

Factsheet

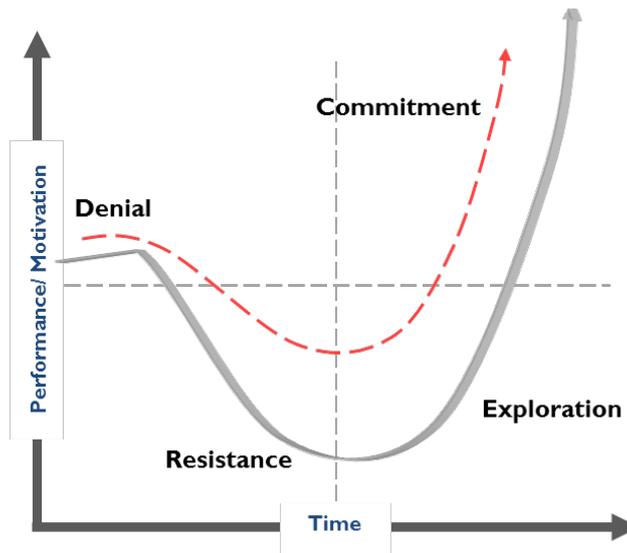
Common Reactions to Change

Remember that everyone is different and therefore will experience change and the change process differently. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' to the process and different people may move through each stage at a different pace. The key is to be aware of where people may be and help them through that stage with clear information, consultation and support.

Figure 1: Stages of reactions to change

Denial – a person will typically avoid the topic, appear unconcerned, refuse to believe it is happening, show no initiative, focus on details, ask picky questions, and challenge the data or the decision

Resistance – a person will typically become angry, aggressive, use sarcasm, feel overwhelmed or depressed, ask 'why me?' or 'why now?', avoid accountability, become sad and depressed



Commitment – people feel that they are able to see the possibilities, are confident and in control, they are able to focus on continuous improvement. Typically people seek accountability, work with the change and achieve results

Exploration – people seek to understand and accept new ways of doing things. They start being creative, consider what they can do and begin to look forward. Energy increases, they learn and discover new possibilities, generate ideas and start to plan for the future.

STAGE: DENIAL

The stage of denial can be prolonged if employees are not encouraged to register their reaction, or if management acts like employees should just move directly into the new ways. Denial is harmful because it impedes the natural progression of healing from loss (i.e. the old way of doing things) to moving forward ... Because people are often blind to problems during the denial phase, a manager can mistakenly think that he or she has jumped directly to the final phase of commitment.

What you see	What you should do
<p>Withdrawal No noticeable reaction – “business as usual” Focus on the past Apathy/numbness – the announcement of change doesn’t seem to sink in Evidence of activity, but not much gets done Provide individuals with facts and information about the change</p>	<p>Reinforce that the change definitely will happen Explain what to expect and suggest actions they can take to adjust to the change Give them time to let things sink in Arrange a planning session to talk things over</p>

STAGE: RESISTANCE

Resistance is not only a predictable part of change it is probably the most difficult phase to deal with. People resist for good reasons, even though we would rather they didn't. These reasons include: their security is threatened, the change threatens their sense of competence, they fear they will fail at new tasks, they are comfortable with the status-quo and they have vested interests in the existing systems.

What you see	What you should do
Pre-occupation, wondering where they stand/how they will be affected Anger, blame, anxiety, complaints Stubbornness, negativity Apathy, sick leave, withdrawal Significantly lowered productivity Listen and acknowledge feelings	Encourage support Don't try to talk people out of their feelings or tell them to change or pull together Respond to concerns as effectively as possible Facilitated "dealing with change" sessions can provide a forum for expression of feelings which is helpful in moving through this stage Make effective use of organisational "rituals" ie parties, barbecues, luncheons.

STAGE: EXPLORATION

During the Exploration phase, energy is released, as people focus their attention on the future and towards the external environment once again. Another word for this phase is "chaos". During exploration people tend to draw on their internal creative energy to figure out ways to capitalise on the future.

What you see	What you should do
Confusion Chaos and energy New ideas, but lack of focus	Focus on priorities Provided needed training Set short term goals Conduct brainstorming and planning sessions

STAGE: COMMITMENT

During this phase employees are ready to focus on the plan. They are willing to recreate their mission and build action plans to make it work. They are prepared to learn new ways to work together, and have re-negotiated roles and expectations. This is a phase where they are willing to solidly identify with a set of goals and be clear about how to reach them

What you see	What you should do
Improved co-operation Better focus Working together with a plan	Set medium and long term goals and objectives Concentrate on team building Acknowledge good efforts by both individuals and teams