



# Managing Change

## Learning Outcomes

**By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:**

- ✓ Discover how you can prepare for and embrace the forces of change.

# Managing Change

## What is Change?

Daryl Conner has studied change and its effects around the world. In his 2005 research paper **Managing Intent: Delivering on Promises and Avoiding Disappointment**, he indicates that only one-third of strategic initiatives actually turn out exactly as designed. Human nature, production, and plenty of other factors will have an impact on the results and influence the original vision. You will also need to fix problems that crop up. This will lead to a different result that can range from slight to significant.

For example, when you go to a car show and look at the new vehicle designs, there are often significant differences between how the car was initially designed and what people are actually driving. Projects run into cost overruns and must be scaled back. As well, sometimes the technology changes so quickly that what we thought we were designing will be redundant by the time we finish unless we make changes as we go.

Here are some key points about change:

- Change affects everyone differently; there is no “normal.”
- Change is an essential element of the world and it must be accepted.
- Adapting to change is about our attitude.
- We have to grieve for what we are letting go of.
- Change is an opportunity for self-motivation and innovation.
- We can identify strategies for accepting and implementing our changes.

**William Bridges**, who has contributed significantly to research about how change affects us, tells a story about his early days as a university professor. In the 1960s it was common to have Saturday classes. Students attended classes Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, or Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. Most students hated Saturday classes and so did most professors, so Bridges thought it would be a really easy thing to change. His solution was to have longer classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays, so there was no need for classes on Saturday.

However, it wasn't a simple change to make. Although they knew that almost everyone hated Saturday classes, some professors wanted the percentages. Several of them argued strenuously to retain Saturday classes; they had taken Saturday classes themselves and it hadn't hurt them. Finally one professor said, “But if we change from three classes to two, I'll have to rewrite all my lecture notes.” The other professors agreed, and the change was voted down. Bridges didn't think the professors were selfish, lazy, or stupid, but nobody had addressed how the changes would affect them. They were struggling to protect what was familiar, and many of us would have done the same thing.

We all have a personal connection to how we work, so it takes work to do this. Bridges says, “It isn’t the changes that do you in. It’s the transition.”

Change is the situation: the move to a new building, a retirement, or renovating a house. Transition, on the other hand, is a three phase process people go through as they come to terms with the new situation that change has brought.

Change is about doing things differently, seeing things in a new way, adjusting to surprises, and adapting to ideas with new twists.

### **Change is a new laptop. Transition is learning how to use it.**

With that new laptop, I am:

- Thrilled by possibilities of things I can do with it.
- Excited by the size of its memory and the new programs.
- Stimulated by the idea of working on things in way that I have never tried before.

However, I’m also:

- Fearful and uncertain of how to use all the features, like the fact I can flip the screen down and make it work like a tablet.
- Anxious and worried that I won’t figure everything out before the next time I have the laptop with me in a meeting or a training session.

I must:

- Give up something to get something. I gave up the old familiar laptop.
- Unlearn what I knew about the old familiar programs and adjust to things that are very different.
- Temporarily give up my cushion of comfort.

## **The Change Cycle**

### **The Three Phases**

**William Bridges** went on to earn his doctorate and became an organizational consultant focused on change. He believes it isn’t the change that is the problem; the change is a situation. People have difficulty with the transition, which can be described as a three-part process. The transition isn’t optional, and we must all go through those three stages if we want to make the change stick.

There are three stages each of us goes through in accommodating ourselves to any change.



**Fig.1.1**

### **Endings**

All change begins with an ending. We may try hard to intellectualize it, thinking that if we understand it, we can deal with it. However, we don't always have the skills to deal with emotional reservations. Like the organ reject theory, our minds may know that the change is good for us, but the body still rejects it. Intellectually, we may accept a change, but emotionally, we may still resist it.

Change is sometimes perceived as exciting, stimulating, and motivating. Jack Welch, the former CEO of GE and a popular consultant, talks about change with excitement. He believes in seizing the opportunity and being open to what's ahead.

Change is often viewed as loss. An ending can be a loss, but a loss can be celebrated. It simply means that we are letting go of one thing to grasp on to another. Failing to identify and get ready for loss is the biggest difficulty for people in transition.

### **Transitions/Neutral Zone**

This is a time to complete endings and begin new patterns. People in this stage may have a strong need for support from others. Major transitions can unleash powerful conflicting forces in people.

Western culture often tries to avoid this phase of the experience and jump to new beginnings. The neutral zone is treated like a busy street to be crossed as quickly as possible. However, it is important to take the time to complete endings and integrate new patterns effectively.

### **Beginnings**

Organizations think about beginnings long before people do. There is often conflict between the organization's motivation and the critical mass to make it happen, so it is essential to get people involved, especially those who are leaders and have influence.

At this stage, people need drawing leadership (with a vision and purpose) rather than pushing management (focusing on goals and plans).

## Human Reaction to change

### Control and Change

Daryl Conner, who we mentioned earlier, lays out the human reaction to change like this:



Fig. 1.2

## The Pace of Change

### The Trend of Change

At one time, change was a short burst of disruption followed by a longer period of stable operations. Today, there are no longer any rest periods; change is continuous and enormous.

### Reactions to Change

People react differently to change. **Everett M. Rogers** (1931-2004) is best known for developing the **diffusion of innovations theory**. Research on the subject has included a vast range of activities, including how people go from being bystanders to participating in a riot, communities learning about family planning, and farmers adapting to hybrid seeds. Rogers breaks down people's reactions into the following categories:

**The Innovators** are people who want to try new ways of doing things or who have responsibility for continuous improvement. They will be pushing for change.

**The Early Adopters** on the team will be the first to embrace the changes. They may even rush in before they fully understand the change and why it is necessary. They welcome change either because they immediately see the benefits or perhaps because they prefer variety to routine.

**The Early Majority** are those who are influenced by Innovators and Early Adopters and who prefer to be ahead of the wave rather than swamped by it.

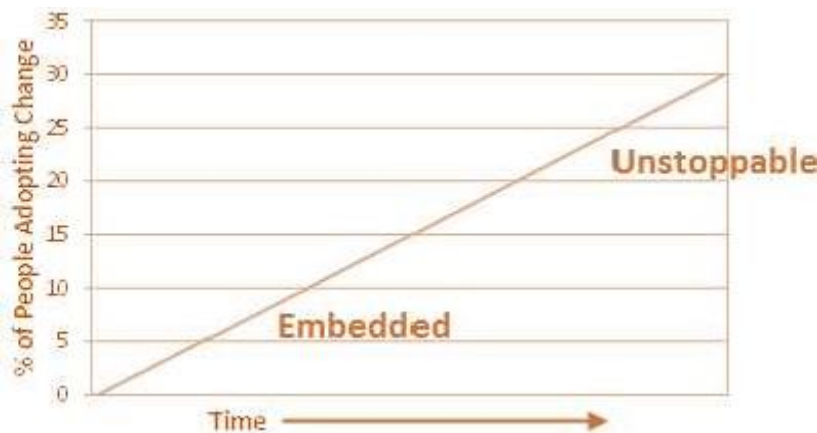
**The Late Majority** are more cautious. They hold back until they are sure they know what they are doing and until they believe the change has a fair chance of working. Only then do they come on board.

**The Late Adopters** are the last to come on board and they may not come willingly. They are not easily convinced of the value of the change, but they can be moved to accept the change once they see the benefits or feel that they will be left behind.

**The Diehards** resist the change. They do not come on board at all. If their resistance is absolute, they may be moved to a back position in the organization, where their resistance interferes with operations less, or even terminated. They can become angry and bitter about the way things are going.

**Changes are adopted at different rates in organizations.** The Innovators try things first, followed by the Early Adopters. These are people you need to get on board first. Focus your efforts on them, not the Diehards. Some people are never able to change and you cannot spend your own time on them. They become casualties.

When **5 %** 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 change is assured.



**Fig. 1.3**

**Why 20%?** On a bell curve, there are only a few Innovators (2.5%) and a larger group of Early Adopters (13.5%). Combined, and then added with the leading edge of the Early Majority, these are approximately 20% of a typical organization. Once that 20% has joined the bandwagon and adapted to the change, the momentum reaches what Malcolm Gladwell refers to as **the tipping point** in his book of the same name. Gladwell's discussion of the theory applies the strengths of three types of people (Mavens, Connectors, and Salesman) to engage people in something. Then, they spread the news to others and build energy.

## **Case Study: Getting More from the Last Hour**

### **Getting More From the Last Hour**

Employees in one department have fallen into the habit of slacking off during the last hour of work. Supervisors were under a good deal of pressure from their managers to do something about it. Privately they acknowledged the slow-down as a real problem, but they didn't know what to do about it.

Rather, they scheduled themselves into their offices during the last hour of the day under the guise of using that hour for planning the next day's work. The result was that they didn't have to see the problem. Each supervisor intuitively sensed that to take action would be unpopular, and would bring criticism from both supervisory colleagues and employees for trying to win points with management.

The situation was further complicated by the fact that employees had work-related justification for being away from their primary work area and in contact with employees in different sections. Thus employees could be supervised by their area supervisor, or by a supervisor from another area.

Twenty supervisors report to four managers.

## **The Four Room Apartment**

### **The Framework**

This model was developed by Claes Janssen. It gives us a strong illustration of how people react to change, and to help people see where they and others may be in the change process. Discuss characteristics of each group: what they are feeling and what they are doing.

These are presented in the order that we experience them:

- **Contentment:** We like the status quo.
- **Denial:** We are afraid to admit that things have changed. We spend a lot of energy holding onto the past. When the change is traumatic or brutal, we spend less time here because the reality is indisputable.
- **Confusion:** We still have some anxiety but we are ready for constructive action.
- **Renewal:** We have lots of energy for creative work. We then go back to being content until the next change happens.

## The Four-Room Apartment

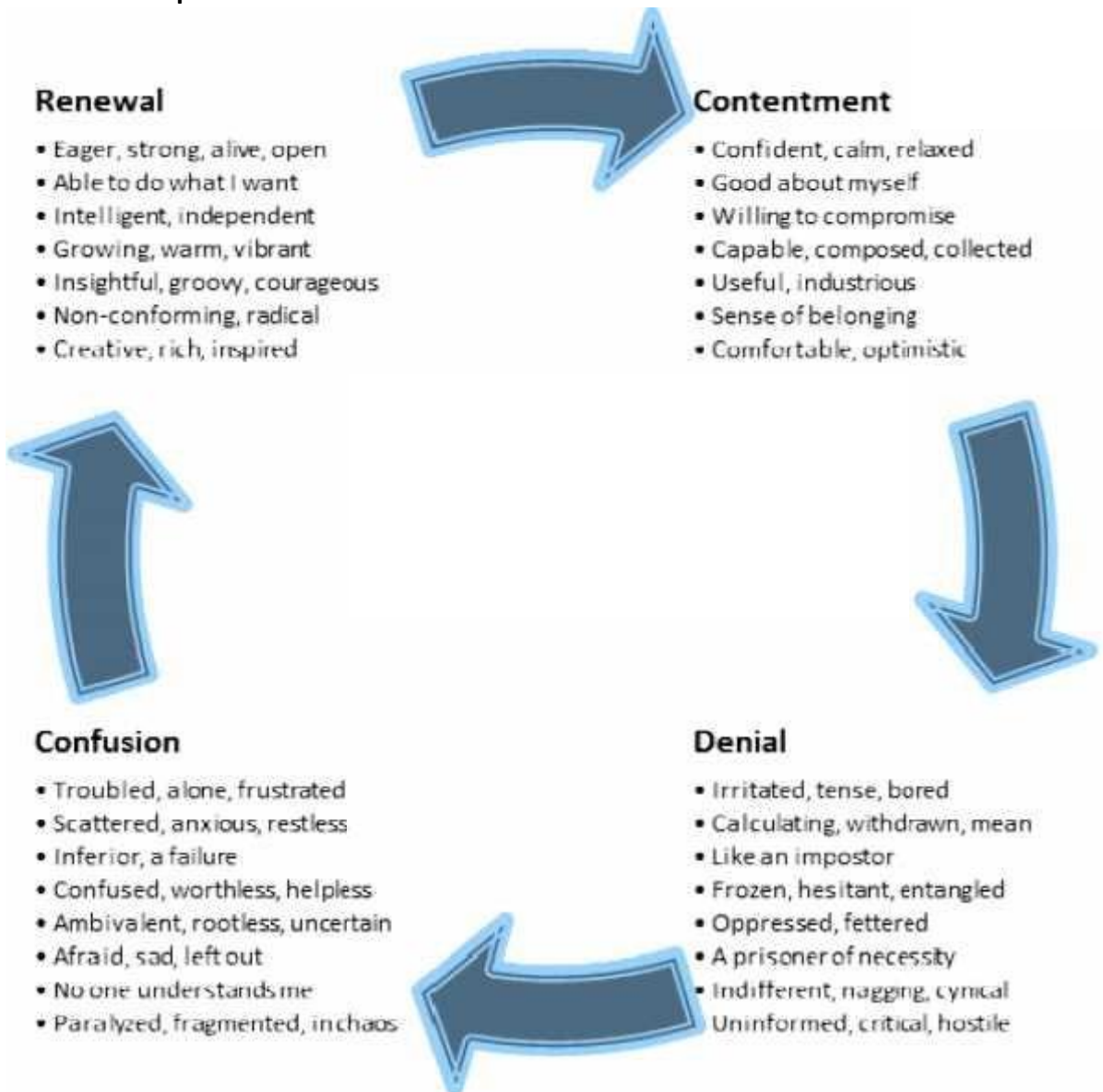


Fig. 1.4

## Understanding Resistance

Change is all around us. Many of us buy new cars, computers, phones, and clothes; paint our homes in new colors; try new food; and plant different things in the garden. We're pretty good at adapting to a lot of change, especially if it's our own idea. But there are people who will resist change, and it often seems related to their belief that they may lose control or something else that is valuable to them.

Making lasting changes is even tougher. People know that smoking is bad for them, but they smoke anyway. People know that they should maintain a healthy weight and exercise, but many people don't.

They know that taking the bus to work is probably better for the environment and less expensive than driving, but they drive anyway.

Think about these situations:

- Does an employee resist a raise in salary or increased vacation allowance?
- Do you hang on to a cranky old car and resist being given a new one?
- Does a supervisor resist an imposed schedule change that has them representing the department at an important reception for the new company CEO, rather than finishing the quarterly budget?

All these changes are likely to be warmly welcomed and be implemented with great cooperation from the people concerned.

## **Making Change Stick**

### **Action Planning**

It's one thing to talk about, anticipate, and/or resist change. It's another to make things happen. Depending on the size and impact of what's changing, you may need a formal project management plan to make sure that the changes are well-implemented and that they stick. For smaller changes, you will still need a way to help the employees move into the new zone, ensure that things are working, confirm that people are adapting, and then evaluate what went well and what didn't.

### **Reinforcement**

Whether the new behavior needs to be practiced, repeated, incorporated into other behaviors, or stands alone, it has to be reinforced in order to stick. The manager's role includes providing reinforcement so that people who have made the change continue to see its application and value.

Success of change related programs relies heavily on reinforcement of the new behavior, and many changes require more reinforcement than you may think. Success in weight loss programs, for example, is often measured in terms of pounds or inches lost. But the reinforcement does not always come from losing the weight. (If it were that simple, we would all be an ideal weight!) Instead, the reinforcement comes from the frequent meetings, support from a group leader and members of a group, and sometimes even a weekly fee that must be paid whether you attend your regularly scheduled meeting or not.

## **Adapting to Change**

### **Understanding Resiliency**

We can define resiliency as the ability to bounce back from change and to focus on positive aspects rather than getting bogged down in the negatives. Resiliency can be taught and modeled. It needs to be done well for people to recognize the benefits and adopt them. This means that, as a leader, we have to

recognize that saying “It will all work out” is not helpful to people. Many people don’t cope naturally, but they can learn techniques to help them cope better than they might without any help at all.

Daryl Conner has identified these five characteristics as key to developing resiliency. We’ve added some strategies for helping people cope.

### **Positive**

A positive attitude is crucial when dealing with change. Let’s say that your job assignment has changed. Rather than think, “This change means I have to do that activity more and I don’t like it,” think about the things that you will get to do more or new opportunities that will arise.

**To teach this skill**, meet with your team individually or as a group. Have them raise the negative aspects of the change, and then have them re-frame each statement as a positive so that the positives list is at least as long as the negative one. Though this will feel awkward to them at first, even superficial, stick with it. Eventually people will learn to reframe things themselves and to believe in what they are repeating.

### **Focused**

Stay focused on the change itself and what you can do to manage it. Try not to worry about things that are out of your control. Think about the stages of transition (endings, transition/neutral, and beginnings) and validate where you are, as well as your feelings about it.

**To teach this skill**, help staff to recognize where they are in the model, focus on the action plan or an agenda, and block out distractions and negative gossip.

### **Flexible**

Change will be much easier if you try to embrace it. Think of ways that you can adapt or things that you can do to make the change easier. Continuing with the job assignment example, you could identify training that you will need or questions that you have. **To reinforce this concept**, celebrate and reinforce when members of the team are demonstrating success, being flexible, experimenting, or taking risks.

### **Organized**

Put the changes in context with the rest of your schedule, and your approach to work, and look at it in line with the models we have discussed so far. If you try to look at change in logical fashion, it may become less personal and easier to handle.

**To teach this skill**, help staff create and update plans. Training in time management, personal productivity, and project management might help.

## Proactive

If you anticipate change in the early stages and modify your expectations accordingly, it will be much easier to deal with the change than it is in the later stages, when things are already underway and you have less opportunity to influence or already feel a loss of control. Change that comes as a surprise is harder to deal with than things that we can prepare for.

**To help those around you,** keep the lines of communication open. Communicate what you know, even if it may change soon and you don't have full details. Set expectations on when they can receive updates and how things may change.

### Further Reading:

- ✓ *Change Management: A Guide to Effective Implementation,(2008), By Professor Robert A Paton, James McCalman*
- ✓ *Change Management: A Balanced and Blended Approach,(2012), By Michael Reiss*

