

Overcoming Resistance to Change
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I look forward to partnering with many of you who want to know not only why there is resistance to change, but how best to overcome resistance and move through change. This document is to help lay a foundation to prompt us to think about the challenges in order to help us understand how to meet these causes with the right tools and appropriate responses.

Isn't it interesting that change is important to survival... for growth and development, and yet we cling to a God and a Savior who does not change. It is no wonder that we wrestle with the unknown of change, because we long for that which we can count on. **Hebrews 13:8 - "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."** And yet, we must change in order to trust Him and know Him. **2 Corinthians 5:17 - "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come; The old has gone, the new is here!"**

"Great ideas alter the power balance in relationships; that's why great ideas are initially resisted." (quote possibly attributed to Hugh MacLeod.)

There is a tremendous amount of material on this matter of change, and I am sure you have read articles and books on this subject over the years, if not studied it as a part of your educational process. In wanting to provide you some thought in preparation for this workshop, I thought the following was on the best list of what causes resistance to change. I think it is one of the best, not because it is a long list, but because it is honest, and does well to describe human behavior. I invite you to read through and think about when you have seen these exhibited in your work experiences. In seeing the challenges, I am sure you will begin to quickly see solutions.

An organization is interactive with its environment. Each environmental change will affect the work and performances of the organization, and because of that, it will need to adapt itself regarding changes in the environment. So organizational change is the activity of differentiation or modification of the organization with the main purpose to bring improvements of overall business processes and to bring adaptation in relation to the ongoing changes in the environment.

When we talk about organizational change, we need to mention that this process isn't simply a journey from point A to point B. There are many barriers you will need to pass if you want to succeed in your intentions to improve your ministry or business. Resistance to change is an integral part of each change process. Managers will need to be aware that there always will be people in their organization that will resist the proposed changes. Because of that, efficiency and effectiveness of the change process will be in direct relation with resistance to change and successfully managing resistance to change.

The practice of managing resistance to change recognizes four types of people regarding their responses to change:

- People who will initiate the change process.
- People who will accept the proposed change.
- People will be indifferent to the proposed change.
- People who will not accept the proposed change.

People can belong to more than one category, as some will add ideas to the change, and therefore become initiators, and some will toggle between categories based on new information, energy, other priorities, etc.

28 Causes of Resistance to Change

1. **Threat of power on an individual level.** It is more likely that managers will resist change that will decrease their power and transfer it to their subordinates.
2. **Threat of power on an organizational level.** With the change process, some groups, departments, or sectors in the organization become more powerful. As a result, some people will be opposed to such a proposal or process where they will lose their organizational power.
3. **Losing control by employees.** The change process sometimes can reduce the level of control that managers have. In such a way managers can resist the proposed changes if the change process will require reduction of their control power.
4. **Increasing the control of the employees.** Organizational change can increase the managerial control on the employees, and this process can produce employees resistant to those proposals.
5. **Economic factors.** Organizational change sometimes can be seen from the employee's side simply as something that will decrease or increase their salary or other economic privileges that the workplace provides them. It is normal to expect that those people who feel that they will lose a portion of their salary, will resist the change.
6. **Image, prestige, and reputation.** Each workplace brings adequate image, prestige, and reputation that are important to all employees. Organizational change can drastically shift employee benefits. If this is the case with the proposed change, then it will produce dissatisfaction and resistance to the change process.
7. **Threat of comfort.** Organizational change, in many cases, results in personal discomfort and makes employee life more difficult. They make a transfer from the comfort of the status quo to discomfort of the new situation. Employees have skills to do an old job without the special attention of accomplishing the task. Each new task requires letting go of the old methods and learning new things that can lead to feelings of wasted energy and cause dissatisfaction.
8. **Job Security.** Organizational change can eliminate some work functions, can produce technological excess, layoffs, and so on. Job security, simply, is one of the causes of resistance to change.
9. **Re-allocation of resources.** With organizational change, some groups, departments or sectors in the organization can receive more resources while others will lose resources. So, this will bring resistance from the individual, groups, or departments who will lose some of their currently available resources.
10. **Already acquired interests of some organizational groups.** Organizational change can make new groups more significant for the success of the organization. That is a big threat for old coalitions that will cause resistance to change as those old groups become more insignificant.
11. **Implications on personal plans.** Organizational change can stop other plans, projects, or other personal or family activities causing resistance to change from those people who will be impacted with this change.
12. **Too much dependence on others.** In an organization there are employees who are too dependent on other individuals. This dependence is based on current support that they receive from powerful individuals. If the change process brings the threat of that dependence, it will cause resistance to change of those threatened with this change.
13. **Misunderstanding the process.** Individuals usually resist change when they do not understand the real purpose of the proposed changes. When employees do not understand the process, they usually assume something bad.
14. **Mistrust to initiators of change.** When employees do not have trust in those who initiate the process, the process will not be accepted.
15. **Different evaluation and perception.** Different evaluation and perception can affect the organizational change, if there are people who consider the proposed change as a bad idea.

16. **Fear of the unknown.** Organizational change in many cases can lead to uncertainty and fear. These are normal feelings. When employees feel uncertainty in a process of transformation, they think that changes are something dangerous.
17. **Habits.** Employees work, in large part, based on habits, and work tasks are performed in a certain way based on those habits. Organizational change requires shifts of those habits.
18. **Previous experience.** All employees already have some experience with a previous organizational change process and know that this process is not easy. That experience simply may tell them that more change processes in the past have been unsuccessful.
19. **Threat to interpersonal relations.** Employees are often friends with each other, and they have a strong social interpersonal relationship inside the organization. If an organizational change process can be seen as a threat to these powerful social networks in the organization, that affected employees will resist that change.
20. **Weakness of the proposed change.** Sometimes proposed change might have a weakness that can be recognized by the employees. So those employees will resist the implementation of the process until these weaknesses are removed.
21. **Limited resources.** A normal problem in every organization is limited resources. When resources are limited, organizational change is threatened.
22. **Bureaucratic inertia.** Every organization has their own mechanisms such as rules, policies, and procedures. Even though individuals want to change their behavior, these mechanisms can obstruct proposed changes.
23. **Selective information processing.** Individuals usually doing selective information processing, or hear only something that they want to hear, will ignore information that is opposite of the current situation. With this, they prevent accepting important aspects of proposed changes.
24. **Uninformed employees.** Often, employees are not provided with adequate information about organizational changes that must be implemented.
25. **Peer pressure.** People may use some kind of informal punishment for colleagues who support change which others are not supporting.
26. **Skepticism about the need for change.** If the problem is not personal to the employee, they do not see the real need for change. Those that can't see the need for change will have low readiness for the change process.
27. **Increasing workload.** In the process of organizational change, employees, along with their normal work activities, usually will be loaded with activities of a new change process.
28. **Short time to perform change.** Because organizational change can be interactive with the environment, the need for change often comes from outside, and performance goals are dictated from the outside of the organization. These situations can lead to a short implementation process causing resistance to change.

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Additional Resources to prompt your thinking:

Change is Good...You Go First. 21 Ways to Inspire Change by Mac Anderson and Tom Feltenstein.

Deep Change: Discover the Leader Within by Robert Quinn.

One Small Step Can Change Your Life / The Kaizen Way by Rober Maurer.

Cultural Change and Leadership in Organizations: A Practical Guide to Successful Organizational Change by Jaap J Boonstra and Wiley Blackwell.

Promise and Peril: Understanding and Managing Change and Conflict in Congregations by David Brubaker.

Change Management Leadership: Biblical Perspective by Michael Teng.

Leading in Disorienting Times / Managing Church & Organizational Change by Gary V. Nelson and Peter M. Dickens.