Tips and Tricks

Managing Resistance to Change

*About this tool*

**PURPOSE**

To provide advice on how to manage employees’ resistance to change

**AUDIENCE**

Change Manager, managers or supervisors in supporting their employees through workplace changes

**USE**

* As part of a change management strategy
* As part of a manager’s toolkit
* As part of a training plan
* In meetings with supervisory employees
* In a broader communications plan (emails, communiqués, on an internal website, in blog posts, etc.)

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**TOP REASONS FOR EMPLOYEE RESISTANCE:**

1. Lack of awareness of why change is needed
2. Impact on current job/role
3. The organization’s past performance with change
4. Lack of visible support and commitment from managers
5. Fear of job loss

How to Respond

## Listen and understand objections

* A critical step any manager should take when implementing a change is to listen
  + In many cases, employees simply want their objections to be heard
* Understanding employee objections can often provide a clear path toward a resolution
* Listening can also help managers identify misunderstandings about the change

## Focus on the “what” rather than the “how”

* For some types of changes, an effective approach is for managers to let go of the “how” and simply communicate “what” needs to change
* Taking this approach puts the onus of finding a solution on employees
* Employee involvement and ownership builds desire to support the change

## Remove barriers

* Clearly identify the barriers
* Barriers to employees’ accepting the change might not relate to the change itself, but might relate to family, personal issues, or physical limitations
* What appears to be resistance or objection to the change could be disguised as barriers that the employee cannot see past
  + Determine ways that the organization could help address these barriers

## Provide clear and simple choices and consequences

* The desire to participate in and support the change is ultimately about choice
* Communicate in simple and clear terms what the choices and consequences are
* Managers can help employees through a change process by being clear about the choices employees have during the process
* By providing clear and simple choices, and by explaining the consequences of those choices, you can give employees a sense of ownership and control

## Create hope

* Many people will respond to the opportunity for a better future
* Managers can create desire to change by sharing their passion for change
* People will follow a leader whom they can respect and who can create hope

## Show the benefits in a tangible way

* For some employees, seeing is believing. Demonstrate the benefits of change in a real and tangible way by, for example:
  + Sharing case studies of other modern workplaces
  + Inviting guests to provide testimonials about their experience with the change
  + Visibly demonstrating the success of pilot programs or trials

## Make a personal appeal

* A personal appeal works best with honest, open relationships where there is a high degree of trust and respect (for example, “I believe in the changes”)

## Convert the strongest dissenters

* You might need to intervene to convert strong and vocal dissenters
* The strongest dissenters can, however, become your strongest advocates (they are often equally vocal in their support as they were in their resistance

## Demonstrate consequences

## Provide incentives

Speaking Points

## Goal of workplace changes

* Workplace changes will assist employees in their work by offering a whole office solution
* Workplace changes will enable employees to communicate and collaborate in new ways
* Workplace changes will take into account space allocations based on job profiles, collaborative spaces, and more freestanding and flexible furnishings
* Technological tools such as videoconference systems will support flexible HR policies that provide employees with the opportunity to work from different locations

## Benefit of workplace changes

* Workplace changes will provide a collaborative, multidisciplinary design strategy that considers the interaction of people, space, technology and business processes
* Workplace changes will allow the development of more effective and efficient work environments that accommodate individual work styles and alternative work strategies
* Workplace changes will enable employees to work when, where, and how they can be most effective

## Impact of workplace changes on employees

* Density will increase because certain characteristics such as the clean desk policy will free up workspaces
* Employees will be able to choose their workspace based on their mood, needs, and work requirements, providing greater flexibility
* Workplace changes will facilitate telework and greater flexibility

Questions and answers

The following are examples of questions to address resistance.

## Why do you think the change is happening?

* Build understanding of the need for change

## Do you support this change?

* Identify the factors that affect the desire for change

## Do you have the training you need?

* Understand the specific areas that require support

## Are you having any difficulty implementing these skills and knowledge? If yes, in what areas?

* Consider new ideas for implementing change

## Are you getting the support you need?

* Reinforce change by providing support