

Making the Transition: Overcoming Resistance to Change



Communicate

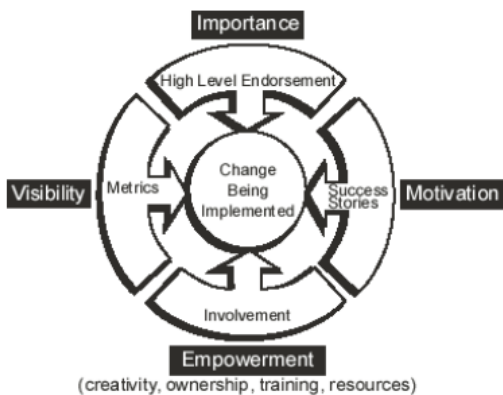
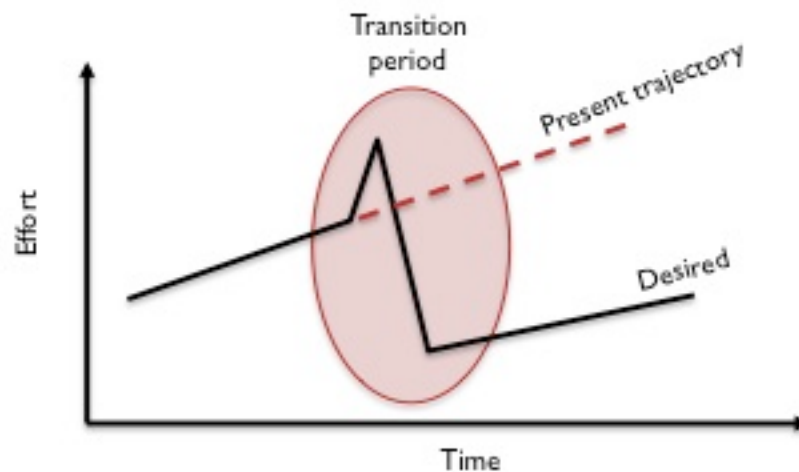


Figure 1. Factors that enable change

Develop a plan for consistent communication of what is changing, what is not, and why. Determine who will communicate the plan and when. Separate rumors and proposals from facts and accepted plans. Clearly state the current situation/process. Communicate reasons for the change, root causes, desired results, benefits to the target and the organization, and the context for the change to all levels of the organization. Highlight how support of the target group is important. Be available after the plan is communicated to answer questions and respond to concerns.

Transition

Develop a graph similar to Figure 2., which depicts costs of not making the change. Continuing the present path leads to greater effort over time. Longer-term benefits justify the short-term effort. Take time now to sharpen the axe. Set expectations for how long and what happens during the



transition period. Be complete with plans and communications so there are no surprises.

Understand behavioral patterns and reactions to change

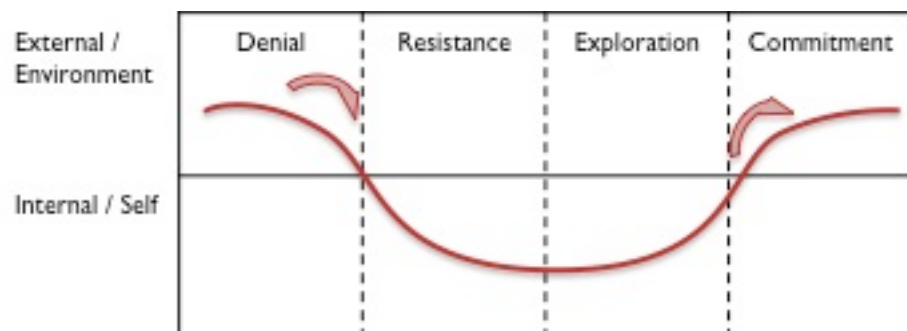
Inhibitors

Anticipate and be prepared to counter some common symptoms of inhibitors to change:

- Resistance to imposed change
- Lack of a decision – endless meetings with no buy-in
- NIH: the idea won't work because it was "not invented here."
- "We tried that already."
- "Our situation is different."
- "I want to complete what I'm doing."

Stages

Understand the emotional responses and stages, shown in Figure 3, that people go through to cope with change. First there is denial and several forms of resistance (anger, bargaining, depression).



Acceptance involves exploration followed by commitment. Accept the need to go through each stage in sequence. Some individuals go through stages faster than others; some may iterate through the stages several times.

Leading the change process

Lead

Be a leader, not just one who surrenders to the change. Educate and motivate others to change the way they do business. Teach the desired behavior. Lead by example. Recognize that the change is new to most people; give them time to adjust and catch up to where you are. Stress the need to be flexible. Build commitment incrementally by breaking down big problems into small, doable steps (small wins). Create goals for individuals that provide a path for the change.

Test

Invite people to express their reactions to the change. Bring resistance into the open to address causes, identify potential problems, and answer questions. Encourage people to ask what or how questions about the change, instead of why. Develop responses to their reactions. Ask the target to articulate perceived benefits from the change. Ask for ideas on how to make the change successful. Consider pilot tests to identify unanticipated results. Know that changes are a natural part of business dynamics.

Recognition

Acknowledge positive changes in behavior. Reflect responses to changes in performance appraisals. Thank people for their cooperation and support during the change process. Celebrate milestones towards achieving the change. Appeal to people's self-esteem and continuously reinforce teamwork values.

Follow-through

Ensure that the change led to the desired outcome. Use metrics. Correct the process and lead additional change if the desired outcome was not met. Put processes in place to sustain the change over time, then adapt time management processes to help people achieve results.

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References

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