

Most Frequently Asked Questions on Managing Change

Q. What are the benefits to a successful change initiative?

A. Change can be difficult to achieve, but it is necessary for any organization to stay relevant and adapt to the needs of its customers. Some of the benefits of an effective change initiative are as follows:

- ✓ Alignment of existing resources
- ✓ Increased overall effectiveness
- ✓ Increased employee performance
- ✓ Predictable future challenges
- ✓ Reduced risk
- ✓ Increased return on investment

Q. Why is change hard to manage?

A. Change is inevitable, and while it is natural and good, it can also be difficult. The secret to successfully managing change from the employees' perspective is definition and understanding. Resistance to change comes from a fear of the unknown or an expectation of loss. The front-end of an individual's resistance to change is how they perceive the change. The back-end is how well they are equipped to deal with the change they expect. As a manager, your role is to help your staff understand the reason for the change and to provide them with tools to be successful in their new landscape.

Q. What are the common initial reactions to change?

A. While it's true that everyone reacts to change in their own unique way, it can be helpful to become familiar with some common reactions to change so that you can be best equipped to respond to and address your employees' reactions. Here are some common ways (and playful names) that describe how employees react to change:

- ✓ **Trailblazers** embrace the concept, and have already progressed in that direction with little help needed.
- ✓ **Pilots** are somewhat cautious, but willing to move towards change once they understand the vision and their role in the change.
- ✓ **Intellectuals** support the concept, but will only take action when they feel there is a strong need to do so.
- ✓ **Late Bloomers** tend to resist change for an extended period of time, but once convinced, they become the strongest supporters of change.
- ✓ **Traditionalists** refuse to accept the concept of change.

Q. What are some models for Managing Change?

A. There are many models on how to manage change. Some of the most common ones were developed by **Kurt Lewin and John Kotter**.

Kurt Lewin's change model was one of the first to be developed and his three stage model helps us to understand how people move through change. Stage 1: "Unfreeze" – in which staff becomes ready to change, Stage 2: "Change" – in which the implementation occurs, and Stage 3: "Freeze" – in which the change is made permanent.

In **John Kotter's** model, he identifies the following eight steps for leading change:

- 1) Create a Sense of Urgency



- Help others see the need for change and the importance of acting immediately
- 2) Create the Guiding Coalition
 - Put together a group with enough power to lead the change
 - 3) Develop a Change Vision
 - Clarify how the future will be different from the past
 - 4) Communicate the Vision for Buy-in
 - Ensure that as many people as possible understand and accept the vision
 - 5) Empower People and Remove Barriers
 - Remove as many barriers as possible and unleash people to do their best work
 - 6) Generate Short-term Wins
 - Create visible, unambiguous success as soon as possible
 - 7) Don't Let Up!
 - Consolidate gains and produce more change
 - 8) Incorporate Changes into the Culture
 - Anchor new approaches in the culture for sustained change

Q. How do I establish an effective vision when preparing my team for change?

A. Creating an effective vision will increase buy-in from stakeholders and team members to take on change with a positive attitude, resulting in less resistance. An effective vision states the goals and new direction in a clear and direct way. An effective vision also lets staff know the level of importance of this change and how they can support it in their respective roles. In addition to identifying the “why”, it’s helpful to paint a picture to inform others of where the organization is going and what it will take to get there.

Q. Why is it important to “paint a picture” when establishing a vision for change?

A. Change can cause anxiety, fear, and other negative reactions when people are uncertain about the change. Creating a picture can inspire people to begin to move in the right direction of:

- ✓ What the organization will look like
- ✓ What team members will be doing
- ✓ What customers will be doing/receiving
- ✓ What products and services will be provided and how well
- ✓ What new values the organization will need in this future state

Q. As I manage a change initiative, should I recognize small milestones in my team’s success or should I hold off and only recognize their major achievements?

A. Some changes are short, while others may take longer to achieve. Setting and acknowledging short-term achievements keeps the team motivated in the overall goal. These short-term wins or milestone accomplishments must be clearly related to the change effort to ensure success as it provides evidence that peoples’ efforts are paying off. In addition to motivation, the milestone achievements can also serve as a guideline to adjust the vision and its strategies.

Q. What is Change Readiness?

A. Change readiness is the new change management – With change as a constant in our work environment today, change readiness is the ability to **continuously** initiate and respond to change in ways that create advantage, minimize risk, and sustain performance. More information on Change Readiness can be found [here](#).

