations resist change due to scarcity of resources. Greater the scarcity of resources, greater is likely to be the resistance to change.
- c. **Threat to Power:** With the change process, some groups, departments or sectors of the organization become more powerful. Because of that, some persons will be opposed to such a proposal or processes where they will lose their organizational power.
- d. **Sunk Costs:** An organization may also resist change because it has invested in fixed assets and human resources. When change is introduced, many of these costs become useless. Similarly, some executives may be retained despite their outdated skills and experience. Their pay and other benefits represent sunk costs.

2) Individual Resistance

- a. **Habit:** The human beings prefer to carry out their daily jobs in the same way. Introduction of any new steps in carrying out the job makes them feel that the job has become difficult. So they resist the change.
- b. **Security:** People with high need of job security are likely to resist the change which is likely to affect their feelings of safety. Introduction of new technology in an organization may make the employees feel that their jobs are in danger.
- c. **Economic Factors:** Employees may feel that the proposed changes may reduce their monthly pay. Hence they oppose such changes.
- d. **Fear of Unknown:** Individuals develop disinterest towards the change due to the fear of unknown or uncertainties in the future. As a result, they develop a negative attitude towards the proposed change.
- e. **Lack of Awareness:** People may not be aware of the benefits of the proposed changes and consequently they resist those changes due to ignorance.
- f. **Social Factors:** The workers may resist change because of the influence of the group or the union which they belong. They may feel that their status will go down as a result of introduction of new technology. Workers as a group oppose change as they are unfamiliar with the change.