

MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN THROUGH MANAGING RESISTANCE



Also read:

Part 2: [Silence isn't always golden](#)

You recognise that sinking feeling. You're under pressure to drive better results with a team who are already stretched thin, and now you need to ask them to work in a different way.

Leading change can be an emotional minefield; managing those who resist change is one of your greatest challenges.

People resist change for all kinds of reasons. Humans instinctively crave stability, belonging and certainty. It helps us feel safe and secure in the world when we know our place in it, what's expected of us and how to respond.

The latest neuroscientific research suggests that uncertainty or volatility sets off an involuntary response most commonly associated with a physical threat – a fight or flight reaction. No wonder the mere suggestion of change brings out a subconscious response in your team to **“resist change at all costs and support the status quo!”**

This perfectly natural human response gives rise to various expressions of resistance within your team. As a change leader, it's critical to be able to identify and address these attitudes early and often during the change process.

CONTINUED OVER... ►

MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN THROUGH MANAGING RESISTANCE

FIVE WAYS PEOPLE RESIST CHANGE

Part of managing resistance effectively is helping others get excited about change and become comfortable in a constantly disrupted environment. In order to do this, we need to understand how people perceive change and why they resist it. We can only counter people's anxieties and resistance if you fully understand where they come from.

To help you identify and address how resistance might manifest in your team, we're publishing a series of articles that explore each of these resistant attitudes in more detail.

In this series, we'll explore the different ways resistance to change may manifest in your team and provide scenarios to help you effectively navigate them.

We've identified five ways in which your team might react to change, indicating possible resistance:

1. Silence / non-responsiveness
2. Questioning
3. Stonewalling
4. Undermining
5. Avoiding

Each article will provide you with real life scenario to help you identify it more easily when confronted by that type of resistance. In each scenario, there will be a number of ways you might respond to your team member, we explore each of those and offer an alternative way to address each in a way that promotes the best results for your employees in assisting them to embrace the change.

We also delve into the important question: **"why people react the way they do"**.

GUIDING YOUR TEAMS FROM RESISTING TO EMBRACING CHANGE

Our Change Leadership series of articles will demonstrate how you can identify and overcome each type of resistance to change. While each article explores a single aspect of resistance, in reality we recommend taking an integrated approach to managing change.

By taking a deep and intimate approach to understanding our clients' worlds, we help leaders break down each of the resistance barriers so that they can effectively guide their teams towards embracing change.

We have had tremendous results with organisations who implement transformation projects within industries which typically favour inertia. Through our change leadership program, we use a holistic approach to identify roadblocks and foster collaboration, open communication and a willingness to see solutions through innovation and transformation.

**"Our only security is our
ability to change."
~ John Lilly**

If you'd like to develop your change leadership skills or find out more about managing resistance to change in your team, please contact:

ELLIE PIETSCH

ellie@theterraceinitiative.com

MANAGING RESISTANCE: SILENCE ISN'T ALWAYS GOLDEN



Also read:

Part 1: [Making change happen through managing resistance](#)

In **Part 2 of our series on Managing Resistance**, Ellie Pietsch explores how effective change leaders manage one form of resistance – silence.

As leaders, we are often tasked with managing teams through disruptive change. However, change is a necessary precursor to growth, which in the current age of transformation simply replaces “business as usual.”

Studies show that, without change management, between 50% and 75% of all manufacturing and technology change projects fail; and up to 75% of all business re-structuring efforts do not produce the expected results .

Shepherding people throughout change is critical. Left to chance, unmanaged change can be as detrimental to the organisation as no change at all. One of the ways your teams may express resistance to change is by not responding at all.

Imagine...

You have been planning a significant technological change that will vastly improve your administrative functions, reducing errors and improving job satisfaction. You prepare and deliver a detailed speech for your team to announce this change, and you're met with... *crickets*.

Chirp... chirp...

CONTINUED OVER... ►

MANAGING RESISTANCE: SILENCE ISN'T ALWAYS GOLDEN

No one smiles, no one asks questions, no one says thank you, or congratulations. You spot someone in the corner of the room texting.

You think...

Immediately you get the distinct and immediate impression that your team doesn't understand, are disinterested, disengaged or just don't care. You feel frustrated, maybe even humiliated by the lack of reaction.

You are worried your change may fail due to your team displaying a lack of enthusiasm right from the outset. You are inwardly fuming, they don't even know about it fully yet, and they're already resisting. Don't they know how much work you've put into this project already?

Before you react: stop and consider... are you dealing with resistance? Have you validated your conclusion that the team is disinterested or disengaged?

Consider...

You may very well be correct in assuming your team is resisting your proposed change. While that may be true, you could react in one of two ways to this potential reality:

1. Entertain all kinds of stories internally about your team's reaction; or
2. Turn the blame on yourself immediately, starting on the script of "Bad Boss - The defining sequel."

The reality might be entirely different, and we suggest, rather than entertaining little scenarios in your own head, asking yourself a few questions about the team:

- ◀ Is my team quiet by nature or do they require some time to process information?
- ◀ How do they prefer information to be delivered - do they prefer reading detailed documents over face-to-face conversations?
- ◀ How approachable am I as a leader, especially in a team context? What alternative modes of communication can I investigate to get feedback?
- ◀ Is it just the end of a very long week, and are they just too tired to deal with 'yet another change'?

If you'd like to develop your change leadership skills or find out more about managing resistance to change in your team, please contact:

ELLIE PIETSCH

ellie@theterraceinitiative.com

TACTICS

It may be very possible you are encountering resistance to your change idea and its implementation.

By reframing your thinking in that moment of looking at a sea of quiet faces, you clear your mind of your perception of resistance. What's important now is to listen - be open to receiving the feedback or information your team is giving you.

The immediate response might be just to state out loud **"I can see everyone is taking a moment to think about it - that's great!"** Try not to announce plans to extract thoughts, to ensure your team feels comfortable enough to process thoughts and feelings. Consider leaving the room for a moment - use the excuse of needing a glass of water, or fetching something for the team to read.

There are some other tactics to then discover your team's responses in a non-confrontational way:

- ◀ Help your team help "think out loud" in the room by starting a discussion
- ◀ Determine the most effective way to encourage response either verbally or in writing, and how you will follow up with them
- ◀ Consider one-on-one conversations with a follow-up meeting to discuss feedback as a whole
- ◀ If your team is already suffering from change fatigue, consider ways to break the proposed change into smaller, more manageable mental tasks

We can help you manage resistance and become a more effective change leader. Get in touch with us regarding the Change Leadership Series.

In our next article, we'll consider how Resistance as Questioning may show up in your team, and some tactics that will help you address this.