



# Leading Change

*"Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans." – Ira Glass*

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

Change occurs all around us. We see it occur in everything around us from seasons, relationships, in the pupa that transforms into a butterfly, babies, the elderly, and even within ourselves. Although it is common, it's still never easy – especially when we don't expect it or when it is forced upon us.

Change within the workplace can happen for a number of reasons. There could be a change in leadership, proprieties, systems, or even evolving organizations. Change in the workplace can be a harrowing experience for employees, and it is often viewed with suspicion. It is natural for employees or teams affected by the change to go through a roller coaster of emotions like distrust, fear, and uneasiness. They offer resistance when they encounter new changes.

On the other side of the spectrum are the leaders who have to enforce the change. They are caught between the devil and the deep sea – having to make changes at an organizational or team level, but unable to do so because of fierce resistance from the employees.





Yes, change is not easy, but change must happen; and it can take place successfully if it is approached properly.

**Change management** can make the entire change process easy for both employers and leaders who must incorporate change, as well as for those who will be affected by it (employees/team members).

In this eBook, we will look at what change management is, the role of leaders in change management, and how it can be incorporated within an organization. We will look at some of the biggest barriers to change management and how they can be avoided.





# Chapter 2: What is Change Management?

Change management is an all-encompassing term for the tools, techniques, and processes used to manage the people-side of change to achieve the desired business outcomes. It is the management of employee engagement and adoption when the organization changes, and how it will be done. The tools, techniques, and processes of change management help individuals to cope with change and make a successful personal transition that results in the adoption and realization of that change.

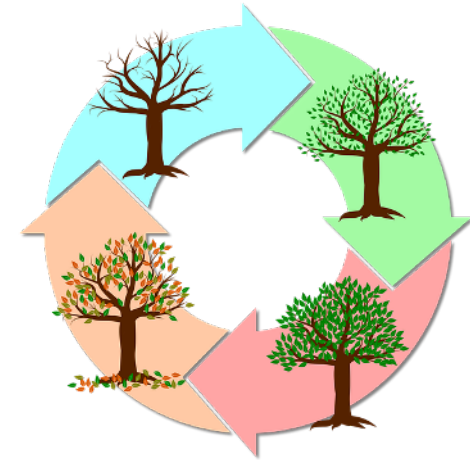


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## WHY IS CHANGE MANAGEMENT CRITICAL?

You can create a new organization and design new processes. You can even implement new technologies within your organization. But if your people are left behind, all the changes that you made amount to no good.

Managing the people side of change is commonly called the 'soft' side of





change, while the non-human aspects of change are the 'hard' side of change. However, more often than not, managing the people side of change is the hardest thing to do.

*For example, in a merger or acquisition, the technical side of the change will naturally be very complicated. There will be a multitude of issues surrounding the financial arrangements of the deal. New developments will have to be established, and the business systems would have to be integrated. Several critical decisions must be made about the physical aspects of the new business. All these non-human aspects of change are challenging, no doubt. But the hardest part is getting people (employees/teams) on board to accept and embrace change, and participate in the process.*

*The degree of acceptance or resistance of the employees/teams will either make or break the merger. That is why change management is critical when introducing any type of change in an organization.*

**Change management helps employees to understand the change, commit to it, accept and embrace it in their current business environment.**



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# Chapter 3:

## The Benefits of Change Management

On the surface, it might seem that change management only supports the smooth transition of change from the old order to the new. But take a closer look, and you will see how deep its benefits run.

Change management manages change effectively, improves teamwork, increases work efficiency, and helps the organization solve any problems quickly and effectively while the organization changes. The benefits of change management run deep. It:

- Assesses the need and the impact of change, and helps managers develop proper plans so that change can be adequately handled.
- Reduces the time needed to implement a change.
- Improves cooperation and collaboration in your organization.
- Minimizes resistance to change.
- Aligns resources within the organization to support change.
- Makes the use of an effective communication strategy.
- Helps leaders respond to challenges more effectively and efficiently.





- Reduces the risks associated with change, as well as the disruptive aspects of the business.
- Reduces stress and anxiety that is associated with change.
- Ensures that productivity, morale, and efficiency are maintained or even increased.
- Helps in the routine running of your business during the change process.
- Supports staff and helps them understand and cope with the change process.
- Minimizes the possibility of failure.
- Manages the costs associated with change.







# Chapter 4:

## 5 Barriers to Organizational Change

When changes are in the offing, barriers arise. That makes it hard and even impossible to implement change in the organization. Here are the five most common types of obstacles witnessed in organizations.



### 1. Individual barriers to change

People don't like change – that is part of our human nature. That is because we perceive threats in our environment – including our work environment. According to Harvard Business Review, people tend to resist change because:

- Change is associated with loss of control over processes that might have built up over time.
- There is often a lot of uncertainty that people would like to avoid.
- Change would mean changes to work habits and routines.
- Change might be associated with a change in position and loss of power, which would mean a loss of face for those people.





- There will be concerns about the competence levels of individual employees and if they can cope in the new environment.
- Change might mean more work – especially during the transition period.
- Change causes a ripple effect that affects other departments and customers as well.
- Change can bring up feelings of past resentments for the person who is responsible for it.
- Change involves risks – at an individual level and team level and could affect one’s livelihood and happiness.



## 2. Broken or lack of communication

Some organizations lack effective communication strategies. While this is very bad on a daily basis, it is especially disastrous during the change process. Leaders are under the false notion that once changes are implemented, employees will blindly follow and adjust to those changes. But the truth is that this only leads to resistance to change.

Another problem is when the C-suite makes decisions on changes, but these are not communicated at all (or not communicated clearly) to the lower levels.

The only way to overcome this barrier is for leaders to consider everyone





involved in the change as a stakeholder. Communication must begin as early as possible – not after the planning and implementation of the changes. Everyone must be on the same page.



### 3. Lack of direction

While communication is necessary for successful change management, new problems and hurdles will arise if the communication lacks a cohesive message and direction.

Direction includes having clearly defined goals, measurable objectives, a timeline, regular benchmarks, and communication that has everyone on the same page.

Without this kind of direction, the organization will simply reach another roadblock in its endeavor to introduce change.



### 4. Ineffective leadership

Leaders who impose change within the organization or team rather than approaching change systematically and methodically are viewed as insensitive leaders. Any type of organizational change is successful only if it is backed by, supported, and sponsored by the people at the top. When the organization's leaders are not active or visible throughout the change process, employees will hesitate to take part in that change.





## 5. Cultural barriers

When changes affect people from diverse groups, cultural barriers might emerge.

Cultural barriers are common in geographically-dispersed organizations that work across two or more regions. There are differences in opinion regarding the type of changes needed and how to execute them. Each region will look at the problem of change from their cultural viewpoint.

Cultural barriers can even arise when there are several subcultures within an organization.





# Chapter 5: The Principles of Change Management

Some tried and tested change management principles are better than others, and can effectively and efficiently bring about change within your organization. These principles form the very foundation of organizational change management. The 11 guiding principles of change management are as follows:



## 1. Lead with culture

Lou Gerstner – the CEO who led IBM through one of the most successful business transformations in history, said that the experience taught him that culture was everything. Culture is critical to the success of change management. Unfortunately, change leaders often fail to consider the organization’s culture to either garner their support or over cultural resistance.

The organization’s existing culture can be explored to tap into the way people think, behave, work, and feel and boost the change initiative.

Leaders must bring cultural elements aligned to the change to the forefront and use that to attract the attention of the people who will be affected by the change.





## 2. Change should start at the top

There is no doubt that all employees – at every level, must be fully engaged in the transition. But successful change management starts at the top and trickles down to the lowest rung of the ladder. It must begin with a well-aligned and committed group of leaders/managers and CEO. Everyone at the top level of the ladder must agree on the changes and their implementation methods. These decisions must then be relayed down the ranks and followed by everyone – including the leaders.



## 3. Involve every layer of the organization

There is a misconception that the fewer the people involved in change management, the better. The truth is that the more people across different layers and departments are involved, the better. Midlevel and frontline managers can provide you with invaluable information from their rich repository of knowledge regarding the glitches to expect, technical and logistical issues that must be addressed, and even how clients and customers will be affected and might react to the changes.

Their full-hearted support can also influence their teams to follow suit.





#### 4. Don't forget to make an emotional case along with your rational case

Leaders often lead change on the basis that the organization will be entering new markets, or that the organization will grow over 20% a year over the next few years. These objectives are excellent, but they rarely mean anything to the employees. As humans, we respond to causes that engage our hearts and our minds – we will respond to change when we feel that we are part of something consequential. Relate the changes to your employees – let them know how they – as individuals can benefit from the changes and how they can contribute to the better of the organization by embracing these changes.



#### 5. Act until it becomes a natural part of you

Even if you are not enthusiastic about the change, ensure that your daily behavior reflects the imperative of change. Define a few behaviors/actions that are essential to the success of the change initiative. As a senior leader, you must conduct everyday business while ensuring you are aligned with the new behaviors. Do this right from the start, so your employees can see the change occurring through you and will follow. They must see you lead the change from the top.





## 6. Engage.

Sustained change does not happen over a single meeting with the employees. Successful and sustained change occurs only when there is constant communication throughout the organization and every step of the implementation of the plan. The more interaction and the more types of communication employed, the more effective they will be in ensuring change takes place.



## 7. Lead outside the lines

Involve people who do not hold formal positions to help with change management. These people do not hold official power, and yet they are leaders in their own right. They could involve a receptionist who has worked for several decades with your organization, like a frontline staff member, or even a very innovative project manager. Although they do not have formal power, they have dominion over the breadth of their company knowledge, network, and even their personal qualities that make employees trust them.

Include these informal leaders into your change management strategy as these valuable people can be:







- Superb motivators who can inspire change.
- Trusted nodes whom employees can approach with ease to discuss matters regarding changes in the organization.
- Change ambassadors who can serve as exemplars and communicators of why change is so important.



## 8. Make use of both formal and informal solutions

Significant company changes might require a change in procedures and policies. Leaders must keep track of how the new changes impact HR policies, employee handbooks, company goals and objectives, and any other formal documentation. Changes must be made accordingly and conveyed to the employees so that they are aware of the new rules.

As well as the formal solutions that must be made use of, an organization can use informal methods to help its employees adapt to change. These can be in the form of motivational messages, open-door policies, sending out an internal newsletter that keeps employees updated on how the changes are unfolding within the company, and getting company influencers to encourage employees during trying times.





## 9. Measure your success and adapt

You must be able to support the entire change process throughout its lifecycle. You can only do that if you measure its success and its failures.

Many companies that are involved with change fail to measure their success, and soon the endeavor falls by the wayside. Ensure the changes brought about are permanent. Measure the success of your efforts – find out what’s working and what’s not. Then, plan your next steps accordingly.



## 10. Ensure accountability

All levels of employees must be held accountable for how the changes are implemented and practiced within the company. The leaders and managers must ensure that all their employees and team members are held responsible. There must be expectations and rules to decide how internal stakeholders ensure the change takes place. Team members must be accountable as well, as this gives them a sense of ownership – which in turn makes them more invested in the changes that take place.





## 11. Show appreciation and provide support

Showing appreciation at every stage of the change management process boosts the morale of your employees. Change can be so stressful and overwhelming, so even a small bit of appreciation can go a long way in encouraging your employees to persevere with the change. When you take the time out to appreciate individuals and teams, it shows them that their efforts are noticed and acknowledged. It also works as a motivator.

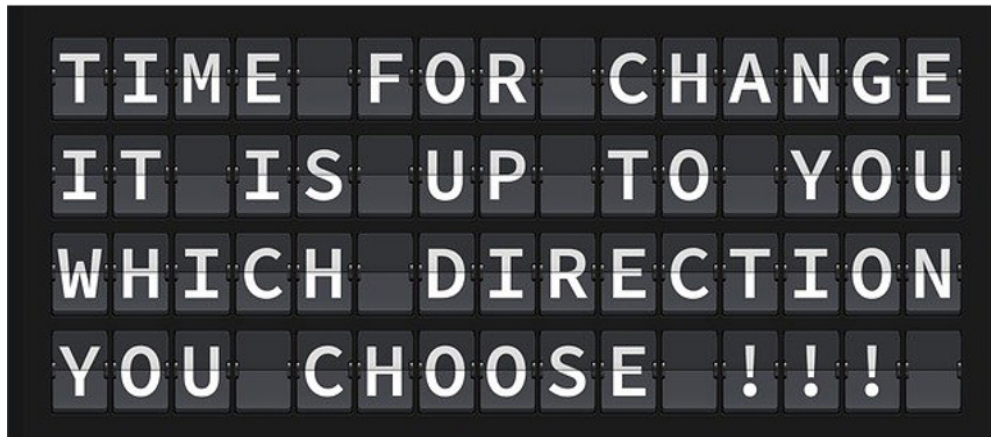


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## CONCLUSION

Change is never easy, so don't expect your employees to embrace it with open arms. There will be hurdles and barriers as soon as you try to incorporate new changes within your organization or team. As a leader, you are an essential part of change management. You are a beacon of hope. You must lead the change by setting an example.

Once your employees or team members realize the benefits that the change brings for them, they will trust you with changes that happen the next time around.

Change is not easy, but it is possible once you, as a leader, go about it systematically and methodically.



## A few books that we recommend:

