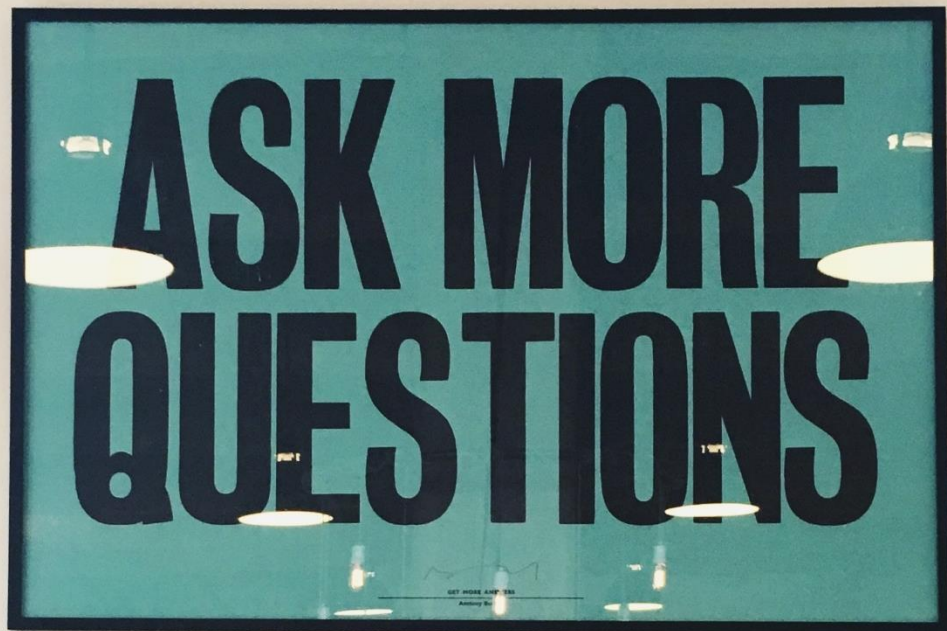# MANAGING CHANGE

## Self-Paced Guide



# DAVID JONES

# Managing Change

## Overview

**Introduction**

Change in the workplace has become a way of life. As managers and leaders you are challenged to maintain performance under chaotic conditions. Your workforce can be confused, resistant and disheartened. What can you do to build a motivated and productive work force under these conditions?

The skills and strategies in this book will help you to:
- Understand your role in the changing workplace
- Understand and manage people through change
- Provide change leadership
- Deal with individual and group resistance
- Prepare your group for change
- Become a change leader

This guide will give you step-by-step advice and activities to become an effective change leader in your organisation.
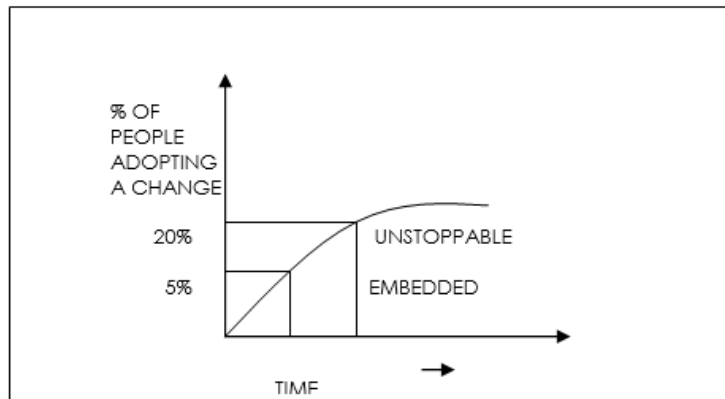
**Contents**

This guide contains the following topics.

# Understanding Change

You cannot escape or hide from organisational change. Problems come when people are not allowed to manage the change. In order for an organisation to adapt to change, it needs to help its people move through change.

**The Nature of Change**



When 5 percent of the people in a group adopt a change the change is *Embedded*. When 20% adopt it, the change is *Unstoppable*.
So, get the Innovators and Early Adopters on board and the success of your changes is assured.
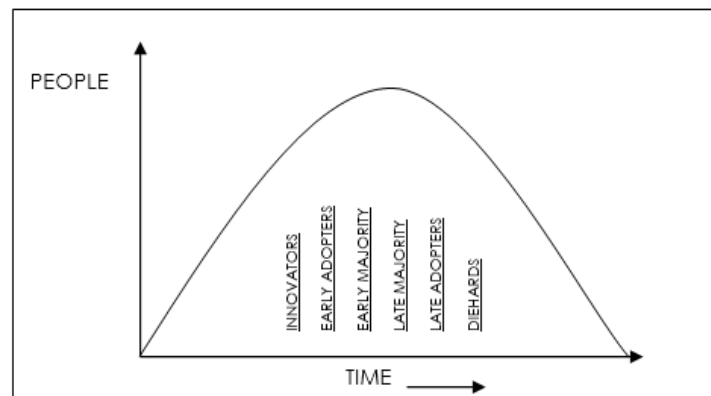


Changes are adopted at different rates in organisations. The Innovators try things first, followed by the Early Adopters. These are the people you need to get on board first. Focus your attention on them, not the diehards.

# **Understanding Change,** Continued

**What Changes have you Experienced**

Take a moment to assess any changes you have faced in the last two years.

1 = little change, 5 = considerable change.

| Change | Impact of Change | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| Technology changes | | | | | |
| Accelerated product cycles | | | | | |
| Merger | | | | | |
| Acquisition | | | | | |
| Downsizing | | | | | |
| Start up of new division | | | | | |
| Top management changes | | | | | |
| Culture changes - new policies, values, expectations | | | | | |
| Changes in legislation | | | | | |
| Changes in competition | | | | | |
| Reorganisation | | | | | |
| Add your own | | | | | |
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**Organisational responses to change**

Change creates pressure in any organisation. This is especially true when the organisation has not had much experience dealing with change. The first taste of major change in this situation can be traumatic. Many organisations today are struggling to adjust to the new environment of rapid change.

In many organisations there are different responses to change among the different levels. This is shown and explained below.
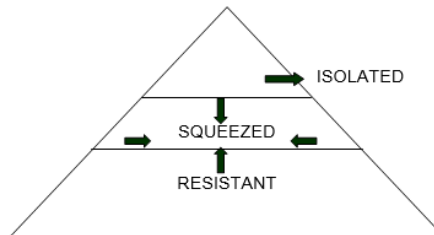


### Top management
In a traditional company, top management has a hard time coming to grips with the direct implications of change. They often underestimate the impact that change has on their employees. They tend to isolate themselves. Often they engage in strategic planning sessions and gather information in survey reports. They avoid communicating or seeking bad news, because it is difficult for them to admit they don't know. They expect employees to "go along" when a change is announced and blame their middle managers if people resist or complain about the change. They often feel betrayed when employees don't respond positively.

### Middle Management
Managers in the middle feel the pressure to "make the organisation change' according to the wishes of top management. They feel pulled in different directions. Middle managers often lack information and leadership direction needed to focus on multiple priorities. They are caught in the middle, and often fragmented because they don't have clear instructions. They are besieged with upset, resistant or withdrawn employees who no longer respond to previous management approaches, and they feel deserted, blamed or misunderstood by their superiors.

### Employees/Workers/Associates
Workers often feel attacked and betrayed by changes announced by management. They are often caught off guard, not really believing that "my company could do this to me". Many respond with resistance, anger, frustration and confusion. They become afraid to take risks, be innovative or try new things.

**The role of the leader during change**

In times of change each manager, supervisor and team leader will be called upon to lead change in his or her group. Top management should not be expected to manage the transition of individual work groups. Many middle managers wait for their leaders to tell them what to do. In many cases communication between top executives and middle managers is poor and there is no strategy to effectively announce and implement change.

Managers want answers. When there are no ready solutions they often blame top management for leaving them in the dark. The best advice for these managers is to stop waiting and become leaders of their teams. If they sit around waiting, the wave of change may wash over them and drown them. To stay afloat they must learn to manage change. Change offers both uncertainty and opportunity for them as managers. How they manage themselves and their work groups will make all the difference. By following the steps and strategies in this book they can learn how to view change as an opportunity and create a climate of productivity and growth.

Going through any major change will challenge the way we view ourselves. Living through this process is similar to a major remodelling of a kitchen. To obtain the final result you want, you must first rip out the old kitchen, leaving a lot of basic structure and emptiness. Then you bring in the new cabinets and appliances that fit coherently. Once you add the final touches you can move back in and feel comfortable and productive again. It always takes longer than you thought and costs more than you estimated.

# Understanding Change, Continued

**Fantasies about change**

Organisational transition is slow, expensive and difficult. There is a tendency to believe that change can be instant, painless and quick. Managers often believe the change they make will:

- Not be disruptive
- Not cost much and be quick to implement
- Solve previous organisational problems

These myths may help you understand why many organisations do such a poor job managing the process of change, or become reluctant to accept the challenge of other changes, if previous attempts have gone badly.

The process of making a change to an organisation's culture requires people to let go of "how it was" and go through a period of doubt and uncertainty. When you are managing this process it becomes all consuming and must be managed sensitively. Organisations that handle the process of changing an organisation's culture well reduce the time required for similar changes in the future.

**Changing a culture**

Change is often nothing more than a simple shift of technology, or some reporting relationships. But when major change hits the company, or a severe crisis demands a response, what really changes is the "corporate culture"; the way the organisation has been doing things. This much change demands a major shift in the way the work gets done. It is no longer possible to remain a caretaker, set in your ways. Rather, the challenge is often to increase productivity, while moving a work group in a new direction. This book is about that challenge.

# Preparing for Change

**Overview**

You may not know when a change is in the works, but when it happens you are far from helpless.  While there may be much that is beyond your control, many aspects of implementing change can be anticipated and influenced.  Begin change management by seeking new options and by planning.  Involve your group during change as soon as possible.

**Key elements for change management**

Top management sometimes plans extensively for strategic changes in an organisation, but places very little emphasis on how to handle the transition from the old way to the new way.  When this occurs, the new goal, system, organisation or project is simply presented as a direction or decision to a work team.  When the team has not been consulted, it comes as a shock.  The change is announced and implementation is left up to the group.  When this happens to you, as the manager involved, you are on the spot.  You need to produce results but can only produce when your team is fully behind the changes.  Top management too often considers implementation of the change a footnote of their plan.  Your work team may consider the same change a crisis of the first magnitude.

Most organisational difficulty with change manifests itself in this transition period.  This is where people get stuck.  People become confused, anxious, angry and often unproductive.  Your job as a manager is to move your team through change in the smoothest way possible, regardless of how well or poorly the change was addressed.

# Preparing for Change, Continued

**Key elements for change management (continued)**

## Gaining Control

Following is a major lesson in leadership. You can't move through change *and* keep previously high levels of tight control over your people. You gain control over change by giving it up.

In effective organisations, people share basic goals and communicate clearly, directly and regularly about what they are doing. Each person goes about his or her work with greater flexibility than is common in less effective organisations. If you manage an effective organisation during change, you will benefit by exercising a new type of leadership - less as a controller and more as a coordinator, focuser and facilitator. This takes place when you learn how to intelligently delegate some of your control to your team.

As a manager you have special responsibilities to maintain strong upward lines of communication. If you keep the information you receive from above to yourself, or feel you are the only one who knows how to handle change, your controlling leadership will not be helpful in implementing the changes. Your group will not learn, will not have the information they need to make shifts, and will not feel they share the change unless you involve them by giving up some of your control.

### Power and Influence

Most of the major organisational changes you will experience in your career will not be implemented by you. You may be able to anticipate change or see it coming (for example, the need for new technology): however most of the time you will be handed change as a fact. When this happens, a common reaction, regardless of level, is an attitude of helplessness. "What can I do?" or "Has anyone taken us into account?" can lead to inactivity and frustration. When this happens, workers spend their days bemoaning the change, dreaming of the old days or criticising the judgment of top management.

Your task as change agent is to shift the energy away from the feeling of being powerless and the feeling of security from the past, toward seeing the opportunities of the future. You can do this by calling attention to the ways your team can make a difference.

# Preparing for Change, Continued

**Key elements for change management (continued)**

**Power and Influence (continued)**

Here is how to begin.

Think about a recent change that has been announced in your organisation. Then in the worksheet on the next page fill in which aspects of the change are **Givens.** Usually they are beyond your control. They could include aspects of timing, personnel, budget or other factors.

Next, write those aspects of the change that you or your team can **Control** in the space provided. This is where you need to dig. Some things may seem to be givens but may be somewhat under your control.

Finally, think about what aspects of the change you and your team can **Negotiate** and write them as indicated. Remember you can always communicate or negotiate with other groups in your organisation. You can initiate communication and discussion with any other group. What aspects of the change do you need to talk about, need better clarification of or need to present new information about? How can you accomplish this?

Taking control and exerting influence are critical aspects of change management.

Use the exercise on the next page for yourself when preparing for a change. Repeat it with your team to help them prepare their response to change. You will learn that your team will see things differently from you, just as you often see things differently from your superiors.

## Preparing for Change, Continued

**Controlling change**

In the space provided, think about this change in your organisation and describe what aspects of that change are givens, which are negotiables and which are controllable in the space provided.

| GIVENS | NEGOTIABLES | CONTROLLABLE |
|---|---|---|
| Aspects of the change we cannot control | Aspects of the change we can influence or discuss with other groups | Aspects of the change my team can control |
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# **Preparing for Change,** Continued

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|---|---|
| **Planning for change** | The following steps will help you successfully introduce and implement a change in your group.  You and your team will need to do your homework to complete each stage.  Depending on circumstances, you may not go through each stage in perfect order, but at least you should be aware of them.  Otherwise you risk being inadequately prepared for implementing the changes successfully.

**I**  **Preparation:**  anticipating key elements
**II**  **Planning:** getting people together to plan the response
**III**  **Transition:** establish ways of working together
**IV**  **Implementation:** activating a flexible response and learning circle
**V**  **Reward:** acknowledging the people who made it work

Each step will be carefully considered in the following pages. |
| **I. Planning** | Think it through.  During this stage:

π  **Make contingency plans.**  Think of options to the proposed change.  If things go one way, what will you do…?  What about the other way…?  Anticipate the unforeseen, the unexpected and any setbacks.

π  **Allow for the impact of the change on personal performance and productivity.**  Don't expect people to get up to speed in an instant.  It will frustrate whatever sense of achievement that are experiencing.

π  **Encourage employee input.**  Discuss at each stage of the way and ask for suggestions.

π  **Anticipate the skills and knowledge that will be needed to master the change.**  Do your people have them?  Have you prepared training plans?

π  **Set a timetable and objectives so you can measure your progress.** |

# Preparing for Change, Continued

**II. Preparation**     Before the change, whenever possible, follow these steps:

π     **Prepare your employees.**  Let them know what is happening ahead of time.  Telling them too far ahead of time is not always better (for example, telling people 8 months before a change only leaves time for anxiety to build up).

π     **Describe the change as completely as you can.**  How do you see the change affecting individual employees and the work group as a whole?  Identify who will be most affected and approach them first.

π     **Research what happened during the last change.**  Does your group have a positive history of their ability to manage change or was the last change traumatic?  Learn from past experience and let this background influence your current actions.

π     **Assess the organisational readiness of your team.**  Are they ready to undertake a change?  An organisation or group that isn't mentally and emotionally prepared will tend to stay in denial, rather than accept the change and move on.

π     **Don't make any additional changes that aren't critical.**  People need all the stability they can get during change.  Don't change the payroll dates, the working hours or cafeteria procedures when you are making large scale organisational changes.  Change the most important things one at a time.

**III. Transition**     Special activities for a special time.  After Step II planning:

π     **Create new communication channels.**  Remind people of why the change makes sense.  Use electronic mailboxes, newsletters, videotapes, general meetings, training sessions, posters, etc., so people will receive information fast.  The cost of gossip is high, prevent it through clear, accurate communication.

π     **Meet frequently to monitor the unforeseen, to give feedback or to check on what is happening.**  Make feedback a daily event.

# Preparing for Change, Continued

| | |
|---|---|
| **IV.**<br>**Implementation** | Take clear flexible action to accomplish these goals: |

- π **Provide appropriate training in new skills and coaching in new values and behaviours.**

- π **Encourage self-management.** Inform each person that he or she is accountable for some aspect of the change.

- π **Give more feedback that usual to ensure that people always know where they stand.**

- π **Allow for resistance.** Help people let go of the "old". Prepare to help those having special difficulty making the adjustment.

- π **Give people a chance to step back and take a look at what is going on.** Keep asking, "Is the change working the way we want it to?"

- π **Encourage people to think and act creatively.**

- π **Look for any *opportunities* created by the change.**

- π **Allow for withdrawal and return of people who are temporarily resistant.** Don't cross off people as irretrievable.

- π **Collaborate.** Build bridges from your work group to other work groups. Look for opportunities to interface your activities.

- π **Monitor the change process.** Conduct surveys to find out how employees are responding to the change.

| | |
|---|---|
| **V. Reward** | π **Celebrate by acknowledging groups and individuals who have helped make things happen.** |

# What Happens to People

**Understanding people's reactions**

Change occurs when something ends and something new or different starts. The period between these two points is called *transition*. This is where people have to learn to let go of the old and embrace the new. Usually it means moving from the familiar to the unknown. Even when this change is positive, this physchological process affects us. Most of us have a strong response to any change. One of the strongest can be a feeling of loss, along with the struggle to accept a new direction.

The most common error in managing change is underestimating the effect it has on people. Many managers think that if they just tell their employees to change, they will. They do not realise how upsetting it is to give up work patterns that are familiar. Always remember how much will be disrupted and understand that people need time to adjust.

Even when change is positive - promotion, expansion, going public, new markets, etc. - it is not uncommon for a person to feel an ending, or loss, associated with it. Managers often have a hard time understanding the loss associated with change. If you don't manage loss, you can't lead people in a new direction.

**Understanding people's reactions (continued)**

**Type of Loss**

When a major shift or change occurs within an organisation, employees normally experience several types of loss including the loss of:

- π **Security** - Employees no longer feel in control or know what the future holds, or where they stand in the organisation.
- π **Competence -** Workers no longer feel that they know what to do or how to manage. People sometimes become embarrassed when they are faced with new tasks because they don't know how to do them. It is hard to admit you don't know how to do something.
- π **Relationships** - The familiar contact with people like old customers, co-workers or managers can disappear. People often lose their sense of belonging to a team, a group or an organisation.
- π **Sense of Direction** - Employees lose an understanding of where they are going and why they are going there. Meaning and mission often become unclear.
- π **Territory** - There is an uncertain feeling about the area that used to belong to them. This can be work space or job assignments. Territory includes psychological space as well as physical space.

# What Happens to People, Continued

**How people change**

A common fantasy is that if you order people to change, they will.  This belief often leads managers to behave like drill sergeants - ordering employees around.  Usually, the response to this approach will be resistance, defensiveness and/or withdrawal.

People do not normally change their behaviour simply from information.  For example, how many people have quit smoking because of the written warning on the cigarette package?

It is far more common for *people to change because of the support, encouragement, caring confrontation and empathy* of a relationship.  Becoming a leader and forming supportive relationships is often a new skill for managers who have taken a more traditional approach to management.  The more involved you are with your team, and the more involved they are with each other, the easier the change will be.  Creating trusting relationships requires skill and can put a manager in a more exposed situation.  However, managers who can create supportive relationships are more successful during periods of change because their teams will trust and follow them.

Because most change is resisted it is important to create incentives for those who adapt to change professionally and thoroughly.  To become a change agent you might:
- Create public recognition of change masters
- Incorporate good ideas and new suggestions from team members as a regular part of your meetings.

**Moving from danger to opportunity**

Change often involves elements of both danger and opportunity.  When people approach a change, their first response is to see it as a threat or danger.  When this happens, they fear and resist the change.

Once the change occurs, it is not uncommon for those affected to begin getting used to it.  Often during this period, people begin to see that the change may lead to new opportunities.  Some see that the new way may indeed be more effective and offer the potential for new freedom and power.  Once people accept that a change can provide new opportunities and possibilities, the change is well on the way to successful implementation.

# What Happens to People, Continued

**Moving from danger to opportunity (continued)**

**Think of a recent change you experienced and write your reactions in the space provided.**

- How was this change experienced by you, as a threat or danger?

_____

_____

_____

_____

- What hidden opportunities or possibilities did you find in the change?

_____

_____

_____

_____

**Danger** and **Opportunity** can be further subdivided into the four phases people commonly go through when facing change.

- **Danger** can be subdivided into:

    Denial
    and
    Resistance

- **Opportunity** can be subdivided into:

    Exploration
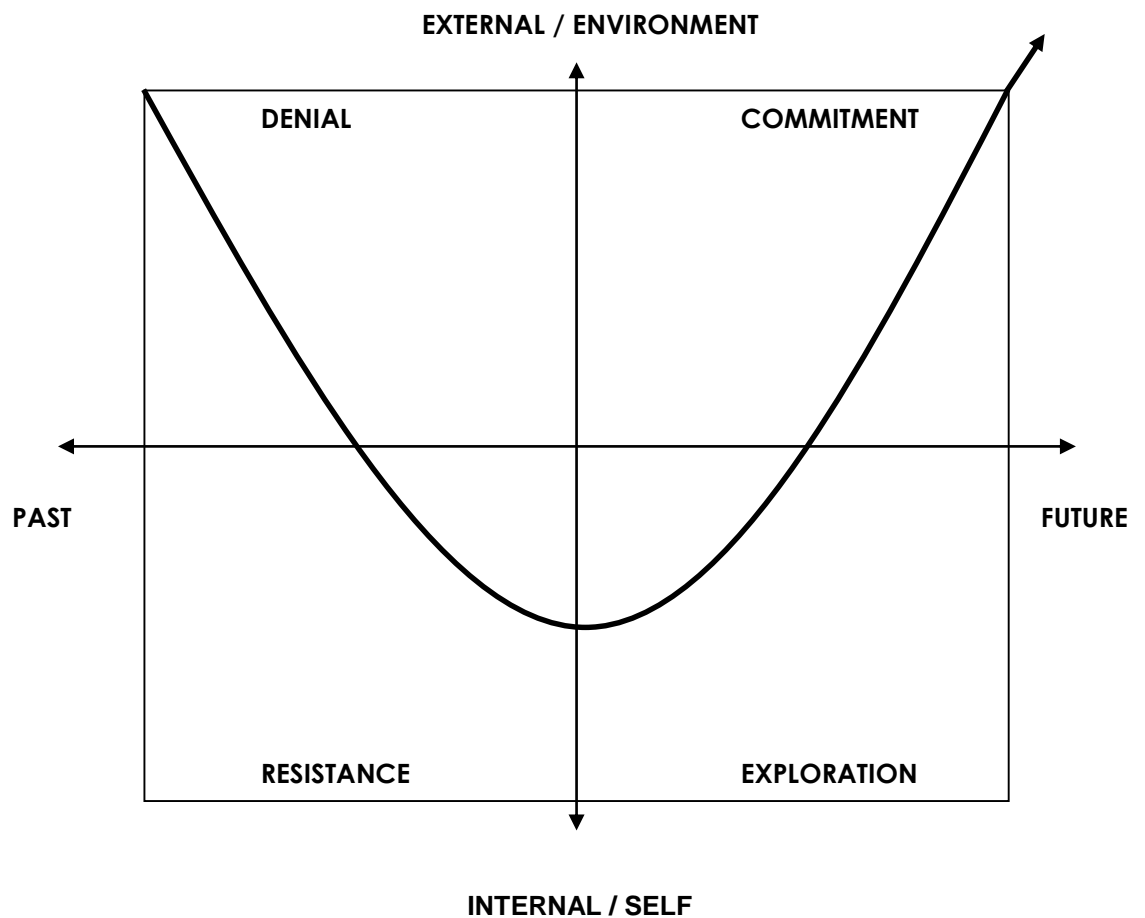    and
    Commitment

# What Happens to People, Continued

**The phases of transition**    Most people move through these four phases in every transaction.  However, some may go quickly or get bogged down in different phases.  Effective leadership can help a group, and each of its members, move through the phases from denial to commitment

**\*Transition Grid ᔆᴹ**

EXTERNAL / ENVIRONMENT

DENIAL                    COMMITMENT

PAST                                              FUTURE

RESISTANCE                    EXPLORATION

INTERNAL / SELF

\*The Transition Grid ᔆᴹ is used with permission from HeartWork, Inc. and Flora/Elkind Associates in San Francisco.

# What Happens to People, Continued

**The phases of transition (continued)**

Changes in your organisation will transport your team through the four phases of the transition process on the previous page. Think of this process as descending into a valley and then climbing back out. The transition leads from the way things were done in the past toward the future. During change, people focus on the past and **Deny** the change. Next, everybody goes through a period of preoccupation, wondering where they stand and how they will be affected. This is normally where **Resistance** occurs. As they enter the **Exploration** and **Commitment** phases they start to look toward the future and the opportunities it can bring.

**Denial: the first reaction to change**

When a big change is announced, the first response is often numbness.  The announcement doesn't seem to sink in.  Nothing happens.  People continue to work as usual.  It appears that productivity will continue.

The stage of **Denial** can be prolonged if employees are not encouraged to register their reactions, or if management acts like employees should just move directly into the new ways.  Denial is harmful because it impedes the natural progression of healing from a loss (i.e. the old way of doing things) to moving forward.  Employees stay focused on the way things were (neglecting both themselves and the future), not exploring how they can or need to change.

Because people are often blind to problems during the denial stage, a manager can mistakenly think he or she has jumped straight into the final phase of **Commitment.**
This hope can be reinforced by motivational speakers who simplistically encourage people to think positively, pull themselves up by their bootstraps and move on to excellence.  This is called the **Tarzan Swing** <sup>SM</sup> and appears to work for a short while (usually until some indicator shows that productivity is decreasing).  At this point, an organisation often calls a consultant to "fix" problems, like stress, that the employees are experiencing.  The focus on the individual, rather than or the organisation's response to the change, leaves an important side of change management untouched.

Top management is particularly prone to want a **Tarzan Swing** <sup>SM</sup> in their organisation from the initial announcement of change.  They often don't see why people should have trouble.  They seem to believe that people are being paid to put aside their feelings, or they may feel that the company simply doesn't have time to move through the other stages.  However, wishing doesn't change the sequence, it just drives it underground.

# What Happens to People, *Continued*

**Resistance: phase two**

**Resistance** occurs when people have moved through the numbness of denial and begin to experience self-doubt, anger, depression, anxiety, frustration, fear or uncertainty because of the change.

In the resistance phases, productivity dips drastically and people are often upset and negative.  Managers hear lots of grumbling, the Human Resources department is extra busy and the copy machines churn out resumes.  Accidents, sickness and work-related absences multiply.  Outside programs on change management are most often requested during the **Resistance** phase.

While it is difficult for a company to openly experience negative expressions, that is exactly what helps to minimise its impact.  Allowing people to express their feelings and share their experiences makes this phase pass faster.  People who believe they are the only one who felt a certain way, or think their reactions are more intense than their colleagues, feel better when they learn through sharing that others feel the same.

Closed cultures where these responses cannot be shared will prolong this phase.  Expressing feeling is what helps employees change.  People need to say good-bye to the old and begin to welcome the new.  Strategies for dealing with resistance will be covered later in this book.

Eventually everyone reaches a low point and begins to move up the other side of the change curve.  This shift, clearly felt but different for everyone, indicates things are getting better.  Work groups suddenly notice a renewed interest in work and feel creativity coming back.  This signals that phase two is passing.
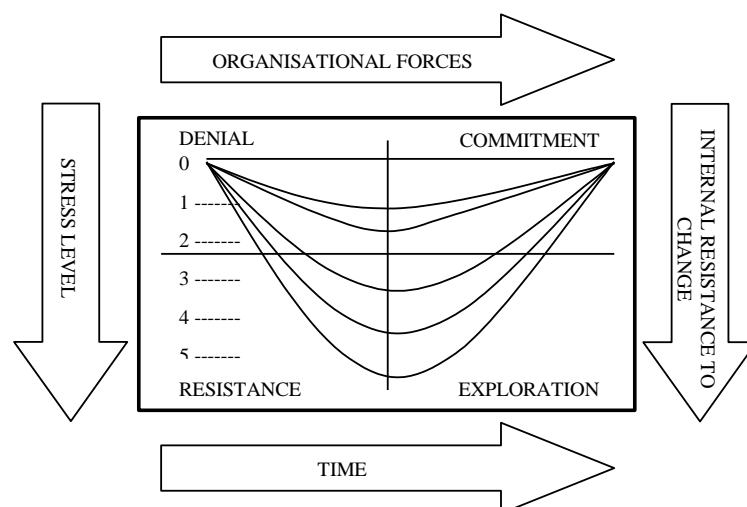
# What Happens to People, Continued

**Exploration and commitment: the final phases**

During the **Exploration** phase, energy is released as people focus their attention on the future and towards the external environment once again. Another word for this phase is chaos. As people try to figure out new responsibilities, search for new ways to relate to each other, learn more about their future and wonder how the new company organisation will work, many things are in question. There is uncertainty during this phase, including stress amongst those who need a lot of structure. During exploration people tend to draw on their internal energy to figure out ways to capitalise on the future. This phase can be exciting and exhilarating. It can create powerful new bonds in a work group.

After searching, testing, experimenting and exploring a new form begins to emerge. When this happens, the individual or group is ready for **Commitment.** During this phase employees are willing to focus on a plan. They are willing to re-create their mission and build action plans to make it work. They are prepared to learn new ways to work together and have renegotiated roles and expectations. The values and actions that are needed to commit to a new phase of productivity are in place. This is the phase during which employees are willing to solidly identify with a set of goals and be clear about how to reach them. This phase will last until a new cycle of transition begins with another major change.

Since change is inevitable, a good question might be: Will we always be riding on this wave of transition? The ideal answer is yes, for without change we, and our organisations, would become stale and unresponsive. The challenge is learning to move through the transition as easily and creatively as possible. What helps people navigate through unknown territory is a map of what they can expect, and information on ways to respond most effectively to the predictable challenges that are presented.

**Management strategies for each phase**

At any point during the change process, your team will probably not be in one phase, but shifting back and forth between phases. As a manager, you need to know what phase your general group is in, as well as the phase each individual is experiencing. To help your team move through the curve towards commitment, some examples are listed below of what you will observe in each phase. This will help you diagnose where team members stand.

# What Happens to People, Continued

**How to diagnose each phase**

### Denial
It is common to observe, withdrawal, "business as usual", focus on past. There is activity, but not much gets done.

### Resistance
You will see: anger, blame, anxiety, depression and even retirement on the job. "What's the difference? This company doesn't care anymore."

### Exploration
You will recognise: overpreparation, confusion, chaos, energy. "Let's try this and this and what about this…". Lots of energy and new ideas but a lack of focus.

### Commitment
Occurs when employees begin to work together. There is cooperation and a better focus. "How can we work on this?" Those who are committed are looking for the next challenge.

**Actions for each phase**

### During Denial
Confront individuals with information. Let them know that the change will happen. Explain what to expect and suggest actions they can take to adjust to the change. Give them time to let things sink in, and then schedule a planning session to talk things over.

### During Resistance
Listen, acknowledge feelings, respond empathetically and encourage support. Don't try to talk people out of their feelings or tell them to change or pull together. If you accept their response, they will continue to tell you how they are feeling. This will help you respond to some of their concerns.

### During Exploration
Focus on priorities and provide any needed training. Follow up on projects underway. Set short-term goals. Conduct brainstorming, visioning and planning sessions.

### During Commitment
Set long-term goals. Concentrate on team building. Create a mission statement. Validate and reward those responding to the change. Look ahead.

# What Happens to People, Continued

**Where is your group?**

Think about how your work group would respond to change during each phase.  Make some notes below.

During **Denial** - I believe my group would react by:

_____

_____

During **Resistance** - I believe my group would react by:

_____

_____

During **Exploration** - I believe my group would react by:

_____

_____

During **Commitment** - I believe my group would react by:

_____

_____

Ask yourself - Who are the leaders in your group that can help the others move along?

_____

_____

# What Happens to People, Continued

**Traps**

During change, a manager may fall into one of the following traps:

1. **Ignoring or resisting resistance**

   Resistance is not pleasant to experience. It can feel like everyone is angry at you and you are to blame. This is normally temporary. Denying resistance only makes it go deeper and last longer. Invite it. Seek it out through listening and good communication.

2. **Jumping to team building**

   When faced with a change, many managers think that what they need most is getting people back working together. When a group is in denial, resistance or the early moments of exploration, you are wasting your time on team building. The group needs a chance to complain and assess their loss before beginning to rebuild trust and cooperation.

3. **The "Drano" approach - pushing productivity too soon**

   Some managers believe that if you demand performance you will get it. Employees may respond in the short run but tend to plateau and actually decrease productivity if their feelings don't match their actions. The danger is that you will end up with a "clogged" organisation where everything breaks down.

**Change mastery**

The next four sections of this book focus on the four competencies that managers need to move their groups successfully through change

- π **Communicating About Change**
- π **Dealing with Resistance**
- π **Increasing Team Involvement**
- π **Visionary Leadership**

# Communicating About Change

**Tips about communication**

Following are some tips for informing your group about change. Place a check mark (4) beside those you currently use. Place an "**X**" next to those you intend to use during the next change.

### π Explain the Reason For the Change

Tell people clearly why the change is necessary, and give them as much data as possible. Keep them informed of any new developments.

### π Talk to People in Person

A memo or a newsletter is not the most effective way to inform people about important changes. Written announcements don't allow people to express their feelings directly. Written documents are often used to avoid dealing with people's responses. In the long run this can only backfire. Memos and newsletters are good as a follow-up after a one-on-one meeting, because people can be in denial and have a hard time *hearing* information that disturbs their security.

### π Tell People the Truth

The more informed people are, the less anxious they will be. Unanswered questions are fuel for the rumour mill. If you don't know tell them so. You don't have to know all of the answers. A believable leader doesn't know everything, especially in times of change. Solicit questions and try to find answers to the missing information. Schedule another meeting when you learn more and share information as it becomes available.

### π Express Your Feeling

Don't exclude information about your feelings. People want to know your reactions. They will feel acknowledged and understood and will be more open if your feelings are expressed. When appropriate, tell them how the change affects you personally. Self-disclosure form a leader is a very powerful strategy because you often reflect what they are thinking.

### π Take First Steps

Encourage people to immediately take a step towards the new direction or the new skill.

# **Communicating About Change,** Continued

**Communicating as a manager**

As a manager, you are often caught in the middle.  You may hold a lot, some or virtually no input in a change, yet you have a responsibility to make it work in your unit.  You have your own feelings about it, but you are responsible for taking the company position.

The way you bring the message about change to your team has much to do with the eventual outcome.  How you make the announcement, what you say and how you negotiate with your team members will make the difference.  The section on "Increasing Team Involvement" explores methods of announcing change, tells how to monitor responses and covers negotiating what needs to be done.  The change announcement is most often made during the **Denial** phase, and sometimes doesn't sink in.  When the message is accepted, your group may shift from **Denial** to **Resistance** very quickly.  You need to learn how to manage these intense responses from your team.

**Setting the climate for communication**

In times of change, maintaining open communication can help prevent rumours, anxiety and mistakes.  Often managers avoid delivering unsettling news by claiming they are "too busy and pressured" to take time to meet with their people.  Studies have shown that if you don't make time early on in the process, you will spend more time later clearing up the problem.

During change, two-way communication is essential.  Every issue must be covered.  Different communication forms are recommended.  Use hotlines, open forums, newsletters, videotapes, fireside chats, informal discussion - whatever works for you.  Repeat the message using various methods of communication regularly.

## Communicating About Change, Continued

**How did I
hear?**

Let's examine some of the ways that people learn about
change using yourself as an example.

Think about a recent change you experienced at work.

- How did you first hear about the change?  How were you
  informed?

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- What were the strengths and weaknesses of the way in which
  you were informed?

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- How would you have preferred to be informed?  How could
  the announcement have been improved?

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## Communicating About Change, *Continued*

**Communicating through discussion**

During change it is important for you to meet with your employees both formally and informally. Keeping everyone informed is the overall objective even though the specific purpose of each meeting will vary as you move through the stages of the change process. Here are some specific purposes for meeting:

- To announce a change
- To provide new information and direction
- To give people a supportive place to express their feelings
- To involve employees in the planning and implementation of the change
- To provide feedback on how things are going

One interesting observation is that a meeting where change is announced sometimes reflects a miniature version of the four phases of the transition cycle. First, there can be denial until the announcement is discussed and understood. Then people may express resistance by questioning, complaining or second-guessing. Next, there can be a shift as people begin to question how they will respond to the future with some constructive brainstorming and planning. Finally, the group may tentatively commit to the direction of the change.

Generally, it's best to meet with your whole group if the change affects them all. If some people are more directly affected, you might like to meet with them individually immediately before the group meeting so you can explain the situation carefully and offer support if appropriate. If the individuals will be negatively affected, a pre-meeting will give you the opportunity to deal with this.

**Benefits of discussions**

People who go through change most successfully benefit from:
- Specific reason for the change
- Accurate information
- An opportunity to ask questions
- Opportunity to express their feelings
- Personal reassurance

# Communicating About Change, Continued

**Announcing the change**

A meeting to announce a change is the best way to inform your group. Meetings are also basic tools for planning, implementing and monitoring change. They reinforce the idea that people can work together to make things happen as a team. Meetings let everyone know what is happening and offer opportunities for feedback. During change, you should schedule frequent meetings to ensure that communication is clear and open.

**Planning a change meeting**

Like any important business activity, it is important for you to do your homework before conducting a change meeting. Review the information to be communicated and write notes to ensure that all key information is presented. Think about the best way to introduce the change and the most logical way to present the details. Following is a general format for a change meeting.

π Review the need for change and how it came about.

π Describe the change in detail.

π Explain how the changes affect your group.

π Ask for questions about the change. Invite participation.

π Listen to feelings and respond appropriately.

π Share your personal feelings (if appropriate).

π Ask for help and support in making the change work.

**Leading a change meeting**

The only way to get people on board and through the transition, is to hold a series of change meetings with all the people on your team.

π Talk to people in person

π Tell people the truth

π Express your feelings

π Involve everyone in planning

π Tell them the history of the change

π Break it into steps

π Take time. Be patient

**Listening during change**

One of the most important elements of communication is listening. People who feel listened to are less resistant and often move through a change more easily. Active listening is the best technique to help individuals understand their feelings and move more quickly to action.

# Communicating About Change, Continued

**Listening with the third ear**

Some managers frustrate their teams by spending the whole meeting talking. They are so busy announcing, explaining, exhorting and persuading they don't leave time for feedback. Perhaps they fear hearing responses. The secret of being a successful change leader is not only talking openly and directly, but also listening carefully to what is said (and sometimes what is not said). Listening will provide you with messages, meanings and feelings that your team experiences.

**Reaching agreement**

During a rapid change there is a need to become effective at renegotiating expectations. The ability to lead individuals and groups through this process is a mark of a change leader.

π Create a safe climate between the people involved.

π Practice clear communication. Say what's on your mind.

π Allow for discovery of the other person's perspective. Listen to learn.

π Don't blame; seek win/win solutions. Discover new ways.

**What do you do when people don't respond or become angry**

π **Postpone:** "You don't seem ready to talk, so perhaps we can meet later today."

π **Open-ended Question:** "What do you think of this change?"

π **Repeat:** "Now that I've explained the change, what do you think?"

π **Self-disclosure:** "The first time I heard about this I was very concerned. What about you?"

π **Other People's Reactions:** "When the other department went through this list, their people were upset. How do you feel?"

π **Broken record:** Repeat again.

# Dealing with Resistance

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|---|---|
| **Why we must deal with resistance** | Before people accept a change, they must deal with their feelings about loss of their old ways.  People need time, acceptance and support to let go of the old and move into the new.  Some employees need special help to move on. |
| **Signs of resistance** | Resistance is not only a predictable part of change, but perhaps the most difficult to deal with.  People resist for good reasons, even though we would rather that they didn't.<br><br>The reasons include:<br>• Their security is threatened.<br>• The change will threaten their sense of competence.<br>• They fear they will fail at new tasks.<br>• They are comfortable with the status quo. |
| **Signs of individual resistance** | How many have you observed?<br>π Complaints          π Apathy<br>π Errors          π Absence due to illness<br>π Anger          π Withdrawal<br>π Stubbornness |
| **Signs of organisational resistance** | Just as individuals signal resistance, so do work groups and organisations.<br>What do you expect to be the resistance signals for your group? (For example, talking negatively in groups, talking about the past, etc.) |
| **Resistance paradox** | **Resistance** is usually unpleasant for management.  It is not easy to endure complaints or suffer blame from your team employees.  In contrast, denial looks much easier.  Sometimes managers encourage teams to remain in the **Denial** phase because it is easier for them to manage.<br><br>On the other hand, resistance is a sign that your group has left the state of denial and is ready to move through change.  Even though it may be misdirected at first, resistance shows that the person's system of self-defense is beginning to take over.  This is an important step in recovering from change. |

# Dealing with Resistance, Continued

**The troubled employee**

Organisational change is hard enough. When it happens along with other personal problems, it may feel like "the straw that broke the camel's back." It is estimated that 10 to 15 percent of the employee population at any given time have alcohol/drug or other medical/behavioural problems that prevent them from being fully productive. The added stress of change on a person who is barely coping can be devastating.

All the management strategies in the world will not help them. They need professional assistance. Because personal problems are increased during periods of stress, such as change, you will probably see an increase in troubled behaviour during these times. The safest path is to refer any employee needing attention to professional help. Contact your Human Resources department for more information.

Remember, covering up poor performance simply extends the time the employee will be distressed before getting help. Avoiding a problem is a form of denial.

# Increasing Team Involvement

**Increasing team involvement**

The primary complaint of managers during workplace change is the difficulty they experience getting people motivated. Employees in the early phases of change are often unmotivated. They are negative or disinterested in work that needs to be done. Their attention is elsewhere. The problem is normally not a lack of motivation, but rather that they are dealing with other issues.

Motivation is often thought of as a series of devices managers use to get people to do things. The implication is that if the tricks weren't employed, employees wouldn't do the task.

New thinking indicates that people do not have to be tricked or forced to work. In fact, studies show that most people want to do a good job. A majority of workers responded to recent survey indicating they are not asked or expected to do all that they could in their job. They wish they could contribute even more!

Getting people motivated is not *making* people do things. It is uncovering the *want to* factor, which is simply learning what they want to do. People get excited about change when they see a part for them in it. They respond with enthusiasm when they feel they have a role in helping define how their work group will be involved in the change. Furthermore, 51 percent of the time individual decisions are less accurate than a group method. As interaction increases, so does the chance of a better decision. A good leader will offer opportunities for team members to be part of making change work. This involves asking people for their best ideas on how to do it best.

| **DIRECTIVE STYLE**<br><br>• Low participation<br>• Low commitment<br>• Leader is responsible for results |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **COLLABORATIVE STYLE**<br><br>• High Participation<br>• High Commitment<br>• Everybody is responsible for results |

# Increasing Team Involvement, Continued

**Role of participation**

People will readily accept change if they are involved in the process. Involvement means that they have a role in defining how to meet a goal, or respond to a new situation. This is the keynote of participatory management. Participant and collaboration can take many forms including:

*Focus groups, brainstorming sessions, discussion groups, team meetings, task forces, opinion surveys, etc.*

As a manager you want to use as many of the above as you can to directly involve your employees in the change process. Remember the following steps for increased collaboration:

- Create a "safe zone" for free discussion
- Press for honest opinions
- Set a time limit for the process
- Invite differences of opinion
- Don't judge, criticise or blame
- Share your dilemmas; ask for help from the team

**Setting the Stage for Improvement**

Before beginning to involve your employees in the change process, it is important that you check for intention. Are you involving them because you want to honestly learn how they feel, or are you doing it simply to protect yourself from criticism. Many managers have tried involvement and failed because their intention was to protect themselves, not to learn.

**Setting goals together**

You can help your employees through change by ensuring you involve them in the setting of goals for their work. Participative goal and objective setting requires open communication in a problem-solving environment. It is a give-and-take process. A manager who thinks it is his or her sole responsibility to plan, organise, schedule and evaluate work will not be as successful as the one who involves employees in goal setting. In times of change, goals and objectives can change frequently and should be re-evaluated often.

**Steps for setting Goals During Change**

I   **Access current situation**

II  **Listen and rephrase**

III **Clarify objectives**

IV  **Identify problems**

V   **Brainstorm solutions**

VI  **Provide feedback**

I   **Assess Current Situation** - what is happening now?

Does the new work following the change match the current objectives? How have expectations changed since they were last reviewed? Ask open-ended questions to find out how each employee feels about what is going on relative to new work expectations. As a manager you may want to become an active listener. Let your employees tell you what is going on. Ask for their ideas on how to best accomplish new responsibilities by asking employees, *"If you had to do this, how would you go about it?"* or *"If you were the boss and wanted this to happen, how would you go about it?"*

You can't make improvements unless you know what is going on.

# Increasing Team Involvement, Continued

**Setting goals together (continued)**

**II   Listen and Rephase -** to establish trust.

It is impossible to listen and talk at the same time.  Listen for the main idea and take notes to ensure that you recall what the other person said.  Allow enough time for each employee to tell his or her own story completely.  Listen for emotion (what are they feeling/experiencing at this time.  Face the employee with uncrossed arms and legs and lean slightly forward establishing solid, intermittent eye contact.  Use affirmative head nods; occasionally say "uh huh", "go on" or "yes" to encourage the employee.  Ask open-ended questions (using how, what, where, when, why) and then repeat or restate what you think the other person said.  Ask a question to confirm your understanding.

**III   Clarify Objectives -** what is it that you want and need to achieve?

Work together towards a clear idea of what is wanted.  Ask the employees to write out their objectives.  Then meet to discuss and revise them.  Working together will motivate an employee to do well and will establish a focus for performance.

> **Remember - Objectives are SMART**
>
> **S -** specific about what is to be accomplished
>
> **M -** measurable
>
> **A -** attainable
>
> **R -** results orientated
>
> **T -** timebound

**IV   Identify Problems -** define and analyse the problems.

In the process of setting goals there will be some areas where you and your employees might not agree.  During periods of change it is common to either have too many objectives or to try to do work that fits both the "old" and "new" ways of doing things.  As a manager, your job is to help prioritise objectives in order to avoid a situation where the employees are overwhelmed.  Too many objectives will create anxiety and lead to poor performance.

# Increasing Team Involvement, Continued

**Setting goals together (continued)**

**V  Brainstorming Solutions -** to generate ideas.

During change it's common for jobs to change character. Previous job descriptions are often not accurate, and employees may feel upset if they are being asked to do things they feel are "not their job."  To help employees understand their new roles you need to think about:

What has been tried before?

_____

_____

What have other people done in similar situations?

_____

_____

What have you tried before, that may not have worked then, that might work now?

_____

_____

**VI  Provide Feedback -** to promote motivation.

Feedback is essential to employees during change.  They need to know how they are doing.  They need encouragement and support.  Many managers don't do a good job of providing feedback when things are normal.

Check any reasons you have used for not giving feedback and then vow to change your behaviour:

π - They already know what I think.

π - I'm the boss; they just need to follow my instructions.

π - I have too many other things to do.

π - If anything new happens, I'll tell those who need to know.

π - They're professionals - they shouldn't need their hands held.

When feedback is poor, employees are more likely to be anxious, have low job satisfaction or quit.  People who hear nothing usually fear the worst.

# Increasing Team Involvement, Continued

**How performance is affected through change**

There will be mistakes made during change. How you respond to them will be important in maintaining employee involvement. Each mistake represents a potential for learning. It is your job to focus employees on the learning aspect of the mistake. Ask what they will do in the future to prevent the mistake from happening again. Provide positive reinforcement to their ideas and give them your support to try again.

One way to reduce damage from mistakes is to have regular cycles of report and feedback. This is especially important during changes when pre-established ways of working are often off the mark.

**Reward Attempts, Not Just Achievements**

Change in the workplace will affect your employees' job performance. Performance will usually be affected in direct proportion to the magnitude of the change. If the change is significant, it is safe to assume that job activities will not be accomplished at a normal rate. Factor this slowdown in your productivity expectations and scheduling.

Before, during and after change there are specific things employees want from their jobs. Make sure you provide as many of the following as possible:

$\pi$ - Work that is interesting and/or meaningful

$\pi$ - a clear statement of the results you expect

$\pi$ - appropriate and timely feedback on those results

$\pi$ - a reward system for achieving results

# Visionary Leadership

**Becoming a change leader**

Being a leader during change is not easy. Different management skills are needed. Less hand-on control and more "framing" and "bridging" occurs. The span of control often increases and managers may be responsible for more people and different challenges. To succeed, an energised leader will do more to focus the efforts of his and her employees. This requires:

- Understanding and articulating a vision of where the group is going
- Sharing the vision
- Creating an environment where employees feel a sense of making the vision come true

Many managers say they feel powerless in their role during change, being squeezed between pressures from above and below. They do not require top management approval to implement. Remember what was said earlier - i.e. if you are waiting for your company to tell how to change before you lead your group through the change, you may be waiting for a very long time.

Instead of waiting, empower your team to make the changes themselves with the following behaviours:

- Focus on the process - surface tough issues, pay attention to how things get done, manage context.
- Problem-solving orientation - don't blame, fix systems not people.
- Learning environment - lots of information and listening.
- Shared responsibility - accountability and mutual contracts.

**Creating a vision with your group**

When change occurs we have to move from "how it was" to a vision of "how it will be." After a group has progressed beyond denial and resistance, it is common to experience a surge in energy. People start preparing themselves to face the future. They explore where they stand, new results that need to be achieved and what opportunities lie ahead. At this stage, they need help to create a vision of their goal. To help this happen you can lead your group towards a shared vision that inspires and empowers them. Many of the extraordinary things ordinary people achieve begin with a vision that inspires and empowers them. During transition a change leader will help his or her group set a clear direction of where the team needs to head.

WHERE WE ARE….

HOW WE GET THERE…

VISION

VISION
WHERE WE'RE GOING