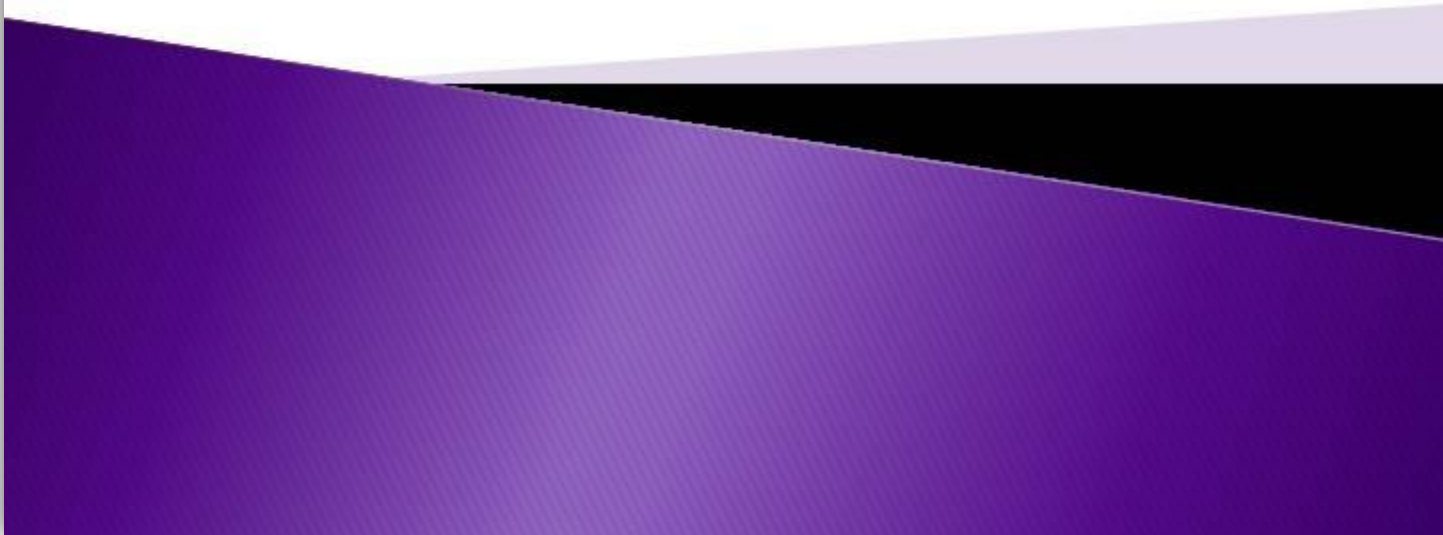


# Navigating Change: The Human Element

## *Participant's Manual*

Lynne R. Sherman, Ph.D.



## Product Description

Change exists in practically all aspects of life and affects virtually every individual worldwide, and yet people vastly differ in how they respond to change. *Navigating Change: The Human Element* explores the change process and reveals why lasting change is often so difficult to achieve. In addition, the various types of loss experienced as a result of change are discussed as are individual and organizational factors that contribute to employees' reactions to change. Quick Reference Guides and assessments are included.

*Navigating Change: The Human Element* is one of nine courses included in the Executive Education Experience™ program. Other courses included in the E3™ program include:

- *Organizational and Leadership Success*
- *Successful Performance Management*
- *Coaching for Optimal Performance*
- *Did You Say What I Heard? Keys to Effective Communication*
- *Creating an Inspired Workforce*
- *Working with Challenging People*
- *Reframing Conflict: The Road to Resolution*
- *Leading with Emotional Intelligence*

For more information about the *Navigating Change* course or the E3™ program, please contact Lynne R. Sherman, Ph.D., at [lynne@drlynnesherman.com](mailto:lynne@drlynnesherman.com).

## About the Author

Dr. Lynne Sherman, founder of People Centered Solutions LLC, is an in-demand speaker, seminar leader, and coach, and is the creator of the Executive Education Experience™ program, a program that transforms how today's business leaders respond to the growing demand for purpose-driven leadership. The E3™ program provides leaders with an understanding of the psychology of leadership as well as practical, easy-to-implement tools for becoming a more effective leader.

With nearly 20 years' experience in industry, consulting, and academia plus a doctorate in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from the University of Akron, Dr. Sherman has been recognized as an expert in her field by US judiciary as well as by government agencies and corporate leaders.

# **Navigating Change: The Human Element**

*Participant's Manual*

Lynne R. Sherman, Ph.D.



a publication created exclusively for  
People Centered Solutions

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# Why Should I Care?

“In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.”

~ Benjamin Franklin, 1789

It seems that in today’s world, we can safely add *change* to the list of life’s certainties.

Change is everywhere. It exists in practically all aspects of life and affects virtually every individual worldwide. People, however, vastly differ in how they respond to change. While some people actively seek change and gladly embrace it, others avoid it whenever possible and, still others openly resist it.

People who are willing and able to initiate and respond to change in a positive manner are viewed as valuable members of society. Yet when organizations attempt to initiate change, top leaders become mystified by employees or groups within the organization who resist change. Resistance is the most important factor in change, and the most neglected by organizational leaders. Failure to understand the impact of resistance can kill otherwise worthy ideas and prevent significant improvements to organizational effectiveness from taking place. Furthermore, research suggests that resistance is often the primary reason change fails (Maurer, 2006; Oreg, 2003; Schiemann, 1992). Thus, the acceptance of and support for organizational change by employees is viewed as one of the most critical elements in achieving successful change (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993; Cummings & Worley, 2005; Miller, Johnson, & Grau, 1994).

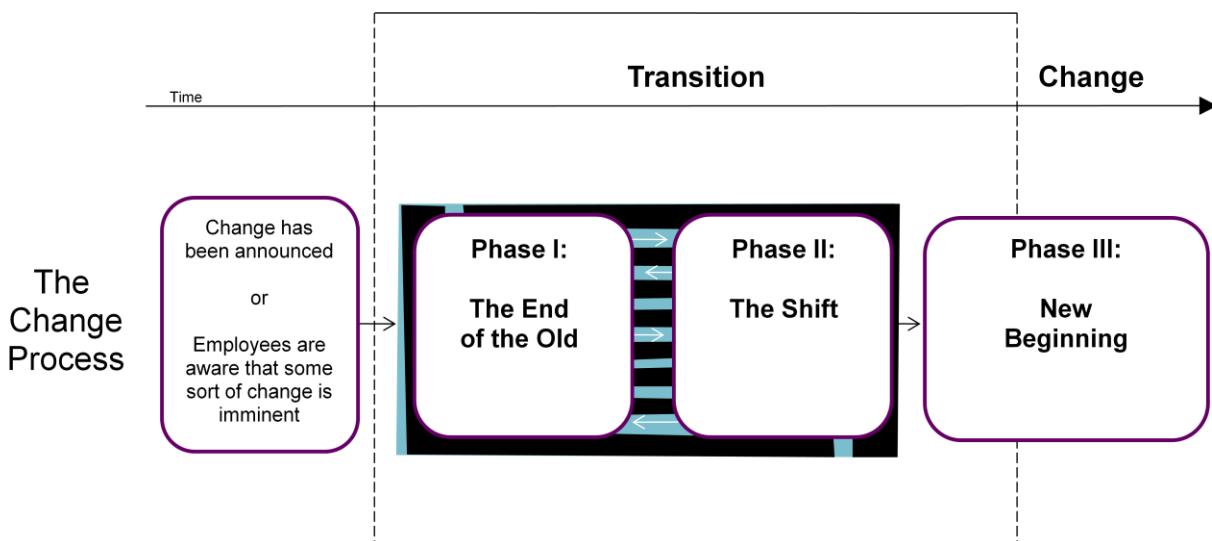
Organizational change challenges the way things are done, it disrupts the status quo, and it strains not only the organization but the employees as well. As a result, employees experience uncertainty, become stressed and anxious, and begin having fears about their ability to cope with the change and the new way of doing business (Coch & French, 1948; Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005).

While change may be a certainty in life, there are things that organizational leaders can do to address the concerns of employees, ease their resistance, and create an engaged and supportive workforce. The information in this Manual will give you the information and tools you need to do just that.

# Part I: The Change Process

# The Change Process

There are many reasons why organizations need to change. However, before any meaningful discussion about organizational change and change management can occur, it is important to understand the change process. Below is a simple model of the change process. A larger copy of this model is included in your Quick Reference Guides located at the back of this Manual.



As can be seen above, organizational change involves two states: *transition* and *change*. Organizational leaders often use the terms *transition* and *change* interchangeably; however, these terms mean two very different things and should be thought of as being *related but not interchangeable*.

*Change* is situation-based, and it focuses on the outcome or the end result of a process. For example, an organization may recognize the need to upgrade the software used to bill its customers. Without this upgrade, the company has experienced many billing problems including significant delays in processing and mailing bills and sending incorrect bills to customers. Thus, this new software is critical to providing a higher level of customer service and to remaining competitive in its market. In this case, the change involves removing old software

and replacing it with new software. The end result of this change is to have new, improved billing software in place.

*Transition*, on the other hand, is psychological and involves passing from one state to another. Using the example above, employees will not only need to learn how to use the new software, but they will also have to let go of the old, familiar, and comfortable way of doing business. Some employees may need to learn new skills, processes may change, and actual job responsibilities may also change. The transition from the old billing software to the new, more efficient software requires employees to let go of the past before they can embrace the future.

Unfortunately, most organizations focus their attention only on change (the end result) rather than on transition. It is only by effectively addressing transition that lasting change can take place.

All change involves transition, and all transition has three states. These states are the end of the old way of doing business, the shift from the old to the new, and the new beginning. For the purposes of our discussion, these states will be called the end, the shift, and the new beginning. It is important to note that an organization may experience multiple states at the same time.

As noted above, change focuses on a specific outcome, whereas transition begins with the end and with the need to let go of the old state before moving forward. Organizations routinely overlook the endings and losses that need to occur before making change a reality. Even when organizations are aware of employees' feelings of loss, they often do nothing about helping these employees work through that loss. Unless the loss associated with the end of the current state is acknowledged and addressed, sustainable change will not occur.

Think for a moment about a significant change that has taken place in your life. This change could have occurred when you left home to start college, when you got married, when you moved to a different neighborhood, or when you started a new job. All of these changes are positive. In fact, some of these changes are events that we plan for and want to achieve. However, each of these changes involves a transition that starts with an ending.

When you left home for the first time, perhaps to go to college, you may have left behind an environment that provided you with both physical and emotional safety. You may have also left behind many things that brought you comfort such as home cooked meals and a bedroom that provided you with your own space.

When you got married, it may have been necessary for you to leave behind late nights out with friends, shopping sprees, and junk food for dinner. Also gone were the freedoms of living alone. The days of not making the bed, not doing dishes for weeks at a time, and leaving your dirty clothes and wet towels on the floor may be over. When you moved to a new neighborhood, you may have left behind doctors, dentists, hair dressers, banks, and dry cleaners you trusted. You may also have left behind a social network of friends and neighbors who have known you for years.

And when you started a new job, you left behind a host of familiar routines that no longer exist. For instance, you knew what you were expected to do each day, you knew who to go to for what, you knew what the policies and procedures said, and you knew how to do your job. A new job changes all of that, at least temporarily.

In each of these positive changes, you needed to let go of something before you could embrace what was new. While it may seem discouraging and even disappointing to realize that there is an ending to each change you make in life, hopefully the new beginning you're working toward provides you with a rewarding and enriching experience.

As with personal change, organizational change requires that attention be given to the endings and losses experienced in the change effort. Failing to prepare for such endings and failing to help employees cope with these endings will ultimately create more challenges for organizations during their change efforts.

As can be seen from the examples above, the first step in managing transition must be to understand that transition begins with an end and that people need to let go of whatever came before. The second step to managing transition is to understand the shift that needs to take place. The shift is the place between what was once familiar and what is new, and it represents the time between letting go of the old and embracing the new. It is during this time that people often feel unsettled, insecure, and confused by what's happening around them. It is also during this time that employees look to their leaders for direction, guidance, and reassurance. If employees do not get what they need from their leaders, they will continue to struggle with letting go of what is comfortable and familiar.

Let's look back at our example of getting a new job. The actual physical change probably occurred rather quickly. One day you worked at one organization, and then a few days or weeks later, you were employed by another organization. You cleaned out your office, you said goodbye to your co-workers, and you drove out of the parking lot one last time. Everything that was familiar to you is simply gone. That's all external change.

The internal, psychological transition still needs to occur. You are now in the shift. If you didn't think that accepting the new position was a positive move for you, then you would have declined the job offer. But now you are between the old job and the new job. The psychological transition is often much slower than the external change, and as a result, you may struggle for awhile, wondering whether the job change was really a good idea.

It is during the shift that your feelings, thoughts, and actions may seem to collide with each other. On the one hand, you feel sad because you left so many good people behind at your old job, but on the other hand, you are excited about the new challenges you face. You know intellectually that this new job is necessary in order for you to achieve your ultimate career goals, yet you may begin to wonder if you are able to successfully perform this new job. Confusion and conflict among your feelings, thoughts, and actions are normal. This is just the reality of the shift.

It is important that you work through the shift and all of the confusion and anxiety that it brings. You'll find that you can't really skip the shift nor can you rush through it quickly, hoping to end the confusion and create a state of normalcy. When you try to skip or rush through the shift and find that you still feel stuck there, you may begin to wonder what is wrong with you or how you could have made such a bad decision about changing jobs. Rest assured, there is nothing wrong with you, and it's likely that you did not make a bad decision. You are simply reacting to the internal discomfort associated with being between your old job and your new job.

Another common reaction to the confusion and discomfort associated with the shift is to escape, and the most common form of escape is to leave the situation. In our example, escaping would mean that you quit your new job before giving yourself enough time to experience the change as a positive one. Interestingly, voluntary turnover is a common reaction to organizational change, because employees cannot reconcile the old way of doing business with the new beginnings associated with the change. Rather than try to make sense of what is happening, many employees feel it is better to simply leave the entire situation and the organization so that they can start fresh somewhere else. What these employees often do not realize is that they are still making a change that will require them to spend time in the uncomfortable shift. The difference, though, is that these employees made the choice to leave the organization and therefore chose to create change, whereas in the organization they left, employees most likely did not ask for or create the change that was taking place.

While there can be discomfort and confusion in the shift, it is also the time during organizational change in which creativity and innovation can take place. This is the time in the overall change process in which anything seems possible. New adaptive behaviors replace old, maladaptive behaviors. New processes and systems are put into place, and more effective and productive working relationships are created. These changes still require employees to move through the shift, but they may make the change more palatable when employees see the positive outcomes that can result from change. The process of moving employees from the old state to the new state is incredibly challenging, but it can also be quite rewarding for both the employees in an organization and for the organization itself.

The last state in transition is the new beginning. As noted earlier, the new beginning is usually the focus of the organization rather than the endings and losses associated with transition and the confusion and conflict associated with the shift. Unless and until organizations recognize the importance of the two states that occur before the new beginning is possible, organizational change is doomed to fail. The transition cannot succeed until employees pass through all three phases: the end, the shift, and the new beginning.



# Endings and Losses

Endings are hard, and they're hard, because they involve loss. Even the endings you chose to create are hard, but until you address the endings and losses associated with change, lasting change cannot take place. Therefore, it is important that organizations understand the different types of loss employees – including you – may experience. Losses generally fall into one of three categories: tangible losses, intangible losses, and symbolic losses.

## Tangible Losses

Tangible losses are those losses that are easily seen. One of the most common tangible losses that occurs as a result of organizational change is the loss of certain job responsibilities. Many times job responsibilities change or are eliminated because changes are made to the technology and equipment employees use and to the processes they use to complete their work. In addition, organizations frequently change the products and services offered to customers which, in turn, can result in changes to specific job responsibilities.

It's important to understand that it is very common in our society to associate self-worth with our jobs or our professions. There is a perceived hierarchy of jobs which also correlates to perceived status, and moving up and down this hierarchy typically impacts one's salary and lifestyle as well. Moves up the hierarchy are associated with more money, a more comfortable lifestyle, and increased or improved status. Moves down the hierarchy frequently correspond to less money, a more frugal or limiting lifestyle, and decreased or diminished status. All of these changes are usually easily seen; thus, they are tangible losses.

Now you may be wondering how a move up the job hierarchy can result in loss, particularly given that moving up the hierarchy generally brings more of the things that people desire. Regardless of where you are headed, you must still let go of the past, and while moving up the hierarchy may be an easy pill to swallow, it still creates loss. For example, you may decide to move to a new, more prestigious neighborhood which requires that you leave good friends and meaningful relationships behind. Your new friends may not accept your old friends and so over the course of time, your old friends fade into the past.

When you move down the job hierarchy, it is easier for most of us to identify and understand the losses that a person experiences. While people are often grateful for still having a job, especially when co-workers have lost their jobs, they often feel embarrassed and ashamed that they are now working in a lower level position. This change is often very public and even when it's not, it may still be the hot topic swirling around the grapevine. Loss of income and perceived status is a very hard loss to overcome, especially when the loss can be observed by others.

And then, of course, there are the instances in which you are expected to “do more with less.” Haven't we all heard that before? Your job responsibilities increase but there is no increase in salary, no change in title, no change in status, and sometimes no change in authority, one's budget, or one's decision-making power; sometimes the only thing that changes is that you get more work to do.

Doing more with less is a common mantra heard by employees during times of change, and it, too, brings loss. Increasing one's workload often requires employees to lower their standards for work quality. In other words, they don't have the same amount of time that they once had to dedicate to producing high-quality work. Suddenly they find that they have to lower their standards just so they can get the job done, and depending on the type of work, other employees and customers may be impacted by this lower quality output.

These same employees may also lose the ability to work on projects or tasks that they enjoy as those projects may now be considered extra or unnecessary. In other instances, taking on more responsibility means increasing one's staff size. Time that you once had to mentor, coach, and develop your staff may now be gone, because there are simply too many staff members to attend to, and the lack of time creates another loss.

Too often business leaders evaluate changes in job responsibilities from a purely analytical perspective, and while a clear analysis of the situation is important, it doesn't reflect the whole picture. Business leaders identify one person to remove from the organization, they divide that person's responsibilities in some manner, and reassign those responsibilities to others. And that is often the end of any thought given to the reallocation of responsibilities.

Another tangible loss is the loss of office space. If your organization is moving to team-based processes and work groups, then a decision may be made to eliminate many private offices and move work groups to cubicles or open floor plans where communication among team members can be enhanced. Losing a private office may mean a loss of status, either perceived or real. Moving to an open office space

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also means private conversations and meetings are gone, and you can no longer close the door to separate yourself from the noise outside your office. What you did in your office was your business. Now that you're sharing space with several other people, what you do in your space is everyone's business.

While business leaders may not give much thought to office space, research shows that employees do. Greenberg (1988) found that not only do employees attach status to office space, but when faced with changes to the location of their offices, they also adjust their productivity levels to "fit" their new offices. When employees moved to an office of perceived higher status, they increased their productivity. Conversely, when employees moved to an office of perceived lower status, they decreased their productivity. This is just another example of why business leaders must consider the human element when embarking on any change initiative.

Other tangible losses may result not from organization-wide change but rather from more specific, targeted changes. One example is a change in where you park – both the lot and the specific space. If you are told you can park in the "Doctor's Lot" or that you can park in the "Employee of the Month" space, you feel a sense of status. If you've parked in the "Doctor's Lot" or the "Employee of the Month" space for some time and you're suddenly asked to move to a different location such as the "Commuter Lot," you experience a loss, especially if you have to take a shuttle to get to the "Commuter Lot!" In this case, you may experience a loss of status, a loss of convenience (e.g., walk out the front door to your specific space vs. take a shuttle to your lot), a loss of dignity, and even embarrassment.

Changes to policies, while necessary and justifiable, can create a loss of personal expression and freedom, both of which are tangible losses. For example, requiring employees to wear a uniform when they have always been able to wear their street clothes to work can create a loss of personal expression and the freedom to choose what to wear to work. The same is true for policies that address piercings and tattoos. Employees who have always been able to show their piercings and tattoos will experience a loss if they are told that they can no longer wear their piercings or show their tattoos.

And finally, many organizations are going smoke-free. Telling employees that they can no longer smoke on the company's property can create a huge – painful – loss for some employees, and it is complicated by the actual physical changes that take place in a person's body when they stop smoking. Thus these employees must contend with the loss of not being able to smoke at work *and* the loss of control

over how their body feels while adjusting to not smoking as much as before or at all.

What makes tangible losses tricky is that other people can see the change and the associated loss which may make the loss seem even larger. For instance, if your private office was eliminated, you not only have to deal with the loss of your office, but you are also aware that others in the organization know that you lost your private office space. If the tangible loss is associated with a positive change such as a promotion, other people in the organization will be aware of your promotion and may treat you differently. Thus, you not only have the loss of your old role, but you may also lose valued relationships as well.

## **The Greatest Loss: The Co-Worker**

When leaders first announce change, many employees automatically begin thinking about and worrying about job loss. They are worried about their jobs, and they are worried about their co-workers' jobs. As the dust starts to settle, there's a moment when everyone looks around to see who survived and who was let go. And then the mourning begins.

If you're like many business leaders, you're thinking "Mourning? Really? Isn't that a bit dramatic?"

The answer is "no." Suppose you've worked with Sally for the past five years. Your office has always been next to Sally's office. Each morning for the past five years you've said "good morning," to each other, you've gotten coffee together, you've taken breaks together, you've had lunch together, and you've left the office at the end of the day together. You've learned about Sally's family, and she's learned about yours. You've shared stories about graduations, vacations, marriages, births, deaths, and new puppies. You've talked about current events, you've debated hot topics, and you've laughed at each others' jokes. You supported Sally when she was stressed, when her workload was about to kill her, and when she got some not so positive feedback on her work, and she did the same for you. You've celebrated birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays together, and you'd call her your friend, and Sally would do the same. And then one day, without warning, she's gone.

It's a well-known fact that, depending on your specific job, you may very well spend more time with your co-workers than with your family. If one of

your family members suddenly disappeared, wouldn't you feel sad? Wouldn't you experience loss and grief? Wouldn't you mourn for your missing family member? Of course you would.

Unfortunately, business leaders are often uncomfortable with the aftermath of layoffs or other kinds of terminations, so they simply don't talk about it, and they hope that you don't want to talk about it either. In the worst cases, business leaders expect you to come to work the next day as though nothing happened.

Then to compound the problem, you may have lost more than one co-worker. Your organization could have experienced massive layoffs, and you're now missing many of your friends. This is one tangible loss that business leaders must pay attention to and address if they ever expect the remaining employees to be on board with the upcoming change.

How leaders can and should address tangible losses is discussed in greater detail later in this Manual.

## **Intangible Losses**

Intangible losses are another type of loss. These losses are usually felt but are not necessarily seen. The challenge that intangible losses present to business leaders is that these losses don't readily present themselves; they are hard to identify. However, there are certain intangible losses that accompany most organizational change. Below are examples of common intangible losses.

- the feeling that one's job is no longer secure
- the sense of family
- the belief that the leaders take care of their employees
- the loss of job satisfaction
- the perception that fairness and equity are gone and/or no longer matter
- the belief that one can no longer trust their boss or senior leaders
- the feeling that the leaders don't appreciate past dedication and loyalty
- the loss of hope for one's future at the company
- the loss of commitment to the organization

All of these losses present potential roadblocks to successfully implementing the desired change; however, some losses are more critical than others and must be

addressed by business leaders. One such loss is the loss of organizational commitment. Research clearly shows that employees who are not committed to the organization are more likely to not be committed to the proposed change and in some cases, will openly resist the change. How commitment impacts change and what leaders can do about it will be discussed in greater detail later in this Manual.

## **Symbolic Losses**

Symbolic losses are a third type of loss that people experience when organizational change takes place. Symbolic losses are typically tangible losses that stand for something else or that are associated with another loss.

For example, more than 10 years ago, a non-profit, inner city hospital decided to expand its services. As a result of this decision, a rooftop garden was removed so that an additional story could be added to the top of the building. On warm, sunny days, employees ate their lunch in the garden. They took their breaks in the garden, and they went to the garden when they needed a few minutes to gather their thoughts after a particularly trying time with a patient. The garden was perceived as a safe haven, and its value to employees was immeasurable.

A few years ago, this hospital undertook another large change initiative. In a positive effort to increase employee buy-in, employees took part in a number of exercises to help them understand the upcoming change, to see how it impacted them, and to identify their concerns and fears about the change. It became painfully evident in one exercise that employees still had not let go of the garden, despite it having been gone for more than 10 years. Employees were still angry and hurt about its loss. Because the hospital did nothing to address the loss of the garden 10 years ago, it still had a negative impact on the current change initiative.

To employees, the loss of the garden represented a change in how the hospital's leaders perceived them. These employees felt as though they were not valued, that their needs were not important to the hospital, and that the leaders were not interested in creating an environment that shows they cared about the employees. Not acknowledging or addressing the losses associated with removing the garden created a lot of hard feelings among employees, and trust in leadership was damaged.

Similar losses that are considered symbolic are the loss of holiday parties, birthday celebrations, employee picnics, and employee recognition programs. When these

activities – which are often put in place to show employees how much they are appreciated and valued – are taken away, employees hear the message, regardless of whether it was the intended message, that they don't matter and that the contribution they make each and every day no longer counts.

## **Assessing Employee Loss**

To determine what is being lost by whom, you can ask yourself the following questions.

First, what specific change is taking place? Catch phrases such as “more efficient processes,” “reduced turnaround times,” and “decreased overhead” do little to define the change. These phrases also do not convey to employees what will be different when the change is complete.

Second, what other changes will occur as a result of the primary change? In other words, what else will change because of the change? It's helpful to think of change as a pebble that is dropped into a pond. At first there is a big ripple which then creates a smaller ripple which, in turn, creates yet another ripple. Change has the same impact on people (including your customers), technology, processes, products, and services. Therefore, it is important not to just understand the primary change taking place but also to understand how the primary change creates additional change.

Third, based on the changes you've identified above, who specifically will experience an ending and need to let go of something before moving forward? What specifically is lost? Are these losses tangible, intangible, or symbolic?

Fourth, is there any one thing that everyone will lose? Is the organization changing product lines or services? Will the mission and vision of the organization change? Will history be lost if the leaders of the organization are leaving? Is the identity of the organization changing? It's very important to identify and understand the losses that impact all employees as these losses can create a significant hurdle over which everyone must pass before lasting change can take place.

Some of the answers to the questions listed above may surprise you. You may even disagree with employees' responses. Regardless of whether you are leading the change initiative or are simply trying to come to terms with the proposed change, it is important that you do not dismiss what other people identify as losses.

Loss is often very subjective, and in the midst of change, employees' perceptions of loss may not seem accurate or rational to you. It is important to accept what employees tell you is their reality even if it is different from your own.

When you dismiss what others identify as an ending or loss associated with transition, you shut down communication between you and the other employees which ultimately makes accomplishing the desired change even harder. Employees will perceive you as not caring about their needs or their feelings. At the very best, they may comply with the change. At the very worst, they will openly defy you and your directives to make change happen. Organizations need employees who are committed to the change process and the desired result. You can only get employees to commit to the change when they feel that you value them, their concerns, their ideas, *and* their losses.

## **But Don't Employees Overreact?**

People are perceived as overreacting any time that they react in a stronger manner than you. Your perception of someone else's behavior is most frequently judged against your behavior. But when you use that manner of thinking, you overlook two things.

First, change causes transition which creates loss, and it is the loss, not the change, that influences employees' reactions. This concept is absolutely critical to understanding employees' reactions to change, so let me say it again:

**Change causes transition  
which creates loss,  
and it's the loss  
– not the change –  
that influences employees' reactions.**

Second, it's more likely to be a part of their world that is being lost, not a part of yours. You are likely to react in that same way when it's part of your own world that is being lost. Acting in a "reasonable" manner is much easier if you have little or nothing at stake.



Overreaction also comes from previous experiences with loss. When old losses haven't been adequately dealt with, a transition deficit is created. All that is needed to set off an overreaction is another new ending. This type of response is evident when we see people overreact to the dismissal of an obviously ineffective manager or leader or to some apparently insignificant change in policy or procedure. What employees are actually reacting to is one or more losses in the past that have occurred without any acknowledgement or chance to grieve.

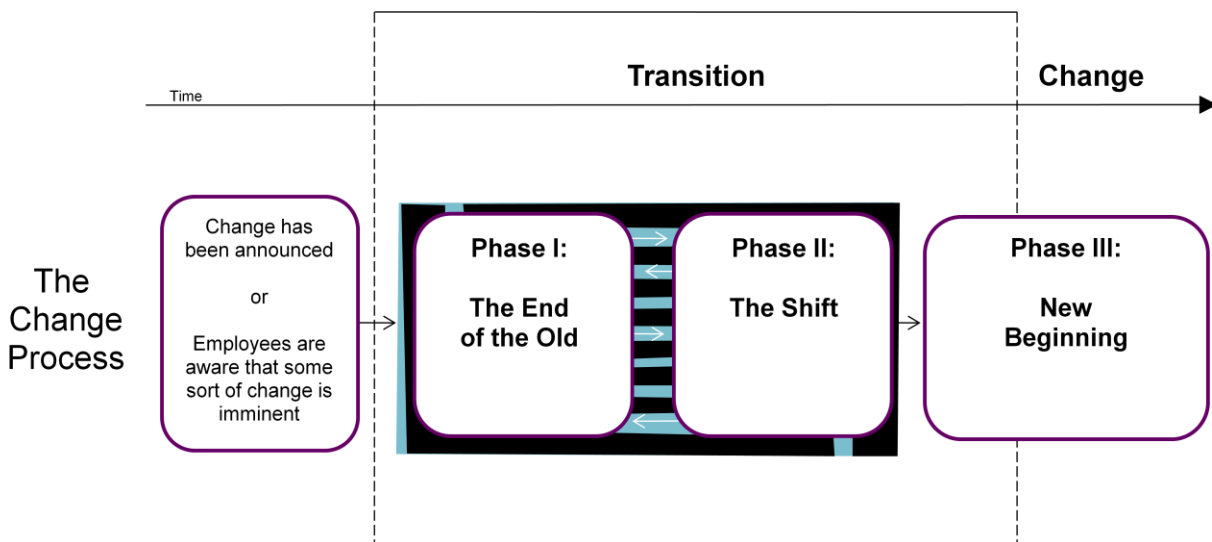
This same kind of overreaction occurs when an ending is viewed as symbolic of some larger loss, as discussed earlier. The minor layoff in a company that has never had layoffs before is an example. For some employees, it isn't the loss of a particular employee that is so troubling. What's often more troubling is the loss of the safety people felt from the no layoff policy.

Overreactions also take place when a small loss is perceived as the first step in a process that might end with removing the grievors themselves. Someone whose job seemed secure is dismissed, and suddenly co-workers begin to wonder "Am I next?"

In all of these cases, "overreaction" is normal and not really overreaction at all. It's simply the expression of loss. During the next phase, which is the shift, employees may still exhibit behaviors that could be interpreted as overreaction, but they will also begin to work through their losses and learn more about the change and what it means to them.

# The Shift

The shift is the second phase that occurs during transition. As a reminder, here's the overall change process:



Although the illustration above depicts each phase of the change process as distinct entities, they really are quite fluid.

Once employees have had some time to digest the fact that change is taking place and that they are losing something as a result, they begin coming to terms with the change. During the shift, employees continue to receive more information about the change (e.g., why it's happening, how it impacts them, how it will benefit the organization) which helps them develop a better understanding of the change, and they have had some time to become more comfortable with the idea of change.

The shift is just what it sounds like: it is a time during the change process that employees begin to shift their feelings toward the change, their thoughts about the change, and their willingness to accept and support the change.

Some employees will immediately jump on board with the change and fully support it. These employees move from the end through the shift to the new

beginning rather quickly and without much fanfare. Other employees will begin to let go of the old way of doing business, begin to buy into the change and then suddenly revert back to their old, former thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. They may then, again, move away from the old toward the new, and retreat again. This back-and-forth process is very common and should be expected.

One way to think of this back and forth movement is to remember when you first learned to swim. At first you have to get used to the idea of being in a body of water that's bigger than your bathtub. You stick your foot in the water and then, perhaps, retreat. You stick your foot in the water again, and you decide it doesn't seem that bad. So you decide it's safe to dangle your legs in the water. You sit on the side of the pool for awhile thinking about all of the water that's in the pool. You consider its temperature, its depth in different areas, and the distance it is from one side of the pool to the other. You kick your legs to get a feel for the water's response. You watch the water splash more as you kick harder, and then watch it become calm again once you stop kicking. You look around to see if there is anyone who can help you if you need help as you venture into the water. You begin to think that maybe you can do this if you hang on to the side of the pool. You decide that you're ready to get into the pool but that you'd like to do it slowly, so you walk around the side of the pool until you reach the steps. You step into the water, and find that it just covers your feet. You decide that that's not so bad, so you step down one step. Okay, that's not so bad. The water is not yet up to your knees, so you decide it's safe to take another step. That's not so bad either, so you take another step. Uh oh! Now the water is getting deeper, and you start to feel nervous and afraid, so you go back up two steps where it feels safer. You stop and think about how much you want to get all the way in the water, but it seems a little scary right now, so you decide to stay where you are. Maybe tomorrow you'll go in a little deeper.

In any change initiative, it is absolutely normal for employees to “test the water” so that they can get a feel for it, so that they can be prepared for what comes next. It's also perfectly normal for employees to retreat to safer ground when they begin to feel anxious. And that's what the shift is all about. It's developing some comfort with the change, so don't be surprised to see employees going back and forth between the old and the new. Later in this Manual, you will be introduced to factors that influence employees' ability to move through the shift effortlessly or with great trepidation, and you will learn how to support employees through this often confusing and anxious-filled phase of change.

## The New Beginning

The new beginning is the last phase of the change process, and it actually begins during transition. Remember, transition represents a psychological shift from one state to another. At this point, employees have learned more about the change that is taking place, begun to let go of the old way of doing business, worked through some of the losses that have occurred as a result of the change, and tested the waters to get a feel for the new and improved way of doing business.

The new beginning represents the point at which employees are engaged in doing business differently. For instance, if a new process was implemented, then employees who have reached the new beginning are using the process *and* are not resisting using it. If the change involved redesigning jobs, then the new beginning is the point at which the employees are doing their new jobs *and* are not resisting doing them.

You'll notice an emphasis has been placed on *not resisting change*. Employees who resist change – and there are many, many ways in which to resist change which are discussed later in this Manual – have not fully embraced the change. It's important that business leaders understand that employees who are resisting the change even after they have adopted the new practice or policy are at risk for abandoning the new way of doing business and reverting back to the old. That is why the new beginning starts during transition; employees may do as they are told with regard to the change, but they may not have fully committed to the change.

Once an employee acts in a manner consistent with the change, they believe the change was necessary, and they feel okay with having made the change, then they have “officially” moved through the change process and have reached the new beginning. The more employees who make it to the point of complete acceptance, the more likely your change will be successful.

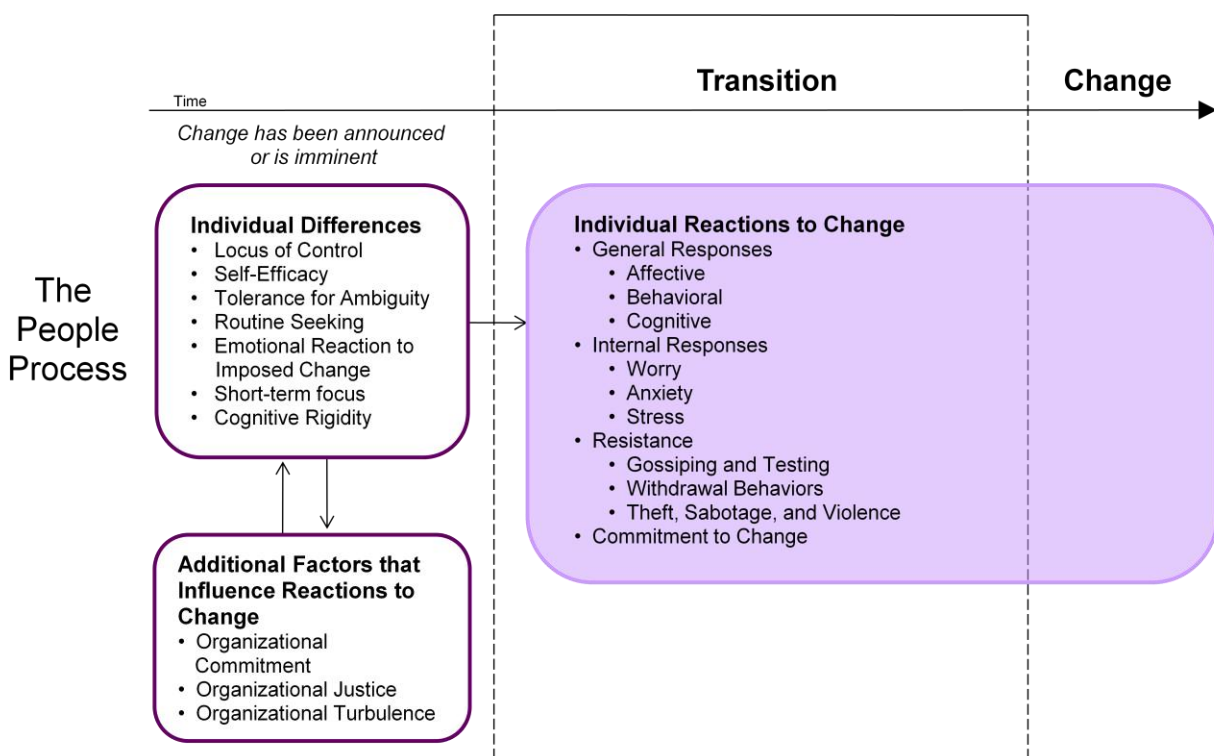
It's important to note that not all employees are going to embrace change at the same time. What that means for an organization is that there will be employees in all phases of the change process at once. Carefully planning and orchestrating your change can go a long way to move employees through the change process in a more cohesive manner. However, even with all the planning in the world, some employees will never really embrace the change.

# **Part II: The People Process – Reactions to Transition and Change**

# The People Process

So far we've made an important distinction between *transition* and *change*, and we've discussed the different phases involved in both. Now we need to add the people piece. How do people react to change, and what makes them react in that manner?

Below is a simple model that illustrates the various reactions employees have to change as well as factors that influence those reactions. A larger copy of this model is included in your Quick Reference Guides located at the back of this Manual.



The framework used for this model is the same framework that was used for the change process: there is the time when change is announced or employees know that change is imminent, and then there is the transition and the change. The white boxes contain information on factors that influence how employees respond to

change. This information is discussed in greater detail later in this Manual. The purple boxes represent some of the many ways employees respond to change. In the following sections, we'll discuss general responses to change, internal responses to change, and forms of resistance to change.

It's important to note that there is no right or wrong way to react to change; there are only more effective and adaptable ways in which to respond. So while you learn more about how employees react and why, remember that the kinds of reactions employees have are as unique as the employees themselves.

# General Responses to Transition and Change

Regardless of the specific change taking place in people's lives, they all experience three general responses to change. More specifically, people have an affective response, a cognitive response, and a behavioral response to uncertainty and change. What makes change particularly difficult is that people often experience incongruence among these three responses. These three types of responses are discussed below.

## Affective Responses

A person's affective response simply refers to how he or she feels about uncertainty and change. Some people feel excited and energized by change and feel it is a positive force in their lives. On the other hand, some people feel a sense of dread and helplessness when they encounter uncertainty and change. For most people, how they feel about change depends on the specific change they face.

Many changes people make in their lives are voluntary and are viewed as being positive (e.g., leaving home to go to college, getting married, starting a new job). It is important to note that even when change is voluntary and even when it will ultimately have a positive impact on people's lives, they still may – at different times in the change process – have negative feelings about the change. And while that's a “normal” response, it is also often confusing to people.

## Cognitive Responses

A person's cognitive response refers to what he or she thinks about the change. Some people will think that a specific change is needed or think that a particular change is good. They may also think that a change will help a situation or will correct a problem. Other people, however, may think that that same change is unnecessary, bad, will make a situation worse, and will not fix the problem at all.

As noted above, many changes people make are voluntary. However, one of the challenges that many people encounter when faced with change is that they do not think that the change is voluntary, but rather it is necessary. For example, a person



who is unemployed may accept the first job offer he receives, because he thinks that any job is better than no job. Therefore, the change brought about by this new job is perceived to be necessary rather than voluntary. On the other hand, if this same person had two job offers at the same time, then he would be more likely to think that his choice of jobs – and therefore the accompanying change – is voluntary. Thinking that a change is necessary or forced rather than voluntary is one of the reasons why people often experience incongruence among their feelings, thoughts, and actions during times of uncertainty and change.

## Behavioral Responses

A person’s behavioral response simply refers to how he or she acts in response to the change, and one’s actions toward change are often dependent on how the change impacts him or her. How people act is a significant challenge for managers, because people’s behavioral reactions to change can range from full, enthusiastic support to vandalism, sabotage, withdrawal, and turnover. Further discussion about how employees act in response to uncertainty and change is presented later in this Manual.

## Congruent Responses

If employees’ affective (feelings), cognitive (thoughts), and behavioral responses to change are congruent, then managers will have a much easier time addressing employees’ responses to change. Congruent responses to change look like this:

	<b>Feelings</b>	<b>Thoughts</b>	<b>Behaviors</b>
1.	positive	positive	supportive
2.	negative	negative	resistant

### 1. Positive Feelings – Positive Thoughts – Supportive Behaviors

Employees who express positive feelings and thoughts about the proposed change and act in support of the change are the kind of employees who make organizational change easier and increase the likelihood of its success. It is important that managers identify as many of their employees who fit into

this category and capitalize on their support. These employees often make great change agents and can be used as champions for the change initiative. In addition, these employees are often quite effective in helping to engage their more resistant co-workers in the change process.

## 2. **Negative Feelings – Negative Thoughts – Resistant Behaviors**

Employees who express negative feelings and thoughts about the proposed change and resist the change are the toughest employees managers will face. These employees often create the biggest obstacles for managers and can easily poison the positive energy generated by other employees. Unfortunately, these employees are unlikely to change their feelings, thoughts, or behaviors toward change.

## **Incongruent Responses**

Unfortunately, congruent responses are not that common. Rather it is much more common for employees to experience incongruence among their feelings, thoughts, and actions toward change. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent among management employees. The grid below shows incongruent responses. Each response is discussed below.

	<b>Feelings</b>	<b>Thoughts</b>	<b>Behaviors</b>
3.	positive	negative	supportive
4.	positive	negative	resistant
5.	negative	positive	supportive
6.	negative	positive	resistant
7.	positive	positive	resistant
8.	negative	negative	supportive

## 3. **Positive Feelings – Negative Thoughts – Supportive Behaviors**

This employee experiences positive feelings about an upcoming change not because he feels the specific change itself is positive, but rather he feels that *any* change is better than the status quo. This employee may think that the change being implemented is the wrong type of change, that the proposed change won't fix the present problem, that it's the wrong time for change, or

that the team leading the change is ill-equipped to create successful change. However, the positive feelings that *something* is finally being done allows this employee to support the change in his behaviors.

#### **4. Positive Feelings – Negative Thoughts – Resistant Behaviors**

This employee is similar to the employee presented above. However, this employee's negative thoughts about the change (e.g., the change being implemented is the wrong type of change, the proposed change won't fix the present problem, it's the wrong time for change, the team leading the change won't be successful, the change is good for the organization but bad for the employee) are stronger than her positive feelings about the fact that change is taking place. Thus, she chooses to resist the change. This employee may readily support another type of change that better matches the cognitive criteria she uses to evaluate the change. For example, she may fully support a different type of change or a change that occurs later in time. She may also support the same change if a different team led the change initiative, or if she felt that she would benefit in some way from the change.

#### **5. Negative Feelings – Positive Thoughts – Supportive Behaviors**

The employee who experiences negative feelings, positive thoughts, and supportive behaviors toward change is likely to be an employee who experiences anxiety and stress in response to most of the changes that occur in his life. This employee, however, understands the need for change and thinks the change is positive. Thus, this employee can become a full supporter of the change once he has had time to achieve a certain level of emotional comfort with the change and to work through his anxiety and stress. This is the perfect example of an employee who needs to test the waters before fully committing to the new way of doing business.

#### **6. Negative Feelings – Positive Thoughts – Resistant Behaviors**

This employee is similar to the previous employee. The primary difference, though, is that this employee is likely to have more deeply rooted negative feelings about the change, and she cannot – despite her best efforts – overcome the negative feelings (e.g., stress, anxiety, dread, fear, doom) associated with the proposed change. Thus, the negative feelings push the employee to resist the change.

## **7. Positive Feelings – Positive Thoughts – Resistant Behaviors**

This employee experiences both positive feelings and thoughts about the proposed change, yet he resists the change. The resistance may come from many sources. For example, this employee may be getting pressure from his peer group to resist the change, or he may have a strongly formed alliance with other employees who resist the change. One group that may exert pressure to resist the proposed change is a union. Thus, if you have a unionized work environment, it is important to get union leaders on board *before* moving forward with the change process.

This employee may also dislike the person or group of people leading the change, and thus, he chooses to resist the change even though he thinks it would benefit the organization. This employee's resistance may also be the result of having experienced too many failed change initiatives in the past. To help this person become supportive of the change, you must first identify the specific factors that have pushed him to resist the change. In some cases, you may find that this person resists publically but privately supports the change.

## **8. Negative Feelings – Negative Thoughts – Supportive Behaviors**

The employee who has negative feelings and thoughts about the proposed change yet acts in support of the change is likely supporting the change because of a perceived obligation to do so or because of the perceived negative consequences associated with not supporting the change. Interestingly, management employees often find themselves in this type of situation.

As can be seen from the information presented above, employees' responses to change present a challenge to organizations that are interested in implementing change. And as noted at the beginning of this Manual, failure to address the human element of change is one of the primary reasons why organizational change fails. Thus, it seems that ignoring how people respond to uncertainty and change is simply not an option. Instead it's important that you understand not only the general responses to change but also gain a better understanding of specific responses to organizational uncertainty and change.

## Specific Responses to Uncertainty and Change

The various combinations of affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses to change discussed above may seem overwhelming, yet it is important to understand these responses as they provide you with a starting place for helping employees accept and ultimately support and embrace the change.

What is equally important to creating successful change is your understanding of specific responses to uncertainty and change. More specifically, you should become familiar with why employees, including yourself, commonly experience worry, stress, and anxiety in response to change. In addition, you need to understand what is really meant by resistance to change and be able to identify behaviors that constitute resistance. It is also helpful for you to understand other specific responses to uncertainty and change including positive responses such as commitment to change.

## Internal Responses to Transition and Change

Worry, anxiety, and stress often go hand in hand with change. In fact, it would be highly unusual for employees not to experience some sort of worry, anxiety, or stress in response to proposed change. The problem, though, is that some employees experience *excessive, uncontrolled worry* during times of uncertainty and change, and these responses can cause significant physical and emotional problems for themselves and their co-workers. This is particularly true for employees who tend to have a predisposition to worry about other aspects of their lives.

### Elements of Worry

It has only been in the last decade that researchers developed a clear understanding of worry (Mennin, Heimberg, & Turk, 2004). Based on extensive research of people who are excessive worriers, three key elements of worry have been identified; they are: future orientation, catastrophizing, and language-based thoughts.

The first element – future orientation – refers to worry that focuses on something that *might* happen but that has not yet happened. Focusing on the future, however, does not necessarily create a state of worry, as there are millions of people in the world who have a very positive view of the future, and they feel hopeful and excited about future events. For a person to feel worry, thoughts about the future cannot be hopeful or exciting. In order to feel worry about the future, one's thoughts and feelings need to be catastrophic, which leads to the second element of worry.

People who worry about the future tend to think about it in a highly negative light; this is catastrophizing. When one's thoughts focus almost exclusively on the worst possible outcome, it is hard to allow into one's mind less negative outcomes. For the person who catastrophizes, only the very worst scenario is considered. Often times when someone catastrophizes, a dangerous spiral begins. The person thinks one negative thought which leads to another, related negative thought that leads to yet another negative thought until the person literally becomes paralyzed with fear and worry about the future. Feeling completely out of control, this person is unable to get his mind focused on more realistic outcomes.

The final element to worry is language-based thought. When in a normal, relaxed mood, people think in terms of both words and images. However, as worry builds, images are pushed out of the mind by words that describe in excruciating detail the impending doom that lurks around the corner. The inner voice takes over, repeating the negative words until all other thoughts are crowded out of one's mind. All that remains is a one-track monologue predicting a catastrophic future.

When taken together, these three elements of worry have been described as "...talking to ourselves a lot about negative things...what we are afraid might happen in the future" (Borkovec, Ray, & Stöber, 1998, 562). Despite that description of worry, it is important to note that not is all lost when it comes to worry, as some worry is actually beneficial to employees and to the organization.

## Types of Worry

There are two different types of worry; they are productive worry and unproductive worry. It's important that you learn to distinguish between these types of worry, as you can benefit from productive worry, and you can learn to control unproductive worry.

### Productive Worry

Productive worry is important for survival, and it allows us to solve problems, handle threats, and plan for unexpected events. Worry also often prompts us to take action that will lead to positive outcomes, thereby reducing future worry.

Productive worry helps people solve *real and immediate problems*, such as paying an overdue credit card bill. Productive worry also helps people reduce the likelihood that a *realistic future threat* will actually occur. For instance, you may have a family history of high blood pressure and heart disease, and you are worried that you may develop many of the same health issues that plagued your parents. So you begin eating better and exercising regularly to lessen the risk of illness. While this worry is focused on the future, it involves a *realistic future threat*. In addition, your response to this realistic future threat involves a specific course of action to address the threat.

In short, productive worry focuses on realistic problems and allows you to generate clear, specific steps to solve problems.

## **Unproductive Worry**

There are two critical elements of unproductive worry. First, unproductive worry generates no clear course of action, and second, it focuses on a highly unlikely event.

As noted above in the discussion about productive worry, taking action does a great deal to alleviate worry. In fact, taking action is one of the most potent antidotes to unproductive worry, anxiety, and stress. Anxiety is our fight-or-flight response. It is our body's built-in mechanism for responding to a threat. In other words, there are both physical and psychological benefits to taking action as a means to combat unproductive worry. Unfortunately, people who are engaged in unproductive worry are often unable to shift their thoughts to action, because they are paralyzed by the worry. Instead of action, people get stuck in a vicious cycle of negative thought and inaction.

Along with failing to take action, people who engage in unproductive worry tend to focus on highly unlikely events. Such events often include plane crashes, being struck by lightning, and developing a rare disease. Statistically, these events are not going to happen to most people; however, for the person who is preoccupied with unproductive worry, such statistical odds must be wrong. What compounds the problem is that people who are unproductive worriers also often make important life decisions based on their belief that such unlikely events will happen to them. In other words, they live their lives with the looming thought that they are the one in 100 million who will be subjected to such horrible events.

## **Change and Work-Related Worry**

Employees who tend to be worriers will experience higher levels of anxiety and stress during times of uncertainty and change than their less worried co-workers. It is important that business leaders help employees work through some of the work conditions and information that create anxiety and worry during change.



Below is a list of the most common things that employees worry about during times of uncertainty and change. As you read the list, begin thinking about how you might be able to help your employees either eliminate each item from their list of worries or ensure that it becomes a source of productive worry versus unproductive worry.

- What is going on?
- Why won't anyone tell me what's going on?
- Does management know something that they aren't sharing?
- Will I lose my job?
- What will my friends and co-workers think of me if I lose my job?
- How will I pay my bills?
- Where will I find another job?
- How long will it take me to find a new job?
- Will I have to take a pay cut?
- Will I be demoted?
- Will I be expected to do more work in addition to my current job?
- Will I need to learn new skills, equipment, or processes to do my job?
- What will happen to me if I can't learn what I need to learn to successfully perform my job?
- Will my friends lose their jobs?
- Who will I have to work with if I have to do a different job or if my friends lose their jobs?
- Will my current supervisor lose his or her job?
- Will I have to report to someone new?
- What if I don't like my new supervisor?
- What if my new supervisor doesn't like me?
- What if we can't turn things around financially?
- If we're in so much trouble financially, why have we spent so much money on consultants?
- Is the organization ultimately going to fail?
- Should I voluntarily leave now before I lose my job?
- If I voluntarily leave, what's to guarantee that the new job is any better?

Much of the worry, anxiety, and stress that occur as a result of uncertainty and change can be managed by organizational leaders through open, accurate, timely, and frequent communication throughout the transition period and long after any changes have actually occurred. One of the critical benefits of addressing sources of employee worry is that you are then able to influence employees' levels of resistance to change.

# Resistance to Change

When organizational leaders talk about change, there is usually a part of the conversation devoted to the resistance they expect to encounter as a result of the change. Resistance to change refers to one's tendency to avoid making changes, to devalue change generally, or to find change aversive across diverse contexts and types of change (Oreg, 2003). Unfortunately, many leaders have the misperception that such resistance will appear in a form or manner that is familiar and obvious to them. Resistance to change, however, appears in many forms.

## **Early Signs of Resistance: Gossiping and Testing**

There are early signs of resistance that frequently accompany uncertainty and change. One early sign is gossip. When it becomes evident to employees that something in the organization is different from the way it once was or that something new is on the way, they will tap into the nearest grapevine, trying to discover what is “really” going on. While connected to the grapevine, employees often throw in their two cents about the change even when they know nothing concrete about the change.

Grumbling and complaining are expected during times of uncertainty and change, and it provides employees with a way in which to express their discomfort with change. Trying to put a halt to such behavior will only push it deeper underground where it can fester until it becomes a bigger problem for you and the organization. Instead, it's best to invite employees to share what they've heard so that you can clarify misinformation, correct incorrect information, and confirm accurate information. By responding to grumbling and complaining, you will show your employees that you are interested in what they have to say, that you want them to have accurate information, and that you take them seriously during this time of uncertainty.

Another early sign of resistance is testing. Employees who engage in testing are really trying to find out what you will do if they resist the change. These employees may openly challenge you or a decision you made about the change. These same employees may also avoid you, fail to attend required meetings about the change, or ignore instructions to engage in activities to support the change.

How you choose to deal with testing will have a significant impact on how well the change progresses and is accepted by employees. While you may be tempted to jump all over employees who engage in testing behaviors, it will be more productive to have a private conversation with such employees and assertively explain your expectations for their behavior as you move through the period of uncertainty and change. You should also be certain to explain any consequences that will result if the behaviors continue.

## **Withdrawal Behaviors**

Like gossiping and testing, withdrawal behaviors are common responses to uncertainty and change. These behaviors include any behavior that leads to employee alienation, isolation, retreat, or departure from work. Unlike gossiping and testing, however, withdrawal behaviors usually take awhile to notice as it is rare that someone will jump right from receiving news about possible change to withdrawing from the situation. Usually, withdrawing is done more slowly as employees take time to process information about their environment and draw conclusions about how this uncertainty and change impacts them.

Withdrawal behaviors often start relatively small with decreased participation in work-related activities such as meetings or team activities such as committee or project work. Withdrawal behaviors then escalate to the point at which productivity is impacted. Again, decreases in productivity may be hard to notice at first, but as time passes, drops in productivity will become more evident, especially if the period of uncertainty drags on and on.

As employees withdraw further from their work group and the organization, tardiness and absenteeism rates will increase. Tardiness and absenteeism are used by employees to maintain some form of control over their environment. Employees also use tardiness and absenteeism as a way of showing leaders that they still have some control despite the changes taking place around them.

An unfortunate reality about absenteeism is that employees – usually the ones who you don't want to leave the organization – use sick time to conduct job searches, network with others in their field, or interview for new jobs. Once the job search process has started, it is very difficult to get these employees re-engaged in the workplace. In addition, once these employees receive a job offer from another employer, they are very likely to leave your organization.

Employees who are more likely to engage in job search activities and voluntarily leave the organization are employees who:

- are concerned about their specific position and their ability to “survive” or remain with the organization through times of layoffs or cutbacks,
- are concerned about the long-term stability of the organization,
- have a significant amount of time left to work (e.g., 15+ years),
- are better than average performers,
- have skills that are in demand, or
- are not tied to a particular geographic location for work.

Employees who have been toying with the idea of a career change are also more likely to voluntarily leave an organization when times are tough and change is inevitable.

Employees who are *not* likely to voluntarily leave an organization in response to uncertainty and change are employees who:

- have been with the organization for many years (e.g., 10 years or more),
- recognize that they have limited skills or would need to be trained in something new in order to find a job,
- recognize that they have it “easy” in their current position (e.g., they earn an acceptable wage given the amount of work they actually produce), or
- are currently in the disciplinary process.

Ironically, the employees who are most likely to stay with an organization through uncertainty and change are the employees who you often want to leave, and the reasons the employees stay are often the reasons that you want them to go. Regardless of who stays and who leaves, voluntary turnover is a very visible and potentially damaging form of resistance to change.

## Extreme Forms of Resistance

While withdrawal behaviors create their own challenges in an organization that is undergoing change, there are more extreme forms of resistance to change that create even greater challenges. These forms of resistance include sabotage and violence.

Sabotage refers to any action that disrupts or impedes normal operations, and it can take on many different forms. One of the most common forms of organizational sabotage is theft, and it could be a considerable problem for organizations undergoing change. Some employees will begin engaging in petty theft which involves taking small, relatively inexpensive items such as office supplies. This type of theft usually reflects employees' attempt to maintain some sort of control during this time of change, and this behavior often goes unnoticed.

Other employees will be more daring and engage in theft that involves larger, more expensive items that are critical to operations. Such items include computers, printers, and other equipment needed to do their jobs. This type of theft often reflects employees' anger with the proposed change, and it is their attempt to block the change from happening. Unfortunately, employees who steal property that is necessary for operations will often escalate their behavior when they see that their initial attempts at stopping the change have not worked. Thus, it is critical that organizations have well-developed security processes and systems in place.

One form of theft that is particularly problematic for organizations is the theft of information. Proprietary information and trade secrets are what separate one organization from another and what helps one organization to be more competitive than another. Thus, the theft of information can have a significant impact on an organization's ability to move forward with change. This is especially true if the information that is stolen outlines detailed plans for the change. For instance, if an organization is expanding its service lines to increase its market share, then that information in competitors' hands can have a damaging effect on the organization's ability to change.

In addition to theft, sabotage can take on other forms. For example, the intentional manipulation of information and data to obstruct or negatively influence the change process is also another form of sabotage. There are many ways in which employees can manipulate information and data. For example, employees may withhold information that is needed for key decisions about the change. Employees may intentionally delete critical business information from databases

and paper files or intentionally record inaccurate information or data in databases and paper files. All of these activities distort an organization's operating records, and unfortunately, such data manipulation is often never detected until it is too late.

One of the most extreme examples of sabotage is vandalism which is the physical destruction of an organization's property. Obvious examples of vandalism include damaging supplies, equipment, and the facility. Creating computer viruses and worms are also forms of vandalism.

Finally, the most extreme form of resistance is violence. Employees who become violent in response to uncertainty and change often feel that their backs are against the wall, they believe they have done everything they can to get other employees – particularly their supervisors – to hear their concerns, and yet the organization is moving forward with the change. Their perceived losses as a result of the change are overwhelming and devastating, and they can no longer cope with the stress associated with the change. For these employees, the proposed change is the proverbial straw that breaks the camel's back.

As is evident from the above discussion, resistance to change is not just one single behavior or action. In fact, you'll often have a difficult time addressing resistance, *because* resistance appears in many different forms. One of the most important things that managers can do is to be on the lookout for resistance and begin a dialogue with employees who are engaged in resistance. Tips and tools for addressing resistance are addressed later in this Manual.

# Commitment to Change

There is good news: not all employees resist change. In fact, it is likely that there are some employees who openly welcome change. These employees can serve as champions for change.

Commitment to change has been widely studied during the past several decades, and a number of definitions have been used to describe commitment to change. Two of the most commonly used definitions are presented below.

Commitment to change is “a force or mind-set that binds an individual to a course of action deemed necessary for the successful implementation of a change initiative” (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002, 475).

Commitment to change refers to “positive attitudes toward change, an alignment with the change, intentions to support the change, and a willingness to work on behalf of its successful implementation” (Herold, Fedor, & Caldwell, 2007, 943).

Just like resistance to change, commitment to change is multidimensional. The second definition clearly espouses a multidimensional view of commitment to change. Researchers have identified three specific components of commitment to change; they are: affective commitment to change, continuance commitment to change, and normative commitment to change.

## **Affective Commitment to Change**

Affective commitment to change refers to the desire to provide support for the change based on a belief in its inherent benefits (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Developing a belief that there are inherent benefits to the proposed change happens one of two ways.

First, many employees go to work each day holding the belief that organizational leaders continually try to make the best decisions for the organization, its employees, and its customers. Therefore, it is a natural extension of such a thought

process to support proposed change, because it must be good for the organization. In other words, organizational leaders would not recommend a specific type of change unless it was beneficial to the organization.

Second, employees may perceive benefits to a specific change, because they have conducted their own analysis of the proposed change. One of the most common ways in which employees analyze proposed change is to identify other organizations that have made the same type of change. There is often a loosely-held belief that if a particular change worked in one organization, then it will work in another.

## **Continuance Commitment to Change**

Continuance commitment to change refers to the recognition that there are costs associated with failing to provide support for the change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). These costs can be categorized into two groups: costs to the organization and costs to the individual employee.

At the organizational level, perceived costs associated with failing to provide support for change include continued financial decline and loss of market share, loss of valuable employees, bankruptcy, and ultimately closure. At the individual level, perceived costs associated with failing to provide support for change include, among other things, job loss, job redesign, job reassignment, reduced hours, reduced medical benefits, increased costs for benefits, and reduced pay.

## **Normative Commitment to Change**

Normative commitment to change refers to the sense of obligation employees feel to provide support for the change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Normative change involves perceived social pressure to support the proposed change, and social pressure may come from any number of places. For instance, many organizations provide valuable services to the community. An organization may need to make significant changes in how it does business in order for it to continue to provide such services to the community. In this case, social pressure to support the change may come from the members of the community that the organization serves.



Social pressure may also come from peers and co-workers in the form of jeers, critical remarks, and sarcastic jabs. Another source of pressure is the union. Employees who are members of unions are often made aware of the union's stance on a particular change, and if the change will benefit the union, then pressure to support the change is likely to increase.

Because commitment to change is multidimensional, it is possible for some employees to experience one component of commitment more strongly than the other two components. For example, employees may not feel any inherent benefit to the change nor do they feel any social pressure to support the change. However, their perceptions of what might happen to them (e.g., lose their jobs) or to the organization (e.g., go bankrupt) if they don't support the change are enough to convince them that committing to the proposed change is necessary.

Many organizations focus on resistance to change, namely who is resisting, why they are resisting, and what can be done to reduce their resistance. Equally important, however, is the need for organizational leaders to remember that one possible and very powerful response to change is commitment. The challenge then becomes one of trying to identify who is likely to resist the change and who is likely to commit to the change. Fortunately for business leaders, researchers have identified specific factors that help increase the ability to predict who is more likely to resist the change and who is more likely to commit to the change. These factors are known as individual differences.

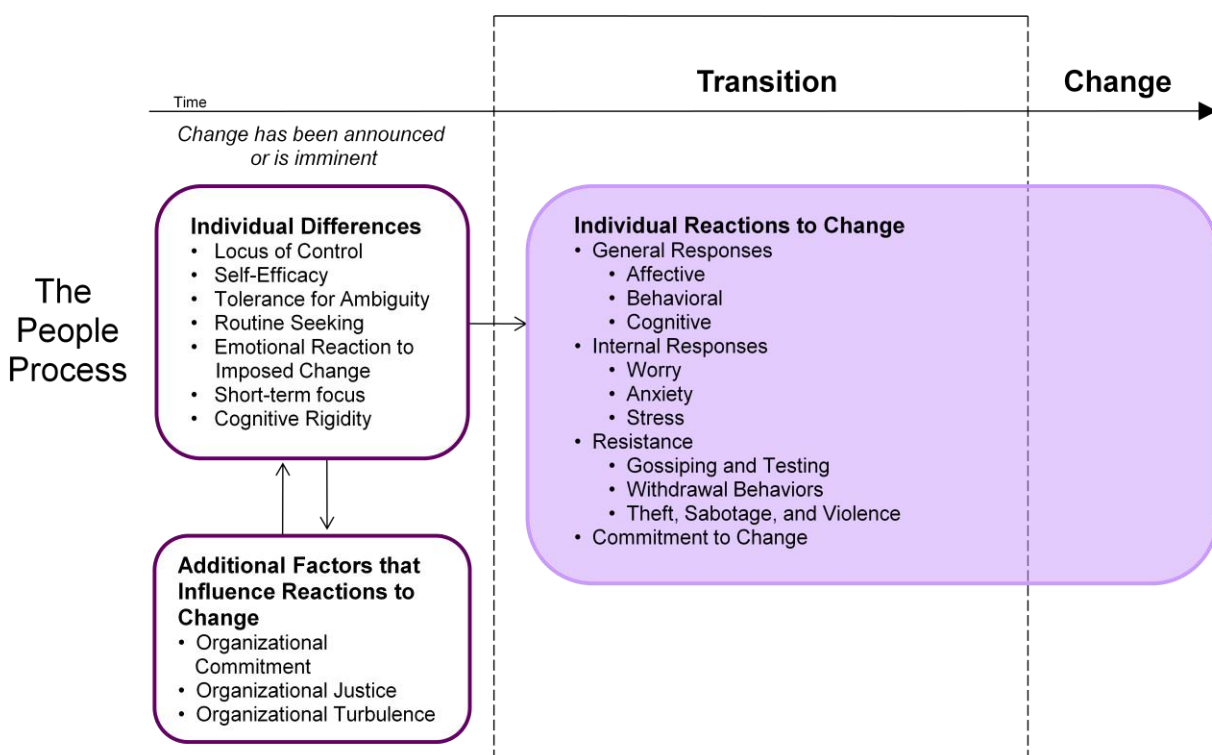
# Part III: Individual Differences

# Individual Differences

Individual differences is a phrase commonly used in psychology, and it refers to those factors or characteristics that cause people to think, feel, and behave differently from other people. Understanding how individual people are similar to and different from each other is so critical to understanding human behavior that there is a separate branch of psychology, namely Differential Psychology, that is devoted entirely to studying individual differences.

Identifying and understanding specific individual differences that impact employees' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors is essential to understanding how people respond to organizational uncertainty and change. Industrial and Organizational Psychologists routinely study how individual differences impact change.

If we refer back to our model for the people process, you can see that there are several individual differences that influence reactions to change.



For the purposes of this discussion, the following individual differences will be examined.

- Locus of control
- Self-efficacy
- Tolerance for ambiguity
- Routine seeking
- Emotional reaction to imposed change
- Short-term focus
- Cognitive rigidity

In addition, we'll examine how these individual differences impact employees' ability and desire to support, or resist, organizational change.

# Self- Concept

There are two individual differences that have been shown to have a significant impact on how employees respond to organizational uncertainty and change, and they are both considered measures of one's self-concept. These two individual differences are locus of control and self-efficacy.

## Locus of Control

Locus of control refers to the extent to which people believe that they can control events that affect them. People tend to have either an *internal* locus of control or an *external* locus of control. Individuals with an internal locus of control believe that events result primarily from their own behavior and actions. In other words, people who have an internal locus of control believe that they have control over what happens to them in life. Individuals with an external locus of control believe that powerful others, fate, or chance primarily determine events. People who have an external locus of control often feel as though they are victims of external events and influences.

In general, employees who have an internal locus of control are often self-directed, willing and able to solve problems, take responsibility for their work and their mistakes, and take the initiative to make their lives better. Conversely, employees who have an external locus of control tend to rely on others for direction, blame others for their circumstances in life, and experience a sense of helplessness in many areas of their life.

### ***Research shows:***

- Employees who have an external locus of control are more likely to find times of uncertainty more stressful and anxiety-producing compared to employees who have an internal locus of control.
- Employees who have an external locus of control are more likely to resist change compared to employees who have an internal locus of control.

## Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to a set of beliefs about one's ability to meet a given set of situational demands (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Change-specific self-efficacy refers to one's ability to handle uncertainty and change (Herold et al., 2007). Employees' beliefs about themselves and their abilities serve as effective buffers against the adverse effects of change, including uncertainty, fear of failure, loss of control, and demands to adapt to change.

### ***Research shows:***

Compared to employees who have a high level of self-efficacy, employees who have a *low* level of self-efficacy:

- are more likely to find times of uncertainty more stressful and anxiety-producing,
- are less confident with their ability to handle times of uncertainty,
- are more likely to resist change,
- are less confident with their ability to handle imposed change,
- demonstrate lower levels of commitment to change, and
- have more difficulty adapting to an organizational environment in which change is pervasive.

## Tolerance for Ambiguity

An ambiguous situation is one in which a person receives information that is too complex, inadequate, or contradictory (Norton, 1975). Thus, tolerance for ambiguity refers to one's tendency to perceive ambiguous situations as desirable (Benjamin, Riggio, & Mayes, 1996).

How a person copes with ambiguous situations influences his or her perceptions and interpretations of information from the environment. In addition, people are considered increasingly intolerant of ambiguity the more they interpret a situation as a source of psychological discomfort or threat. As a result, people who are intolerant of ambiguity tend to engage in black-or-white thinking in an attempt to add structure to a situation. When people who are intolerant of ambiguity are unable to build structure into a situation, they then tend to avoid the situation.

### *Research shows:*

- Employees who are less tolerant of ambiguous situations have a more difficult time coping with times of uncertainty compared to employees who are more tolerant of ambiguous situations.
- Employees who are less tolerant of ambiguous situations have a more difficult time coping with change compared to employees who are more tolerant of ambiguous situations.
- Employees who are less tolerant of ambiguous situations are less likely to help others who are in a situation that is perceived to be ambiguous compared to employees who are more tolerant of ambiguous situations.

## Routine Seeking

As noted earlier in this Manual, resistance to change is one common response to organizational uncertainty and change. Research shows that resistance to change is a multidimensional construct. In other words, there are several elements that must be considered when examining whether an employee is resistant to change. The four primary components of resistance to change are: routine seeking, emotional reaction to imposed change, short-term focus, and cognitive rigidity (Oreg, 2003). Additional information about each of the dimensions is provided below.

Routine seeking refers to the extent to which people enjoy and seek out stable and routine environments. Routine seeking reflects a behavioral reaction to uncertainty and change and includes preferences for low levels of novelty and stimulation as well as a reluctance to give up old habits.

### *Research shows:*

- Employees who need or seek routine in their environments are more likely to find times of uncertainty stressful and anxiety-producing compared to employees who do not need or seek routine in their environments.
- Employees who need or seek routine in their environments are more likely to find change stressful and anxiety-producing compared to employees who do not need or seek routine in their environments.
- Employees who need or seek routine in their environments are less tolerant of ambiguous situations compared to employees who do not need or seek routine in their environments.
- Employees who need or seek routine in their environments are more likely to resist change compared to employees who do not need or seek routine in their environments.



## Emotional Reaction to Imposed Change

The second component of resistance to change is one's emotional reaction to imposed change. Emotional reaction reflects the extent to which people feel stressed and uncomfortable in response to imposed change. Emotional reaction corresponds to people's affective response to change and includes psychological resilience and a desire to not lose control. People who are said to be high in emotional reaction experience more stress and discomfort in response to a situation (Oreg, 2003).

### *Research shows:*

- Employees who have a high level of emotional reaction (i.e., they are stressed and uncomfortable with change) are less tolerant of ambiguous situations compared to employees who have a low level of emotional reaction.
- Employees who have a high level of emotional reaction (i.e., they are stressed and uncomfortable with change) are more likely to need or seek routine environments compared to employees who have a low level of emotional reaction.
- Employees who have a high level of emotional reaction (i.e., they are stressed and uncomfortable with change) are more likely to resist change compared to employees who have a low level of emotional reaction.

## Short-Term Focus

The third component of resistance to change is short-term focus which refers to the degree to which people are preoccupied or distracted with the short-term inconveniences versus the potential long-term benefits of change. Short-term focus involves an irrational component in that resistance to change arises despite one's awareness of the potential long-term benefits to change (Oreg, 2003).

### *Research shows:*

- Employees who have a short-term focus are more likely to have low self-efficacy compared to employees who have a long-term focus.
- Employees who have a short-term focus are less likely to tolerate ambiguous situations compared to employees who have a long-term focus.
- Employees who have a short-term focus are more likely to resist change compared to employees who have a long-term focus.
- Employees who have a short-term focus are more likely to need and seek routine environments compared to employees who have a long-term focus.
- Employees who have a short-term focus are more likely to have a high level of emotional reactions (i.e., they are stressed and uncomfortable with change) compared to employees who have a long-term focus.

# Cognitive Rigidity

The fourth component of resistance to change is cognitive rigidity and represents a form of stubbornness and an unwillingness to consider alternative ideas and perspectives. The ease and frequency with which someone changes his or her mind is a reflection of cognitive rigidity (Oreg, 2003).

## *Research shows:*

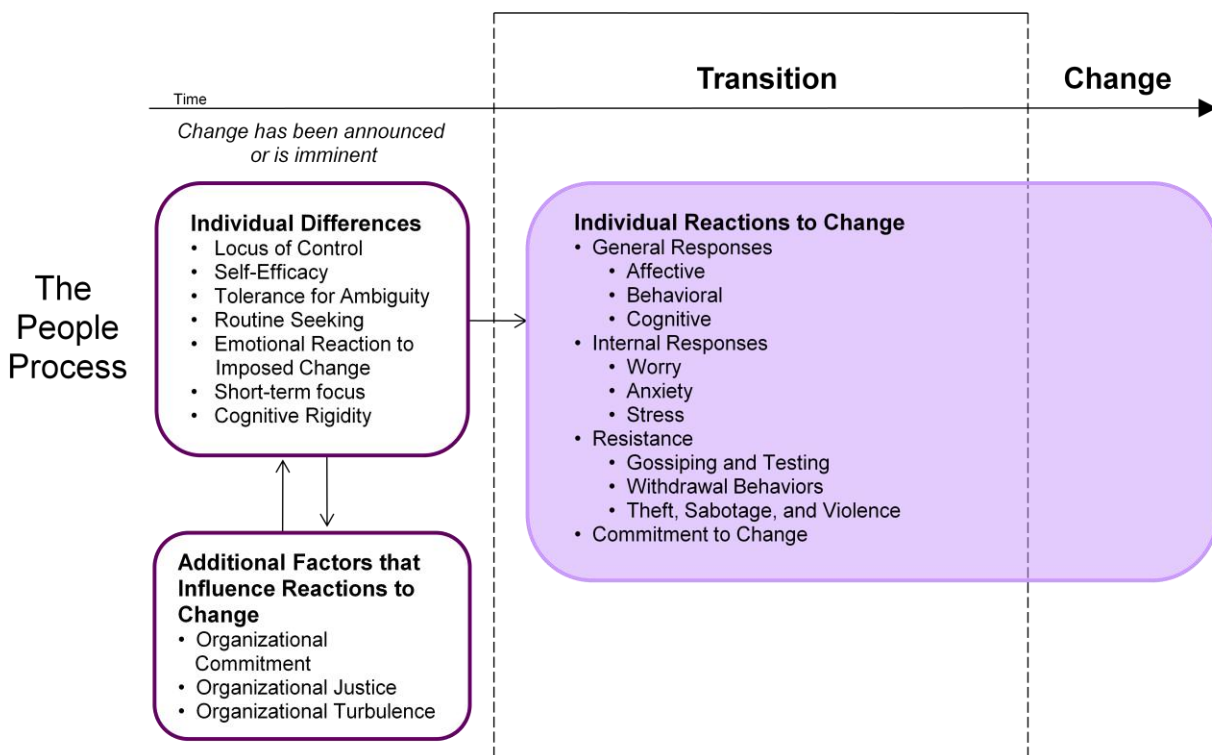
- Employees who have a high level of cognitive rigidity (i.e., they rarely change their minds) are more likely to resist change compared to employees who have a low level of cognitive rigidity.
- Employees who have a high level of cognitive rigidity (i.e., they rarely change their minds) are more likely to need and seek routine in their environments compared to employees who have a low level of cognitive rigidity.
- Employees who have a high level of cognitive rigidity (i.e., they rarely change their minds) are more likely to have a high level of emotional reaction (i.e., they are stressed and uncomfortable with change) compared to employees who have a low level of cognitive rigidity.

# **Part IV: Additional Factors that Influence Reactions to Change**

## Additional Factors that Influence Reactions

If you take a minute to look back at the people process model, you'll see that we've covered reactions to change as well as individual differences that influence change. However, there are still other factors that influence change, and they influence change indirectly through employees themselves.

Here's the people process model again:



You'll see that these additional factors that influence reactions to change are present *before* any change actually occurs. That's because these three factors – organizational commitment, organizational justice, and organizational turbulence – are factors that normally influence and are influenced by employees on a daily basis. Yet when change is announced or is imminent, these factors play a stronger role in how employees respond to change.

# Organizational Commitment

To most people, organizational commitment seems to be a straight-forward concept; however, in reality, organizational commitment has been one of the most widely-studied variables in Industrial and Organizational Psychology, because its impact on understanding workplace behavior is so vast.

Three commonly used definitions of organizational commitment are presented below.

Organizational commitment is a psychological state or mind-set that increases the likelihood that an employee will maintain membership in an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Organizational commitment refers to the relative strength of an individual's identification and involvement in a particular organization (Porter, Crampon, & Smith, 1976).

Organizational commitment is an attitude that reflects the nature and quality of the linkage between an employee and an organization (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982).

Regardless of the specific definition used, most researchers agree that organizational commitment – like resistance to change and commitment to change – is multidimensional. In fact, researchers have consistently identified three components to organizational commitment, and they are: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002; Solinger, van Olffen, & Roe, 2008).

Affective commitment refers to one's desire to remain with the organization, continuance commitment refers to the perceived cost of leaving the organization, and normative commitment refers to the perceived obligation to stay with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1990). These definitions should sound familiar as they are the foundation for the three components of commitment to change. Despite the apparent similarity in structure, commitment to change has been found

to be conceptually and empirically distinct from organizational commitment (Herold et al., 2007).

Organizational commitment has also been studied using two different perspectives. More specifically, researchers believe that employees make a commitment to their organizations, *and* organizations make a commitment to their employees. Not surprisingly, research had demonstrated that employees' commitment to an organization and the organization's commitment to employees are highly correlated (Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005). In other words, if employees do not perceive their organization as committed to them, then they are less likely to make a commitment to the organization. This is a critical finding as it relates to organizational change. Additional research findings are presented below.

### ***Research shows:***

- Employees who perceive a high level of commitment from the organization to the employees is more likely to express higher levels of commitment to the organization compared to employees who perceive a low level of commitment from the organization to employees.
- Employees who have a high level of job satisfaction have higher levels of organizational commitment compared to employees who have a low level of job satisfaction.
- Employees who have a high level of organizational commitment have more positive attitudes toward organizational change compared to employees who have a low level of organizational commitment.
- Employees who have a high level of overall job stress have:
  - lower levels of organizational commitment, and
  - more negative attitudes toward organizational change compared to employees who have a low level of overall job stress.

- Employees who feel overloaded at work have:
  - lower levels of organizational commitment,
  - more negative attitudes toward organizational change, and
  - higher levels of overall job stress compared to employees who do not feel overloaded at work.

As can be seen from the information presented above, organizational commitment impacts and is influenced by many other factors, including organizational change. Thus, these results have significant implications for managers as they work through times of uncertainty and change. Another factor that impacts managers' ability to help employees navigate through change is organizational justice.



# Organizational Justice

Despite implementation being one of the most important steps in organizational change, many organizational leaders lack a clear understanding of the process that leads to successful change implementation. Organizational justice – which refers to employees’ perceptions of fairness at work – provides a natural link to organizational change and explains many of the reasons for the challenges managers face when implementing change (Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Bernerth, Armenakis, Feild, & Walker, 2007; Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997).

Organizational justice is a multidimensional construct. More specifically, there are three types of justice that comprise the overall construct of organizational justice. The three types of justice are: distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice.

## Distributive Justice

Distributive justice refers to the perceived fairness of outcome distributions or allocations (Greenberg, 1987, 1990). Outcome distributions or allocations include, among other things, pay raises, vacation time, and project assignments.

Interestingly, research repeatedly shows that employees who experience low levels of distributive justice may still perceive the overall outcome of a decision as fair, because procedural justice plays a part in employees’ overall perceptions of fairness.

## Procedural Justice

Procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of the process or procedures used to determine outcome distributions or allocations (Greenberg, 1987, 1990). In general, “fair” procedures are those that:

- are applied consistently across individuals and time,
- are free of bias (i.e., decision makers are neutral),

- use accurate and relevant information in making decisions,
- allow participants to take corrective action if they disagree with the outcome,
- conform to ethical standards, and
- consider the opinions of those affected by the outcome (Bernerth, et al., 2007).

It's important to note that not all people who experience a low level of distributive justice will see the outcomes as more just as a result of the procedures used. However, for many people, gaining a better understanding of the procedures or process used to distribute specific outcomes helps to restore an overall sense of organizational justice.

## **Interactional Justice**

Interactional justice refers to the quality of the interpersonal treatment people receive when procedures or processes are implemented. Interactional justice is comprised of two elements; they are: interpersonal justice, and informational justice (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Greenberg, 1993).

Interpersonal justice is the degree to which people are treated with sensitivity, dignity, and respect by authorities or third parties involved in executing procedures or determining outcomes (Bernerth et al., 2007; Colquitt, et al., 2001; Greenberg, 1993).

Informational justice refers to the explanations provided to people that convey information about why procedures or processes were used in a certain way or why outcomes were distributed in a certain fashion (Bernerth, et al., 2007; Greenberg, 1993). Informational justice addresses whether the person providing the explanation:

- was candid in all communications,
- explained procedures thoroughly,

- offered a reasonable explanation,
- offered information in a timely manner, and
- tailored the information provided to specific individual needs (Bernerth, et al., 2007).

Interactional justice, therefore, is not just interested in ensuring that someone communicated information about procedures used to make decisions, but rather it is focused on the content of the message as well as how, when, and to whom the message was sent.

The very nature of organizational change suggests the reallocation of resources (e.g., future employment, pay, benefits, job responsibilities). Thus, understanding perceptions of organizational justice can provide organizational leaders with a link to understanding why employees resist or commit to organizational change.

### ***Research shows:***

- Employee commitment to change was highest when perceptions of distributive and procedural justice were high.
- Employees who perceive the proposed outcomes of change (i.e., distributive justice) to be unfair or unjust are less likely to commit to organizational change compared to employees who perceive the proposed outcomes of change to be fair and just.
  - Employees who perceived distributive *injustice* expressed lower levels of organizational commitment and were more likely to voluntarily leave the organization compared to employees who perceived distributive justice.
- Employees who perceive a high level of procedural justice during change are more likely to commit to organizational change compared to employees who perceive a low level of procedural justice.
  - Employees who are actively engaged in and participate in the transition phase or during the actual change process are more likely to be motivated to commit to the change.

- Perceptions of procedural justice were related to trust and organizational commitment.
- When leaders act in procedurally fair ways, they are viewed as more legitimate and more competent, and employees were more accepting of change.
- Employees who perceive low levels of distributive justice and procedural justice may still be willing to commit to change if change communications are candid, seem reasonable, and are made in a timely manner.
- A lack of communication during times of change leads to uncertainty which results in a number of undesirable outcomes (e.g., anxiety, withdrawal behaviors, resistance to change, voluntary turnover).

Research on organizational justice has demonstrated that organizational leaders not only need to be concerned with the distribution or allocation of outcomes and the procedures used to determine such outcomes, but they must also focus on explaining in a reasonable, sensitive, and timely manner why change is necessary. As a result of such communications, employees who are impacted by the change can assess for themselves whether the unfortunate outcomes or procedures associated with the change process are perceived as just.

# Organizational Turbulence

Organizational turbulence refers to the prevalence of changes taking place in an organization at the same time as the target or focal change (Herold et al., 2007). These on-going changes represent additional distractions and demands to adapt to new ways of doing business. These changes form an important part of the context for employees' reactions to organizational change.

Research has consistently found that employees working in an organization undergoing change often feel stress and overloaded with work. The primary reason why these feelings occur is because change places adaptation demands on employees who presumably possess finite resources. Multiple – and often competing – changes increases such demands, thereby creating cumulative effects on employees (Cooper, Dewe, & O'Driscoll, 2001).

In organizations with high levels of turbulence (i.e., simultaneous or overlapping changes), even a necessary and well-planned change may be doomed to fail, because the affected employees are so overloaded with other changes that they don't have any more resources – personal or organizational – to use on the new change effort. Thus, when considering whether additional change is necessary in an organization, it is important to determine employees' ability to take on more change.

## ***Research shows:***

- Employees who worked in turbulent environments (i.e., there are simultaneous or overlapping changes taking place) expressed lower levels of procedural justice compared to employees who did not work in turbulent environments.
  - Employees who were already involved in change did not perceive the process used to implement the change as fair.
- Employees who worked in turbulent environments (i.e., there are simultaneous or overlapping changes taking place) were less committed to the new change compared to employees who did not work in turbulent environments.

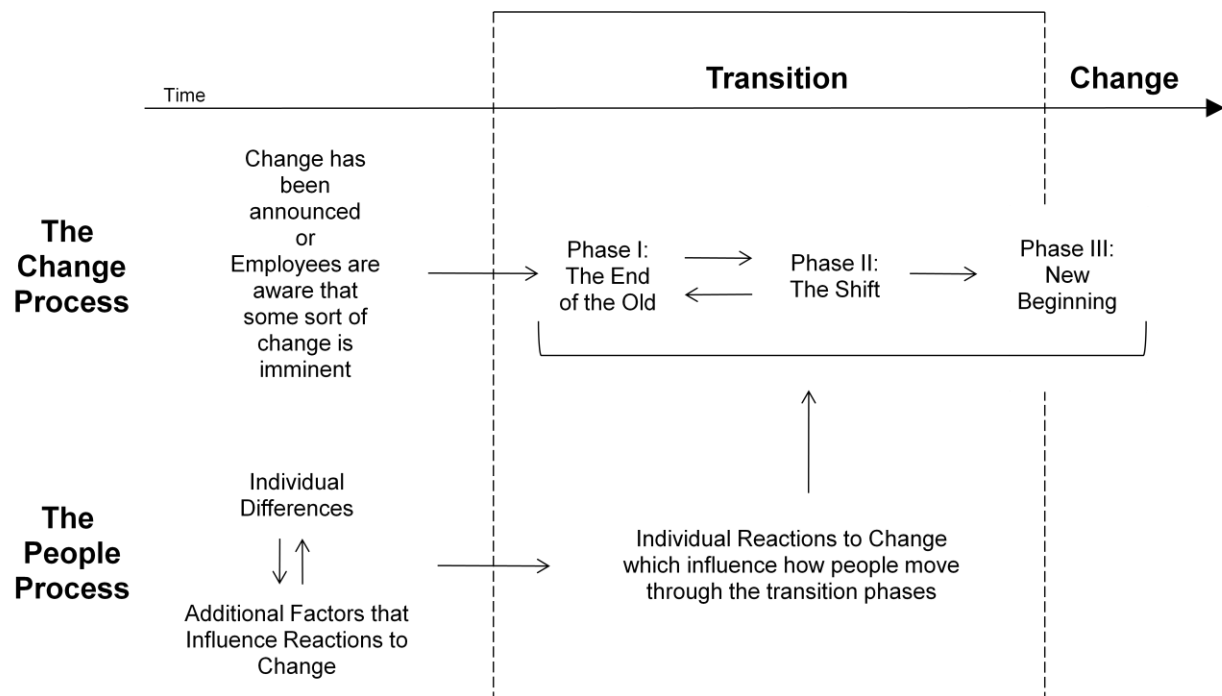
- Employees who had low change-specific self-efficacy (i.e., they did not believe they could adapt to the change) and who worked in turbulent environments were less committed to the new change compared to employees with high change-specific self-efficacy.
  - In fact, employees who had a high change-specific self-efficacy (i.e., they believe they can adapt to change) were neither positively nor negatively impacted by the amount of simultaneous change taking place in the organization.

Research shows that organizational turbulence – or the prevalence of changes taking place at one time in an organization – impacts employees’ commitment to new change as well as their levels of stress and perceptions of work overload.

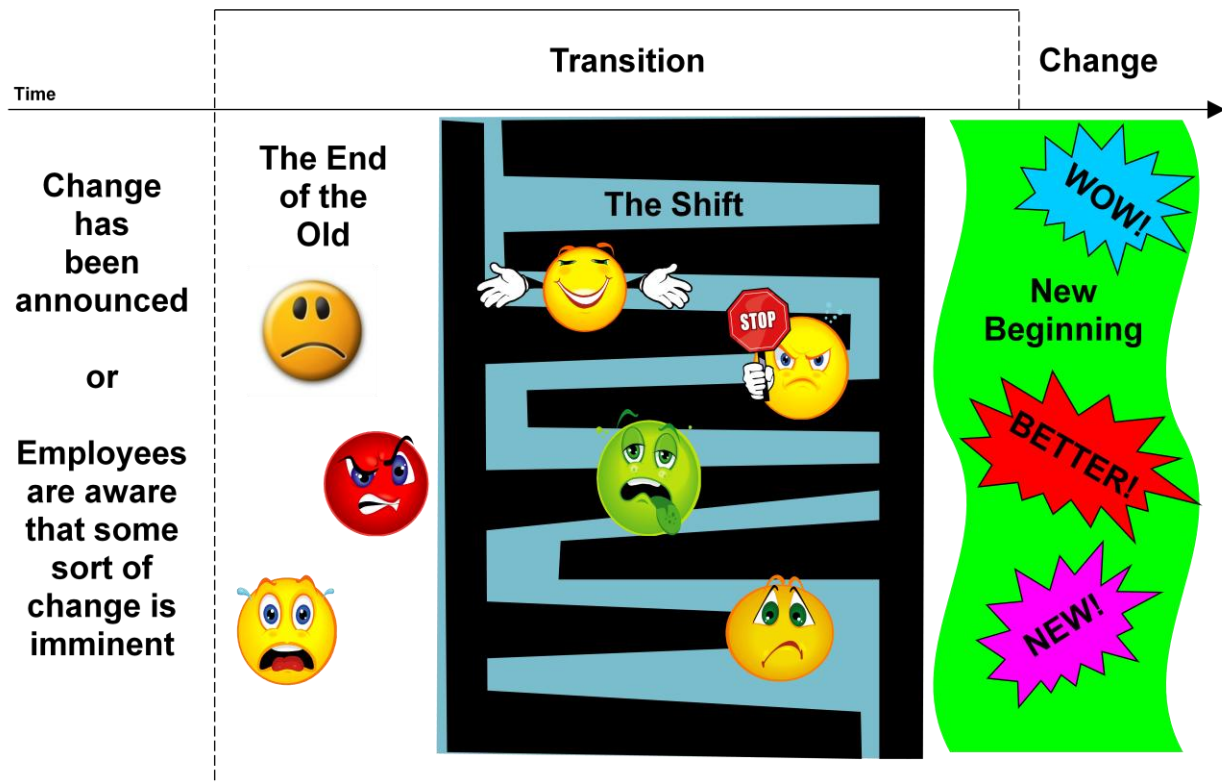
Despite what might appear to be an overwhelming amount of research suggesting that change may never be successful as long as employees are involved, there are many things that you can do as an organizational leader to help your employees feel more comfortable during times when the organization’s future is uncertain. There are also many things you can do to help your employees understand the need for change and help them buy into the change.

# Putting the Pieces Together

We've spent quite a bit of time looking at two different pieces of change: the change process and the people process. When we combine the two models, we have a framework for understanding reactions to organizational change, which looks like this:



When you look at the framework above, it gives the impression that organizational change involves a neat, orderly and sequential process. However, we all know that that is hardly the case. A more realistic interpretation of this framework is presented on the following page.



Now this is what change really looks like! Once change is announced or once employees know that some sort of change is going to take place, a wide range of reactions emerge. You'll see that during transition, there will be employees who are sad, angry, scared, happy, sick, worried, and outright resistant. You also see that these employees don't necessarily move from one phase to the next in an orderly fashion. Instead, they weave back and forth among the various phases. Eventually, the majority of employees do make it to the new beginning where they will begin to experience first-hand that the change has create a new, improved, and better way of doing business.

How long this entire process lasts, how long employees stay in transition, and how well employee adapt to the change are all be influenced by how well you respond to the change and by specific action you take to support them through the change process. Specific steps that you can take to make the change a little more palatable are presented below.



# Part V: Your Role

## Things You Can Do

It should be evident from all the research presented thus far that organizational uncertainty and change present some pretty big challenges to organizational leaders, and leaders can only engage rest of the organization in the change if *they* believe that the status quo is no longer acceptable. There is good news: there are plenty of things that you can do to help yourself and your employees get through tough times. The remainder of this Manual is dedicated to providing you with tips, tools, exercises, and worksheets to help you address the challenges that are ahead.

### Self-Awareness

*Purpose: To know how you respond to uncertainty and change*

Understanding how you respond to uncertainty and change is an important first step in being an effective change leader. A number of short assessments are included in this Manual. Each assessment is described below.

#### *Navigating Change Assessment for Managers*

The Navigating Change Assessment for Managers assesses your affective, behavioral, and cognitive responses to change. You may use this assessment as a tool to assess your responses to change in general. *However, this assessment is most effective when you complete it after having learned about a specific change that is going to take place.* Information on scoring the assessment and interpreting your scores is included in the assessment.

#### *Take Action Worksheet*

Feeling anxious? Stressed? Feel like you're losing control? Feel like you don't have a say in anything that's happening? Taking action is often the best thing you can do to reduce anxiety and stress and to increase control in your life. The Take Action Worksheet helps you identify those things over which you have complete control, partial control, or no control, and it gives you a step-by-step process to create action that will allow you to regain some control in your life.

## ***Resistance to Change Assessment***

The Resistance to Change Assessment evaluates the four components of resistance, namely routine seeking, emotional reaction to imposed change, short-term focus, and cognitive rigidity. It also provides you with an overall resistance to change score. Information on interpreting your results is also provided.

## ***Locus of Control Assessment***

The Locus of Control Assessment evaluates whether you believe you control the events in your life or whether your life is controlled by luck, chance, and fate. Scoring instructions and information on interpreting your scores are provided.

## ***Tolerance for Ambiguity Assessment***

The Tolerance for Ambiguity Assessment evaluates your comfort in ambiguous situations including at work. Instructions and information on interpreting your results are provided.

It is recommended that these assessments be used to increase your understanding of how you respond to uncertainty and change. However, the *Take Action Worksheet* can easily be used with your employees.

## **Other Awareness**

*Purpose: To identify which employees may struggle with uncertainty and change*

One of the most important steps you can take in helping your employees cope with uncertainty and change is to be observant. It is likely, based on your daily experiences with your employees, that you can predict with a high level of certainty who will act out and become a distraction when change is imminent. What's equally important is for you to try to identify who might struggle with change. Using the individual differences that were discussed earlier in this Manual, you can at least get a sense of who might struggle. The Reactions to Change Worksheet for Managers will help you increase your awareness of other employees' reactions to change.

## ***Reactions to Change Worksheet for Managers***

The Reactions to Change Worksheet for Managers can be used to help you get a sense of which employees may struggle the most with uncertainty and change based on six of the individual differences presented in this Manual. *Please note that this worksheet allows you to informally estimate how your employees may react to change.* This worksheet should *not* be shared with your employees.

The more you can understand your employees' reactions to change, the easier it will be to create a supportive environment for those who are having the greatest difficulty working through uncertainty and change. Many of the tools presented in the remainder of this Manual will also help you learn more about your employees' reactions to change and will help you address those reactions.

## **Creating Structure and Routine**

*Purpose: To address routine seeking and tolerance for ambiguity*

Employees will look to you to provide structure to an uncertain environment, because structure and routine help employees feel more secure and will reduce some of their anxiety and stress. The first thing you can do is be more visible and more accessible. Employees, including management employees, look to organizational leaders for direction. You may not have all of the answers to employees' questions nor may you always be able to deliver positive news. However, your presence can create a much needed sense of stability in the environment.

There are other ways in which you can create structure and routine in your environment. First, allocate special time in each staff meeting to update your employees on the latest news concerning the state of the organization. Be sure to allow adequate time to address your employees' questions and concerns.

In addition, it is a good idea during times of uncertainty and change to add a "check-in" or "status update" meeting between your regularly scheduled staff meetings. Adding such a meeting is particularly helpful if you only meet with your staff on a monthly basis. This "check-in" meeting gives you the opportunity to get your staff together to deliver the latest news without having to call an emergency meeting. Emergency meetings tend to have a negative connotation, and people

expect bad news to be delivered during such meetings. By adding a “check-in” meeting, you eliminate the anxiety and panic associated with emergency meetings. These “check-in” meetings also give your employees a chance to keep you up to date on the latest rumors, and it gives them a chance to express their concerns in a more timely manner. When employees have to wait several weeks before sharing their concerns or issues with you, they tend to ruminate over the problem which grows exponentially in their mind until their stress levels are unmanageable. If neither you nor your employees have anything to share during a “check-in” meeting, then your meeting is adjourned.

Policies and procedures give employees a sense of structure. However, during organizational change, policies and procedures must often be modified to match the new way of doing business. Therefore, it is critical that you create and disseminate information on how procedures have changed, what the new procedures look like, and who is responsible for what part of the procedures. Interestingly, managers often believe that if they presented and discussed the changes to policies or procedures during a staff meeting, then everyone who was there understands the changes. The opposite is usually true.

Give employees copies of documents that explain the changes and that present the new policies or procedures, post these documents in common areas, discuss the changes in newsletters and e-mails, and remind employees of these changes in subsequent meetings. In addition, it is often very helpful in reducing anxiety to meet privately with those employees who are directly impacted by these changes, particularly if the impact can be perceived as negative.

As important as it is to discuss changes to policies and procedures, it is equally important to enforce all policies and procedures, especially during times of change. Again, policies and procedures give structure to employees’ work lives. They give employees boundaries within which to work, and they let employees know what behavior is and is not acceptable. Employees expect and need to have policies and procedures enforced. When you overlook violators, or worse yet, when you apply policies and procedures to only some employees and not others, you send the message to employees that there is no structure in their environment. Your behavior is unpredictable which only creates more uncertainty and ambiguity. Consistency in enforcing policies and procedures is always a critical role for management employees, but it becomes even more important during change.

To summarize, the things that you can do to help create structure and routine in the work environment are listed below.

- Be more visible and accessible to your staff.
- Demonstrate the behaviors you want your staff to demonstrate.
- Add a standing item to your staff meeting agenda that is dedicated to discussing the state of the organization.
- Add an additional “check-in” meeting between your regularly scheduled staff meetings to discuss and address concerns in a more timely manner.
- Create, discuss, and disseminate in multiple formats any changes to policies and procedures.
- Consistently enforce *all* policies and procedures (not just new ones).

## **Creating Long-Term Thinking and Focus**

*Purpose: To move beyond the short-term issues*

One of the challenges you face during change is that you will have employees who are preoccupied with the short-term inconveniences of change and cannot see or understand the long-term benefits of the change. There are several things that you can do to help your staff see and value the longer-term plan.

As discussed at the beginning of this Manual, some resistance occurs simply because employees are losing something as a result of the change. These losses – perceived or real – may be part of the reason why employees are focused on the short-term inconveniences of change. It is their way of expressing the fact that they are about to lose something of value and do not want to consider a future without those things.

All too often, organizations are preoccupied with telling employees about how wonderful the outcomes of the change will be and fail to realize that these same employees may not fully understand the problem that the change is expected to fix. Therefore, it is important that you communicate in as many ways as possible and as often as possible where the organization is at this point in time and what

challenges still exist today. If the problems are purely financial, then present the financial data to your employees, but be sure that you have someone with you who can *fully* explain the issues. If the issues are process issues, then present the current processes and identify where and *why* improvements need to be made. If the problems are with the services being provided or the quality of work generated, provide employees with very specific examples of each. The more detailed, fact-based information that you can share with your employees the better.

In addition to providing facts, it is also important that you share the consequences of not resolving or fixing these problems. It is often the information about consequences that convinces employees to support change, because the consequences often include things that impact them directly such as layoffs, job reassignments, or reductions in hours. When employees perceive negative consequences to the current state, then they are more likely to overlook, dismiss, or work through the short-term inconveniences that change brings.

Once employees have a clear understanding of the problems that the organization faces, you can ask your employees to describe what they would like their “new” organization to look like in one year or three years or five years from now. These descriptions can be in words or in pictures. To help your employees describe what their new organization looks like, you can ask them to answer the following questions:

- One year from now (or choose another time frame), how will our customers describe our organization?
- One year from now, how will our customers describe how they were treated by our staff?
- One year from now, how will our customers describe the service they received?
- One year from now, how would you describe the organization to your neighbor?
- One year from now, how would you describe to a new employee how far we’ve come since last year?

When answering these questions, encourage your employees to be as descriptive as possible, using colors, sounds, smells, tastes, textures as well as verbs and adjectives to describe their new environment. The more vivid they can imagine

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their future state, the more likely they will connect with it and want it to be realized despite the short-term inconveniences.

A powerful alternative to describing the longer-term state is to use pictures. There are two fun and engaging ways in which to have employees describe their future state using pictures. First, you can have small groups of employees draw a picture of their environment using markers or colored pencils. Many employees have limited artistic skills which adds some levity to the exercise as their drawings often need interpretation. Second, you can have small groups of employees create a collage that illustrates their desired future state. Using this method, of course, will require you and/or others to save magazines and newspapers from which pictures and words may be obtained. Either way you conduct this exercise, you will find that there will be common themes that are quite prominent in all of their descriptions of the long-term outcomes resulting from change. These commonalities help build cohesion among employees as they realize that they want the same things for their future. When employees know that other employees want what they want, they are more likely to work together to make change happen.

Another alternative to describing the longer-term state of the organization is to use your customers' words. Remember, customers include other employees, so be sure to include them in your descriptions. The compelling thing about using customers' words is that they are essentially telling you what *they* want the future of the organization to look like and be like. Thus, it gives employees confidence that the long-term state can be achieved as some employees are already creating that environment today. After you've had employees describe their vision of their future organization, display what they have created so that it serves as a daily reminder of what they want.

Yet another way in which to describe the future state of the organization is to use stories. These stories may be of the journey a patient took from accident or illness to miraculous recovery. It could be the story of the struggle to overcome budgetary challenges to get the *best* equipment for the organization so that your customers could be better served. These stories – whatever they are – help employees see that they make a difference each and every day and that that is the kind of organization in which they want to work.

Finally, celebrate short-term wins. Change is a long process, and it takes time for change to become embedded in an organization's culture. Use short-term successes as a way to show employees – particularly the skeptics – that as an organization, you can overcome many obstacles and barriers, you do have the ability to create an even better organization, and you can do it through consistent

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effort and perseverance. You should also use these successes as a way to bring focus and attention to the challenges ahead. Short-term wins that are timely, visible, and meaningful are critical to building the credibility needed to sustain any change effort over time. Short-term wins remind employees that long-term success is possible.

To summarize, the things that you can do to help create a long-term focus are listed below.

- Understand that employees – including you – experience loss as a result of change and address the issues of loss before trying to sell employees on the benefits of change.
- Identify and describe in very specific terms the consequences of not changing.
- Describe – using employees’ and customers’ words, pictures, and stories – what employees want the organization to look like in one year, three years, or five years.
- Celebrate short-term wins.

## **Creating Control and Confidence**

*Purpose: To address locus of control and self-efficacy*

As discussed earlier in this Manual, there are two individual differences that have a significant impact on employees’ ability to navigate through change. These individual differences are locus of control and self-efficacy. Remember, locus of control refers to the extent that employees believe they can control events that affect them, and self-efficacy – as it relates to change – refers to the extent that employees believe they have the ability to handle change. These individual differences focus on control and confidence, and the more internal control employees believe they possess and the greater their ability to handle change, the more easily they will be able to successfully adjust to the change.

On the other hand, employees who believe that events in their lives are uncontrollable and who believe that they are unable to handle change will have a much more difficult time dealing with organizational change. Therefore, it is

important that you first be able to identify which employees are likely to struggle with change and then to create control and build confidence among those employees.

The first thing you should do is use the *Reactions to Change Worksheet for Managers*. This worksheet is designed to help you identify those employees who are likely to struggle the most with uncertainty and change, and more specifically, will help you identify which employees have an internal versus external locus of control and who has high self-efficacy versus low self-efficacy. Understanding the individual differences among your employees is necessary to implement the first suggestion for creating control and confidence.

An effective way in which to create control and confidence among employees is to establish a Barriers and Obstacles Team. Team members will act as watch dogs and will seek out people, processes, systems, and policies that interfere with the organization's ability to successfully implement change. This team should be comprised of a few employees who you know, from previous experience, believe that they have control over the events in their lives (i.e., have an internal locus of control) and have the ability to identify and break down barriers and remove obstacles in the workplace (i.e., have high self-efficacy).

This team should also include a few employees who you know are not as strong or confident in their ability to handle the change. This number of employees should be smaller than the number of employees who you know can handle the change. This process works best if there are at least two "confident" employees for every one "less confident" employee. You may want to explain *privately* to the more confident employees that part of their role on this team is to buddy with a less confident employee and help them to develop their confidence by identifying possible obstacles to change, identifying ways in which to remove or overcome these obstacles, identifying a plan to address these obstacles, and then implementing the plan.

When the team works well, the outcome can be quite surprising. The employees who believed that they were controlled by the change and who did not believe they had the ability to handle the change are often transformed to be strong advocates and leaders of change as they have seen for themselves that they can have a positive impact on the change process.

Another way to create control and confidence among your employees is to develop storyboards of prior successes. Storyboards present, either in words or with pictures, how individual employees or groups of employees have overcome

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barriers and obstacles as a natural part of their daily activities. These stories do not have to be related to any type of change to be effective. In fact, these stories are more effective when they reflect the obstacles and barriers that were encountered during an average or typical day. The actual storyboard is simply a step-by-step account of what an employee was doing that day, what obstacles he or she encountered, what action was taken to overcome or remove the obstacles, and what outcome resulted. These stories do not have to reflect employees overcoming monumental barriers. In fact, storyboards are quite effective when they represent challenges that any employee may face.

For example, an employee may have discovered during the course of a typical day that the written procedures to complete a particular process conflict with the way the process is actually completed. This discrepancy has caused problems in the past, and this employee expects that it will continue to cause problems in the future. She decides to talk with her supervisor about revising the written procedures to accurately reflect what is being done on the job. (*Note that changing the written procedures is not always the correct action to take. This is just an example of what could happen.*) After receiving permission from her supervisor to make the changes, she drafts a new document outlining the new procedures and has several of her co-workers review her proposal. Her co-workers recommend a few changes, and she agrees that the changes make for a clearer document. She makes the changes and then asks to present the new written procedures to the entire staff at the next staff meeting. She makes her presentation, the group discusses the changes, and her proposal is accepted. After a few weeks, she informally surveys her co-workers about the usefulness of the changes, and she learns that her co-workers have a better understanding of how to complete the specific process and have experienced less confusion about who is responsible for what parts of the process.

While this example may seem mundane or lackluster, it does show quite clearly that a single employee has the ability to create change in the organization. The actual storyboarding process can be initiated during a regular staff meeting, or if you think it will be more effective, you can schedule a special meeting for the purpose of completing the activity.

After you obtain a few storyboards, display them where employees can easily read them, and encourage other employees to add storyboards detailing their experiences. When you display the storyboards, it is hard to ignore the fact that employees can have a positive impact on an organization and that employees have the ability work through change. Employees who tend to believe they cannot have such an impact may be persuaded by seeing the successes of their co-workers. As

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the number of storyboards displayed increases, even the most resistant employees are more likely to get involved.

To summarize, the things that you can do to help create control and confidence are listed below.

- Complete the Reactions to Change Worksheet for Managers.
- Create an Obstacles and Barriers Team to identify and address potential obstacles to achieving successful change.
- Create and display storyboards that illustrate how employees make a difference in their organization.

## **Creating Perceptions of Fairness**

*Purpose: To address issues of organizational justice*

Earlier the concepts of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice were introduced. Each of these types of justice relates to perceptions of fairness. When employees perceive an unjust or unfair situation, they are more likely to resist change. Therefore, it is important that you address issues of organizational justice, especially during times of uncertainty and change.

The single most important thing that you can do to create perceptions of fairness is to communicate, communicate, and communicate even more than usual and to do it in an honest, sensitive, and respectful manner. First, you need to address issues of distributive justice which is concerned with perceptions of outcome distributions or allocations. Outcome distributions or allocations refer to any number of things that impact employees including, but not limited to, hourly pay increases (e.g., market adjustments) or pay cuts, bonuses, overtime, project assignments, shift assignments, layoffs, vacation time, etc.

During times of normal operations, there are relatively few concerns about unjust outcomes compared to times of uncertainty and change. During change, employees often have a heightened sense of fairness and are actively looking for instances in which one group of employees received a more favorable outcome than another group. As soon as there is any sense of injustice, employees will respond, usually en masse and quite vocally.

When you become aware of a situation in which a group of employees is going to receive a different – and more positive – outcome compared to other employees, it is important that you acknowledge that the outcomes are different. Trying to hide the fact that the outcomes are different will cause you to lose credibility, because your employees will discover the truth by talking with others in the organization. It is perfectly acceptable to empathize with the employees who received the less positive outcome, and if you yourself received the less positive outcome, it is okay to share with your employees your level of disappointment. *However*, it is equally important that you *not* feed into the problem by adopting a “woe is me” attitude as that will only compound the problem.

The next thing you need to do is address the issue of procedural justice. You may recall that procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of the process or procedures used to determine outcome distributions or allocations. If you were the person who made the decision that resulted in different outcomes for different employees, then you need to take ownership of that decision and explain in plain terms, without making excuses or seeking employees’ sympathy, how the decision was made.

There will be times that you are required to make tough decisions. There will be other times, however, in which you are not the person who made the decision that resulted in different outcomes for different employees. If you were not the person who made the decision, then go to the person or group of people who did make the decision and learn as much as possible about how the decision was made. Ask what, if any, alternative courses of action were considered. Ask what information they considered before making the decision. Ask if the decision is final or if there is a chance that the decision can or will be changed at a later date. Ask whether it would be appropriate for your employees to contact the decision maker(s) to ask additional questions about the process if you can’t answer them. Ask as many questions as needed to ensure that you have enough information to go back to your team to explain the process used to make the decision.

Finally, be sure that you communicate all information in a respectful manner that allows employees to maintain their dignity. If it is at all possible, ask one of the decision makers to talk with your employees about how specific decisions were made. While their explanations may not ease the upset caused by getting less than other employees, it may help them to see that a particular decision was not easy to make and that careful deliberation took place before a decision was announced. In the case of decisions that involve legal or ethical issues, it may help employees to hear that such constraints are what led to a particular decision. How you respond to your employees’ perceptions of injustice sets the stage for how they handle

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future situations that may feel unfair. It will also influence whether these employees support or resist any change taking place.

To summarize, the things that you can do to help improve perceptions of fairness are listed below.

- Communicate, communicate, and communicate even more.
- Acknowledge when some employees receive one outcome and other employees receive a different, often less positive, outcome.
- Take ownership of the decision if you made it.
- Explain in detail how you arrived at the decision you made.
- If you were not the decision maker, then talk to the person or group who made the decision that resulted in different outcomes and learn as much as you can about how the decision was made.
- Ask the decision maker(s) if he or she would talk to your employees and explain how the decision was made.
- Always communicate in a sensitive and respectful manner that allows employees to maintain their dignity.

## **Creating Priorities**

*Purpose: To address organizational turbulence*

Change plus change plus even more change can make even the most competent, hard-working employees tired and frustrated. The first step you can take to help decrease the overload, frustration, and angst associated with organizational turbulence is to create a formal system for prioritizing and assigning work. This system should include hard criteria for determining whether you and your staff can take on additional work.

For example, any work that needs to be completed because of legal or regulatory requirements is your highest priority work followed by work that supports the organization's strategic plan. After that, you should prioritize any incoming work

based on the criteria you identified. If work doesn't meet those criteria, then it falls to a lower place on the list of work that needs to be done. Once you've created a formal prioritization system, be sure to share it with anyone who may be impacted by its use.

You can also help reduce organizational turbulence by identifying specific times of the year that are normally busier for you and declare a moratorium on any new project work at that time. While there is always the possibility that you may need to make an exception or two to this practice, it will help ensure that busy times do not become chaotic, out-of-control times for you and your employees.

Finally, learn to say "no." Just because you've said "yes" in the past does not mean that you have to say "yes" in the future. If you feel that your employees are ready to revolt, because their workload is over the top, then say "no" to all nonessential work. While there may be benefits of having some of the nonessential work done, resist the temptation to pile on more work for your employees, especially if you know it will only cause more anxiety and stress for them.

During times of uncertainty and change, employees are often asked to do things that go above and beyond their normal workload. Adding still more work to their current workload will only push your employees further away during a time when you need them to support organizational change.

To summarize, the things that you can do to help create priorities are listed below.

- Create a formal prioritization system, and share it with everyone who will be impacted by it.
- Put a moratorium on new projects during your busiest times of the year.
- Cut all nonessential work.
- Learn to say "no."

## Creating Dialogue with Your Employees

*Purpose: To increase communication and build trust*

Anytime an organization's environment becomes uncertain or when change is expected, it is important that you do whatever you can to create two-way communication with your employees. Building trust is a key element to getting employees to support change, and open, honest dialogue with your employees helps to build trust.

First, don't be afraid to share how you feel and what you think about the current situation – *but do so in a productive manner*. For instance, if you are excited and energized about the possibility of change, then let your employees know that you're excited and you can't wait to dive into creating a new and improved organization. If you believe that change is necessary to help the organization become more competitive, then tell your employees that. If you have concerns that perhaps the amount of change that is taking place is a bit overwhelming, then tell them that, too; however, be sure to follow up that a statement with another statement expressing your commitment to do whatever you can to make the change a success.

If you think that the proposed change is a huge mistake and will only result in failure, then it's best to not say anything at all other than to acknowledge that you intend to support the change and you expect your employees to do the same. You can have private conversations with your peers and other organizational leaders during which you express your concerns about the change, but such conversations really serve no purpose when you have them with your employees.

Second, invite your employees to share their ideas and suggestions for improving how business is conducted. Ideas don't have to save the organization a lot of money but can be something as simple as changing the layout of a form to make it more user friendly. Uncertainty and change should be viewed as a time in which anything is possible, and when you encourage your employees to view change in such a way, then creativity and innovation are more likely to occur.

Third, invite your employees to give you feedback on how things are going in your department. Listen closely to what employees are telling you. If they share something positive with you, then be sure to keep doing whatever it is. If they give you constructive feedback, ask for suggestions on how they would recommend improving or fixing the problem they have raised. Give their feedback and



recommendations serious consideration, and then engage them in additional conversations about the issue as needed. If you decide to take action on their recommendations, then let your employees know that you heard what was said and are doing something about it. Showing your employees that you are responsive to their feedback will encourage other employees to provide feedback as well.

Fourth, communicate using multiple methods and venues. Use staff meetings, bulletin boards, PowerPoint presentations, newsletters, memos, e-mail, etc. to get your messages out to everyone. Be sure to invite your employees to share what's on their mind as well, and let them do it in a way that is comfortable for them.

Finally, create a rumor mill or grapevine board, if needed. During times of uncertainty and change, it seems that the rumor mill gets a real workout as employees begin to speculate about what *might* happen in the future. With each speculation comes another which is sure to spark a rumor, and before you know it, the only thing your employees are talking about are the rumors. A rumor mill or grapevine board is a way in which you can control – or at least try to control – some of the rumors that are spread as a result of uncertainty.

Your employees can write on an index card something that they heard from someone else and post it on your rumor mill board. Your job is to indicate whether what they wrote is true or a rumor. In some cases, you will know instantly that something is a rumor and can simply write “rumor” on the card. In other cases, you will know instantly that something is true and can write “true” on the card. In yet other cases, you may not know whether something your employees wrote is rumor or truth. In those cases, you can write “I don't know” or “I haven't heard that.” Avoid speculating (e.g., “most likely rumor”), because you may be wrong, and if that happens several times, employees may not trust the information you do provide. So keep your answers simple.

This method of communicating works well for evening and night shift employees, because they often do not have the opportunity to talk with you directly. In addition, the rumor mill board serves as a means for ending the spread of rumors which tend to run rampant during times of uncertainty and change.

To summarize, the things that you can do to help create dialogue with your employees are listed below.

- Share how you feel and share what you think – *but keep it productive!*
- Invite ideas and suggestions for improving things in your department.

- Invite feedback from your employees, give careful consideration to the feedback, and take action as warranted.
- Create and use a rumor mill or grapevine board to help control the rumors that frequently accompany change.

## **Dealing with Defiance**

*Purpose: To reduce negativity and increase support for change*

Despite your best efforts, it is possible that not everyone on your team will buy into the change. In fact, some employees will openly defy new ways of conducting business. While it may seem tempting to ignore those employees or chastise them for not supporting the change, it is more productive to engage them in productive conversation. More specifically, you should:

- listen to their concerns and ask that they generate solutions to address their concerns,
- have them research industry best practices to see what other organizations are doing, and
- set the expectation that you will not accept a complaint without a solution.

Most employees who have legitimate concerns about a proposed change will not mind identifying possible solutions to the problems they have identified, and they are likely to welcome your interest in their concerns. However, employees who simply want to create trouble will often back down, because they aren't really interested in having their concerns addressed. If defiant employees continue to resist the new way of doing business and refuse to use new processes, procedures, etc., then you need to address the defiance as you would any performance issue.

## A Word on What NOT To Do

Any meaningful discussion of what to do to help organizational change go more smoothly warrants a brief mention of the things that managers should *not* do. One challenge business leaders face is the desire to comfort employees or reduce the stress they're experiencing as a result of uncertainty and change. Leaders often find themselves saying things to employees that could be damaging in the future. Below are things that you should not say:

- Don't worry about it.
- I wouldn't worry about it if I were you.
- You'll be fine.
- You'll be okay.
- There's no way I could eliminate your position.
- I doubt I'll need to eliminate positions, because we're already short staffed.

While these statements and many others like them may seem innocent, employees often hear these statements as a commitment from you that nothing negative will happen to them as a result of organization change (e.g., reduced hours, reduced pay, restructured job, laid-off). Employees will not only be confused but will also be quite angry when you need to do something that impacts their job, because they interpreted your message as nothing bad will happen to them. If employees ask you whether they will be laid-off or whether they will be asked to work reduced hours, the best answer you can give (as long as it is accurate) is "I don't know."

In addition to watching what you say, it is also necessary for you to watch what you do. Below is a list of things that will actually push employees to resist change.

- Resist their resistance by fighting back.
- Try to do everything yourself.
- Use threats or aggressive language.
- Avoid talking to employees.

- Avoid listening to employees.
- Avoid the employees who are most affected by the change.
- Spend more time with your allies.
- Avoid the troublemakers.
- Ignore those employees who resist, and keep your fingers crossed that they will go away.
- Share your plans with others and then ignore your plans.
- Give lots of rational reasons why people should do as you say.
- Dive into the details before you've shared the bigger picture with employees.
- Quiz employees to see if they've heard what you've said.
- Lose faith in the change.
- Talk in vague terms about the change.
- Avoid being the messenger of bad news.
- Produce non-specific plans.
- Expect employees to instantly understand what took you weeks to figure out.
- Publicly and aggressively punish those employees who object to the change.
- Shout over employees who disagree with your plan.
- Make an "exception" for talented people who resist.

You will have days, just like your employees, when you think that the proposed change is too much or it's impossible to achieve. Those are the days when you must be most vigilant about watching what you do and what you say to your employees.



Successful organizational change is a very difficult thing to achieve, yet thousands of organizational leaders initiate change every day with the steadfast belief that their organization will be the one to succeed. Many organizations will succeed while many more will fail. And for those organizations that fail to achieve successful organizational change, it is likely that they overlooked the most critical element to change: the human element.

# Part VI: References

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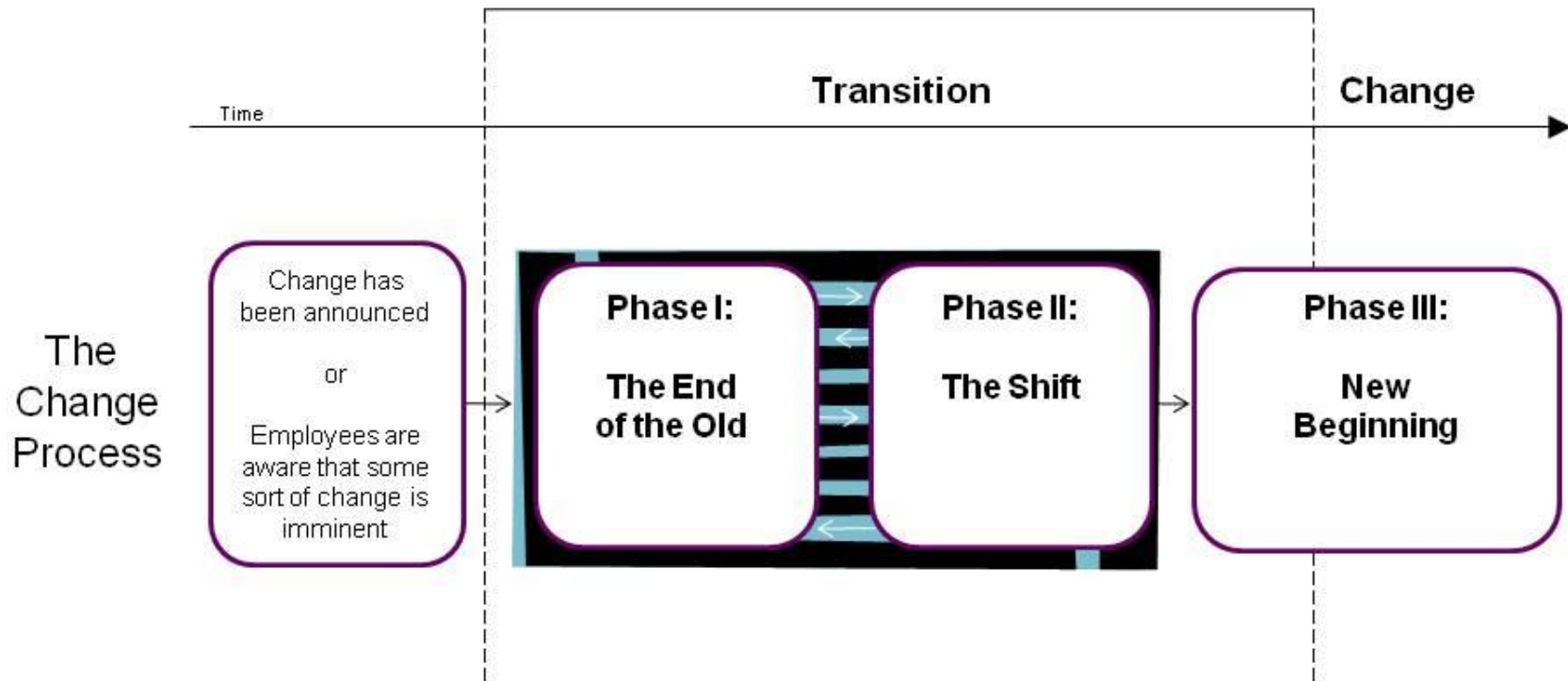
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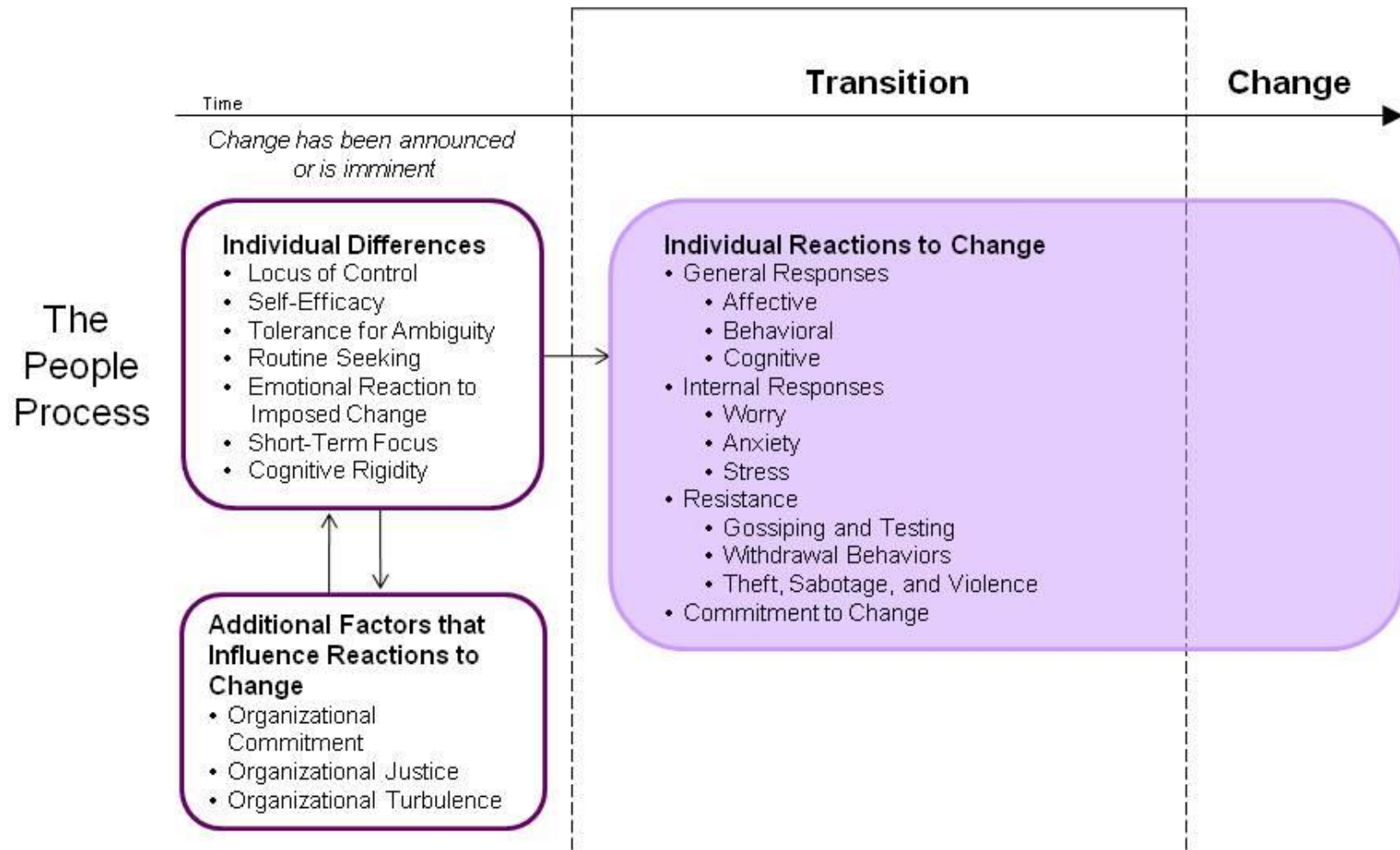
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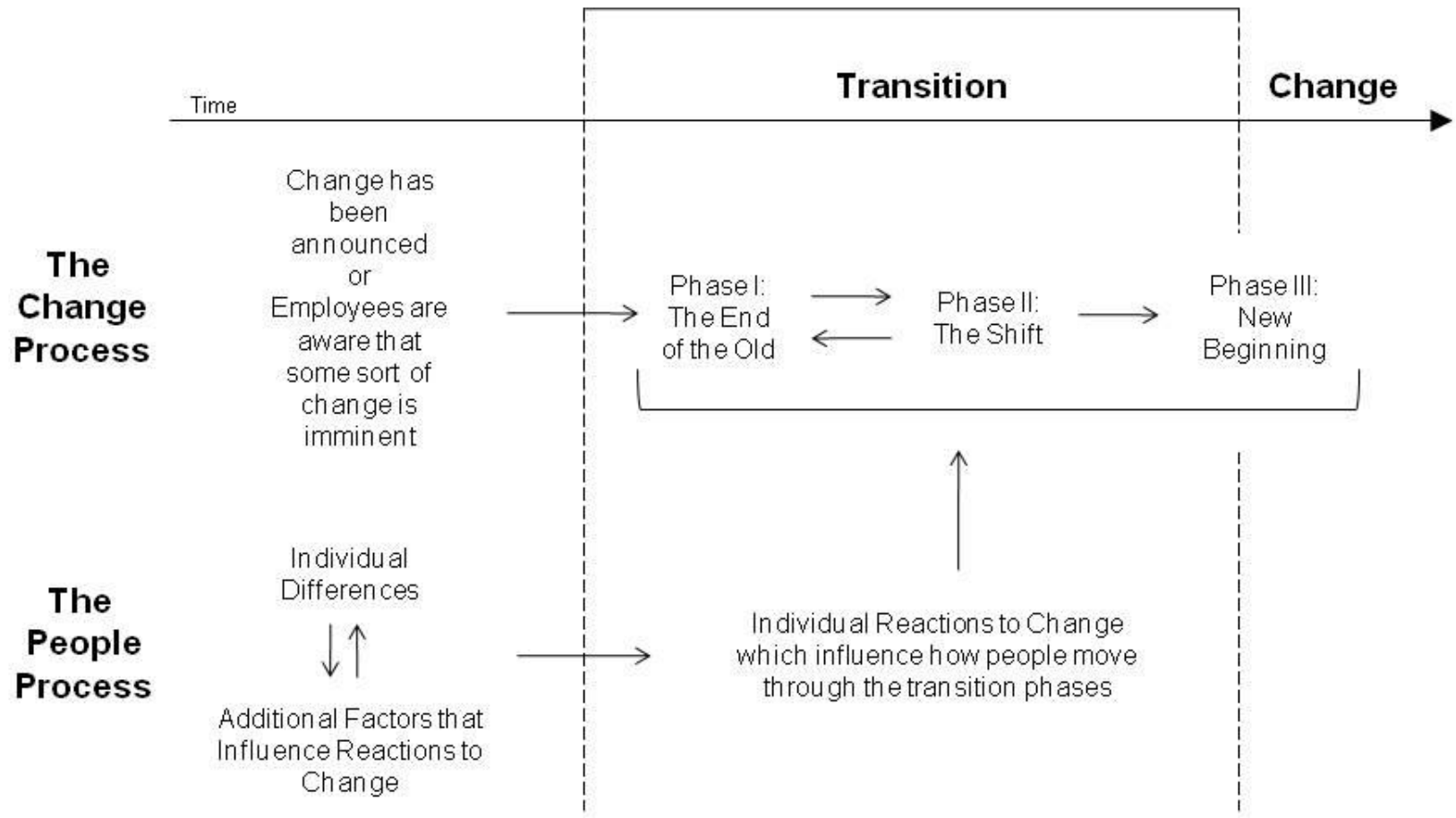
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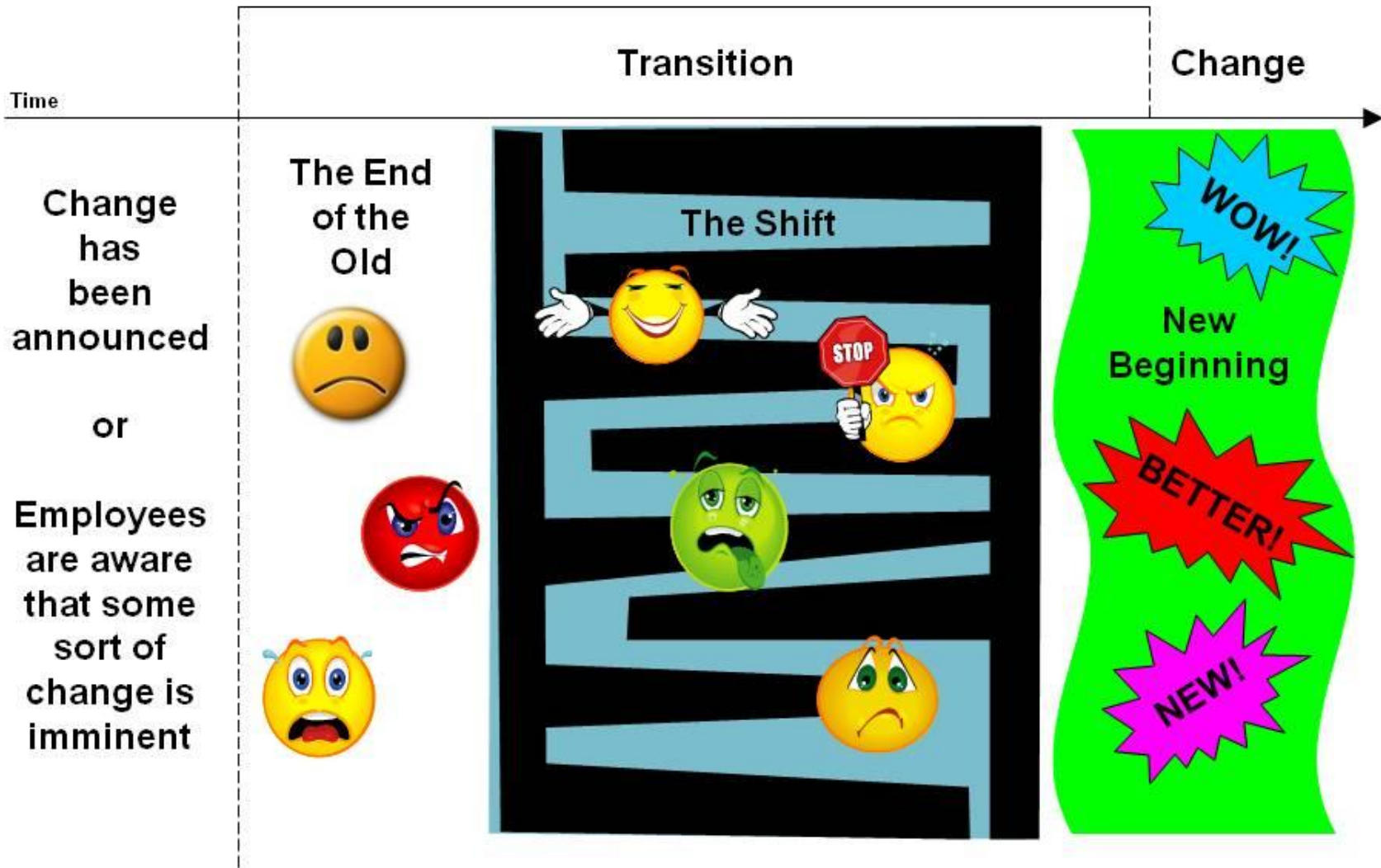
## Part I: The Change Process



## Part II: The People Process



Framework for Understanding Reactions to Change



What the Framework for Understanding Reactions to Change Looks Like in Practice