

The Beginner's Guide to Change

Achieving successful change is less about the change itself but how leaders lead their teams from one state to another – the **transition**.

We get so hung up on achieving the milestones of the change plan that we forget about how people are feeling.

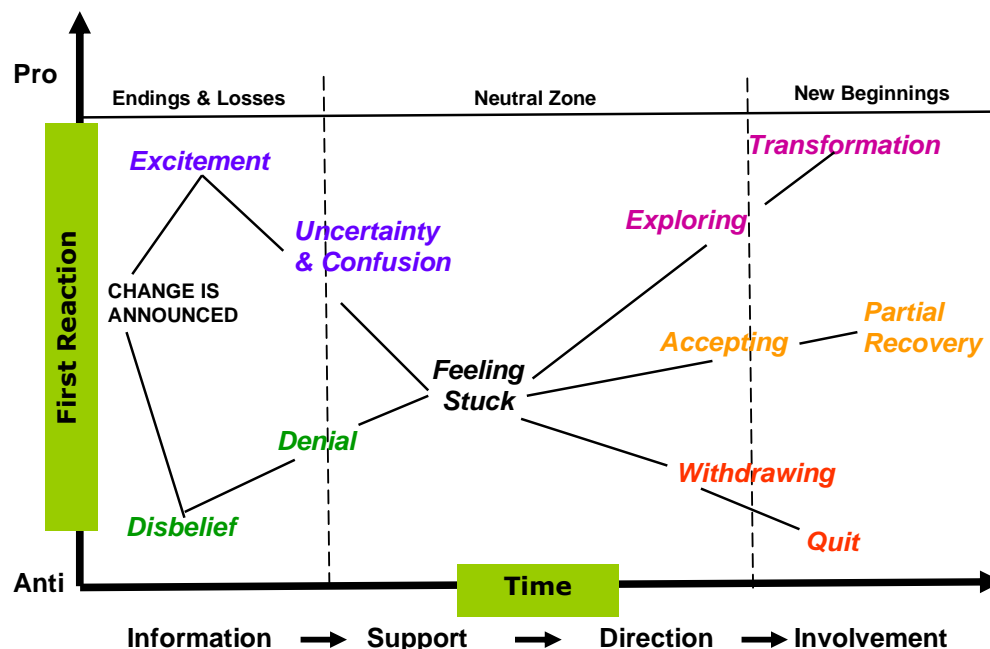
In our attempts to excite and inspire people about our plans for the future, we unintentionally send out a message that whatever happened in the past was not good enough - a past which people have invested heavily in.

So, how do you keep yourself and your team going through change and still deliver the service and results that are required of you? The first step is to understand how individuals react to change. If you can understand this, you are better placed to prevent them from getting stuck.

The model below demonstrates the different approaches to change and the possible journeys that individual team members may take.

It is not a 'to scale' ordinance survey route map, showing every twist and turn, but more an overview of some of the main routes you can take. The main points to observe are:

- There are different starting points.
- People travel at different speeds.
- At some point they may break down and require mechanical assistance.
- For some, this will be a quick pit stop.
- For others, the damage may be a bit more serious and they will never regain peak performance.
- A few will be a 'write off' and will cease their journey completely.



Support strategies

Information

People's reactions to change are often irrational, emotional and subjective. They will all interpret your messages very differently. You use the word 'change'; they may hear 'opportunity' or they may hear 'redundancy'. Don't get drawn into an argument. Firstly, it will stop the communication. Secondly, change is a subjective experience and your "objective" view (which really is another "subjective" view) is irrelevant. To argue leads to the perception that you do not understand people's concerns – or worse, that you do not care what they think or feel. You should:

- Have regular communication/question and answer sessions with your team
- Use a variety of media to support your message
- Listen as well as transmit.

Support

You may feel that some people in the team are overreacting to the change. When things change, people can get angry, sad, frightened, depressed and confused. These emotions can be mistaken for bad morale. In fact, they are the natural sequence of feelings that people experience when they lose something that matters to them. Bring their concerns out into the open - acknowledge them and be empathetic. Do it simply and directly. Don't be afraid that this will 'stir up trouble'. Not acknowledging concerns is what causes problems. Once they have talked it out, you can then focus on the practical things that you can do to support them, including:

- Coaching
- Training
- Helping them assess their options.

Direction

Define the change vision upfront and regularly signpost what has been achieved – how far you have come and how far you have yet to go. Without this, people will lose focus. You will need to:

- Agree short term targets and objectives and give regular, timely, feedback
- Recognise and reinforce the behaviours that will achieve the change
- Acknowledge and celebrate success.

Involvement

Involvement equals commitment. People are more likely to support decisions that they dislike if they have been involved in the decision making process or at least been consulted. Therefore, we would encourage you to:

- Seek ideas and reward those which are successfully implemented
- Involve people at the earliest possible stage
- Bring teams together to tackle individual elements of the change.

These are just a sample of the varied techniques that managers can use to manage the transitions of change. Why not arrange for one of our experienced consultants to discuss your specific needs and how we might help your managers lead successful change. Contact us now on 01803 299740 to arrange a no obligation meeting.