



Communicating Change Effectively

*You don't drown by falling in the water;
you drown by staying there.*

—Edwin Louis Cole

Change is never easy, yet it is something people deal with in nearly every aspect of their lives. Change can be scary, as it often pulls us out of our comfort zone into new and uncertain territories. In the corporate world, change is necessary for a company or organization to grow and thrive. Companies that resist change or are too late in implementing it often risk their very survival in the process.



According to experts, _____ judgments are made about a person within the first 7 seconds of them meeting someone.

Organizational change can be a very complex process with many moving parts. It is never simple and it doesn't occur overnight. But the process of creating a strategic plan for implementing change is key to long-term success for actual implementation of the changes within the organization. Because not all companies are the same and not all employees deal with change in the same way, different kinds of change require different strategies to gain employee acceptance and engagement.

Some examples of changes that can occur in an organization

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



As stated earlier, not all companies are the same. Along those same lines, it can be said that not all change is the same either. Different change often requires different strategies and plans to get buy-in from the various stakeholders involved. Resistance to a new program or plan can severely hinder an organization's ability to move forward and grow.

The three most common types of change:

1. **Developmental change.** With this type of change, the processes that currently exist are slowly and continually improved over time without any drastic and dramatic difference in the way the organization operates. Examples of developmental change might include upgrading of computer systems, utilizing new and improved software, changing vendors, etc. This type of change usually causes little stress to employees if communication has been clear throughout process.
2. **Transitional change.** This type of change is a little more intrusive than developmental change and involves a company replacing or eliminating an existing process and replacing it with one that is completely new. Examples of transitional change might include a corporate reorganization, merger, or the addition of a new product line. The success of transitional change often rests on how smoothly and efficiently the transitional phase goes for all involved. Without constant and clear communication on the part of leadership, employees can feel anxious or uncertain about their jobs and even the future of the company itself.
3. **Transformational change.** This is the most dramatic and sweeping type of change that can happen within a company. With transformational change, a company decides to change its basic underlying strategy and process, often based on a change in supply and demand, lack of revenue, growing competition or the emergence of new technologies in the field. In order to stay competitive in the marketplace, they choose to make radical changes to the way they have previously done business. Transformational change is usually enacted over time and can involve both developmental and transitional change.

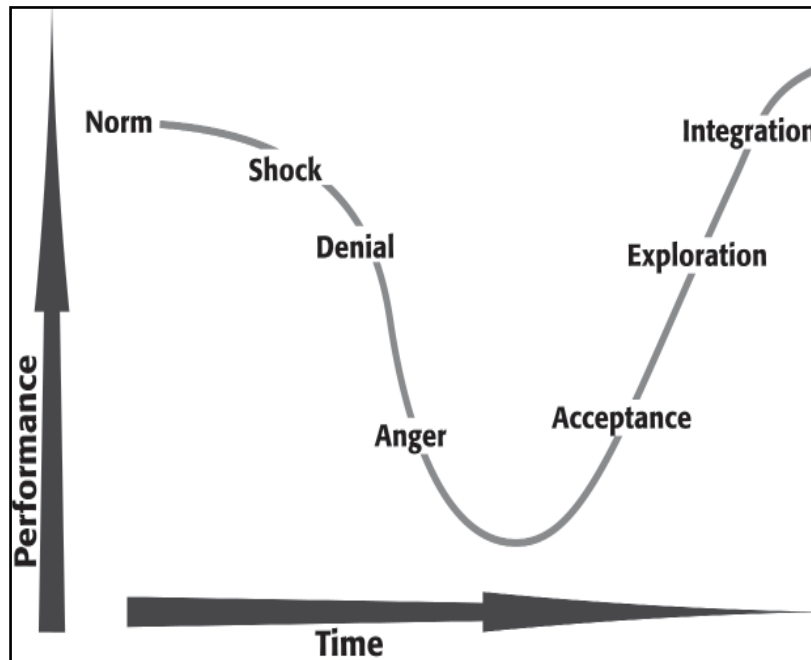
Three keys needed to effect organizational change

1. High level of support
2. Support is effectively communicated throughout the organization
3. People are given all the tools and authority needed to implement change



The Change Curve

The Change Curve is a behavioral model of group and individual reactions to the process of change within an organization. The Change Curve is an adaptation of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's theory that seeks to explain how people deal with catastrophic personal loss and grief.



Angles of the Curve:

- **Norm.** In this stage, everything is normal with employees going about their routine until the announcement of change happens. Suddenly their world is turned upside down.
- **Shock.** After the announcement, people may feel blindsided and freeze up. They may worry and feel anxious about their future and the lack of information coming from leadership. Fear of the unknown may take over and they may be afraid of making a mistake under the new programs or plans.
- **Denial.** People don't want to believe it is happening. They miss the feeling of comfort with the familiar and worry that they will not easily adjust to change. They may feel the security and future is being threatened.
- **Anger.** Now people have begun to accept the changes as actually happening but are angry about them. Conflict can arise with finger pointing and blaming. Individuals may start to divide people and rally others against change in a last ditch effort to defeat it or minimize it.



- **Acceptance.** Reluctantly, people began to accept the change is happening and there is nothing they can do to stop it. This manifests itself in low energy and it often shows up in their work, via lackluster performance. They feel like they want to give up and may appear unmotivated and depressed.
- **Exploration.** Gallows humor is common as the changes begin to be implemented. People reluctantly begin to experiment with the new changes and policies.
- **Integration.** People have finally accepted and committed to the changes and get back to work. They eventually decide to be involved and make the best of it. Integration returns to the norm.



According to experts, _____ % of all restructuring fails not because of strategy, but because of the human dimension.

Managing Reactions to Change

The communicator's task in any change process is managing the curve by helping people adjust and enthusiastically support change as quickly as possible. This requires a communication strategy for each angle of the curve.

Determine what specific intentions might be utilized when communicating with your team at each of the specific angles of the curve and what strategy might be pursued.

- Norm _____
- Shock _____
- Denial _____
- Anger _____
- Acceptance _____
- Exploration _____
- Integration _____



Utilizing Storytelling Effectively

Applying the use of storytelling in a business setting can be highly effective in helping a team or organization deal with change. Stories, anecdotes and illustrations can serve as excellent springboards in business to communicate new strategies, structures, identities and goals.

Here are some questions to consider when choosing a story to include in your speech or presentation:

- Where does the story take place?
- When does the story take place?
- Who is the story about?
- What happens in the story and in what order?
- How does the story pertain to your subject matter?
- How long will it take to tell the story?
- Is this story appropriate for your audience?

*A story is a fact wrapped in emotion
that compels us to take an action.*

—Richard Maxwell



Common mistakes made when managing change:

1. Not communicating strategy clearly
2. Not appreciating that people have different reactions to change
3. Not treating transformation as a mental and emotional process
4. Being less than candid with team members during change process
5. Not setting the stage for change in an appropriate way
6. Improper system or framework to sustain the changes
7. Not establishing the new strategies into the company's culture
8. Lack of vision and foresight from leadership
9. Not involving people at all levels in the change management
10. Not implementing the change quickly yet thoughtful

Change is good. You go first.
-Scott Adams



EXERCISE: Leading Your Team Through Change