



Understanding Change and Transitions

Learning Outcomes

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

- ✓ Describe your skills, values, and beliefs about work and looking for opportunities.
- ✓ Demonstrate an understanding for the types of work available to you and where to go for more information.

Understanding Change and Transitions

Managing Change and handling Transitions

Managing Change

Finding a new job is about making changes and handling transitions, which we can manage very well when we are prepared. Change is a part of life, and changing jobs is a part of the world of work in many ways.

What is Change?

Change is anything that moves you outside of your comfort zone. Depending on your point of view, change can be for the better (graduating school and looking for that first big opportunity) or the worse (fired from work and feeling terrible about it). It can also fall somewhere in between, where we accept that there can be some interesting, exciting, or challenging things coming in the days and weeks ahead.

Everyone's adjustment period to change is unique. It is easiest for those who are flexible in their approach in different circumstances at life and work, but can be devastating for people who are unable to let go. Change can be awkward at first, but like being propelled into a steep turn on a roller coaster, it can also be exhilarating. It can motivate you to do your absolute best. During change, time can seem to move very slowly for the reluctant, but it can be a whirlwind for those who are ready for it.

Change is needed if we are unhappy with where we are, when old practices or processes no longer work, or when a job no longer exists. It can be like pulling a new sweater on over your head; for a moment you cannot see, but you know you will feel warm and comfortable once you can get your head out of the hole.

Five Aspects of Change

- It is about doing something we are not used to doing.
- It often leads us to think about what we have to give up, instead of what we could gain.
- Although some of us might be happy to greet the change, for many it can be overwhelming.
- If the pressure to change is lessened, people will quite quickly and naturally revert to their previous behaviors.
- Sometimes change makes people focus on the need for new resources (such as the need for more materials, training, people) when their needs can actually be met with what is already there.

Myths About Change

It always comes with resistance or conflict.

Not always. Although we hear lots about resistance, we hear little when change happens smoothly. Things are changing continually around us, and we do not always hear grumbling.

Every aspect of the change must be planned ahead of time.

We do have to plan for significant change, and that planning should include many things so that work and the needs of our employees are respected. For example, if electricians need to be brought in and the power will be shut off for a period of time, people need to know when their equipment will be unavailable. It is difficult, however, to plan for people's reactions, so that aspect cannot always be anticipated.

No one will embrace it.

That is unlikely when the rationale for the change is explained and understood. When they are looking (or even thinking about looking) for a new job, plenty of people are genuinely excited about the potential for change.

Someone else is responsible for it.

That you are here today means that you are taking responsibility for a job change. You may feel that because a job search agency, your boss, or a parent sent you, that they are responsible for it. But you are the only person ultimately responsible for your life, so this workshop and what you get out of it, and the job that you undertake, are your responsibility.

Test your Knowledge

Think about your circumstances around looking for work right now and how you feel about it. For example, are you excited about a new job in the same field? Looking forward to a new job in a new field? Indifferent, but must find a job? Angry at having lost a job?

Who are the people in your support network that are able to help you as you go through these changes?

On the Bridge

Change is a simple word, but a complex topic. Different models of change have evolved over time to reflect the need to pay more attention to the process of transition and the changes in attitude that take place, as opposed to solely focusing on the changes desired.

Understanding the Transition

William Bridges is a highly respected authority on change in the workplace. He says that many change initiatives are set up to fail because they are “change heavy and transition light.” In order to make your job search successful, let’s focus on the transition aspect for a few moments.

Test your Knowledge

Give two examples of change.

Describe transition.

Transition Phases

Ending

Endings can be described as the adjustment to not doing something in a familiar way. We have to let go of something that is well known, even dependable.

Change is often viewed as a loss, even negative. An ending is a loss in that context. It means letting go of something, and the need to grasp onto something else. Failure to prepare for the loss is one of the largest difficulties for people in transition.

Neutral Zone

Here we are in a sort of waiting period, hanging in mid-air, without access to what we did in the past and no instruction about the future.

There is a strong need for support at this stage. Many transitions unleash powerful conflicting forces in people, and support is required to make it through the transition period and successfully implement the change. Western culture avoids neutral zones. We look at them like a busy street that must be crossed as quickly as possible. However, it is important to take the time to complete endings (a grieving period) and integrate new patterns. Most organizations and many people skip the transition and jump into new beginnings.

New Beginning

Here we embrace the little known or even unknowable, and start over. This is the new job, where we are now moving into something completely new.

Failure to deal with these phases means that lasting change will not take place. In the job context, that can mean we start to “job hop” or never really engage in the place we now find ourselves working.

Test your Knowledge

What can you do to help yourself and others to manage a transition like a job search?

During the Ending, I can...

During the Neutral Zone, I can...

During the Beginning, I can...

About Job Loss

Losing your job can be a devastating change. When you lose your job, the Endings stage could include:

- Losing regular income
- Losing touch with colleagues and friends
- Not having somewhere to be every day
- Having to change future plans
- Having to change the way that you apply your knowledge, skills, and talents

What is the different between “change” and “transition?”

The Important Stuff

Values Check

The Importance of Values

Values exist at your very core. Understanding what you value means that you can target the right companies for the right job. When our values are inconsistent with those of a workplace, we disengage from the work and leave it, either physically or emotionally.

Do you know the things that are important to you? People often do, although they may struggle with putting their values into words. This exercise will help you to define what is important to you in terms of work, and help you to decide what kinds of jobs you will look for or companies that you will consider.

Your values are extremely important to you. It's important to match your values with those of your work. For example, if one of your values is about being paid what you are worth and you work somewhere that pays everyone the same wage no matter how much work they do, your values don't match those of the organization. In this case, there may not be a big problem initially, but over time, if you observe that people are getting paid the same as you without seeming to work as hard, you may become cynical. On the other hand, if you value the idea that teamwork and the efforts of the team combine to make the company do well, you may not have any difficulty with having everyone paid the same wage.

Identifying Your Values

The list below includes some commonly held values, and there are extra spaces at the end to add values that are important to you. Read each statement and then rank each value according to the following:

1. Not important
2. Quite important
3. Very important

	Abundance: Making enough money to live very comfortably.
	Achievement: Accomplishing goals, either short or long term.

	Adventure: Have work duties or hobbies which involve frequent risk taking.
	Aesthetics: Studying or appreciating the beauty of things, ideas, etc.
	Affiliations: Be recognized as a member of a particular organization or department.
	Artistic Creativity: Engage in creative work in any of several art forms.
	Change and Variety: Have work responsibilities that change often.
	Community: Live and work in a town/city where I can get involved in local programs and issues.
	Competition: Working with and against others where there are clear win/lose outcomes.
	Creativity (General): Create new ideas, programs, organizational structures, or anything else not following a format previously developed by others.
	Fast Pace: A high pace of activity; things must be done rapidly.
	Friendships: Develop close relationships with people as a result of my activities.
	Help Society: Do something to improve the world I live in.
	Independence: Be able to determine the nature of my actions without significant direction from others; not have to do what others tell me to.
	Influence People: Change attitudes or opinions of other people or alter their behavior.
	Intellectual Status: Be regarded as a person of high intellectual prowess or as one who is an acknowledged expert in a given field of knowledge.
	Knowledge and Learning: Engage myself in the pursuit of knowledge, truth, and understanding.
	Location: Find a place to live (town or geographical area) that is conducive to my lifestyle and affords me the opportunity to do the things I enjoy most.
	Make Decisions: Have the power to decide courses of action, policies, etc.
	Maximum Use of Abilities: Being able to apply as many of the things that I know as possible.

	Moral Contribution: Make a significant contribution through moral standards that I feel are very important.
	Physical Challenge: Have a job or hobbies that makes physical demands that I would find rewarding.
	Precision Work: Work in situations where there is very little tolerance for error.
	Public Contacts: Have a lot of day-to-day contact with people.
	Security: Be assured of keeping my job and a reasonable financial reward.
	Stability: Have a routine that is largely predictable and not likely to change over a long period of time.
	Supervising or Managing Others: Influencing the work activities or some aspect of the outcomes produced by other people.
	Time for Self and Family: Establishing balance between work and other interests and relationships.
	Work Alone: Do projects by myself without any significant amount of contact with others.
	Work Under Pressure: Work with deadlines and/or where quality of my work is evaluated critically by superiors, customers, or others.
	Work with Others: Have close working relationships with groups; work as integral part of a team working toward common goals.

Top Values

When you have finished going through the list, pick out no more than five of the values that you marked as very important ones and circle them. Make sure there are no more than five. Those five top values should be an accurate reflection of your core values, the things that you are most focused on, which influence your decisions and the things that you do. These five core values are important to keep in mind as you go through your job search.

Write them here:

Values Defined

Are Your Values Fulfilled?

Think about your current (or last) job for a moment. Of your top five core values in the previous section, how many of them were fulfilled by that job? Your answer may give you a very important insight if you ever felt unsettled or dissatisfied with that job.

Value	Fulfilled by Last/Current Job?

Test your Knowledge

Still thinking about your core values, complete the following statements. You may not have five factors for each statement, and there are no right and wrong answers, so include the things that feel right for you.

I work because:

I want the following things out of my work:
