

## Factsheet

# Managing Resistance When It Occurs

Resistance slows down the change process and affects the foundation step of creating a sense of urgency. It also introduces confusion. If the change is difficult and you are under stress, it will be tempting to ignore or enter into conflict with those who are resistant to the change. While it might be easiest to keep resisters out of the change process, you may need to try to 'win over' some resisters in order to progress your desired change - resisters can have a huge influence on how well the change does or doesn't progress.

### Resistance to change

- Resistance often stems from feeling not heard, no say, no control, no trust, no respect, no belief, no involvement.
- Individuals have 'many parts' inside and outside of work - consider the 'whole' person.
- The change threatens jobs, power and status in an organisation as well as established patterns of working relationships.
- Poor communication about the change (purpose, scope, timetables, staff) can lead to ambiguity and confusion and can trigger negative reactions among employees. Employees need to know what is going on, especially if their jobs are going to be affected. Informed employees tend to have higher levels of job satisfaction than uninformed employees.
- Most resistance to change is due to the change being poorly communicated. Communication is two way – it is as much about listening!

### Steps to manage resistance

A quick 4 step process to managing resistance:

Step	Approach
1	<b>Identify the resistance.</b> Trust what you see more than what you hear. Listen to yourself and use your own feelings as a guide. Listen for repetition or tell-tale phrases of resistance.
2	<b>Acknowledge and name the resistance.</b> State your perception of the resistance in a neutral and non-aggressive manner, eg 'What I think I hear you saying is...'. State how the resistance is making you feel.
3	<b>Be quiet, listen and let the person respond.</b> Get the person talking, encourage full expression of their concerns. Gradually uncover any underlying resistance or issues and be aware of other forms of resistance surfacing.
4	<b>Enable people to say goodbye to the past.</b>

### Some tips:

- Validate people, wherever they are at (refer to the Change Curve).
- Don't 'react' or be 'surprised' - be patient, change takes time.
- Assess 'why' the resistance – listen, think, look around, develop strategies to address specific concerns.
- At the end of the day - don't be afraid to intervene where there is persistent or prolonged resistance.

## When dealing with resistance DO NOT

- Fight the resistance - it's a normal part of the change process.
- Take it personally - instead use 'I Statements' to respond.
- Go into more data collection and get hooked into the details.
- Avoid, or collude with, an individual.
- Work more with your 'allies'.
- Lose your confidence.
- Expect to have all the answers.
- Avoid giving 'bad news'.
- Use aggressive language eg 'you idiot'.
- Delay or wait one more day.
- Expect approval, encouragement, support and/or affection.

## Six approaches to addressing common forms of resistance

In their article 'Choosing strategies for change' (2008), Kotter and Schlesinger outline six approaches to addressing the common forms of resistance to change. These approaches, along with their advantages and disadvantages, are explained in the table below.

Approach	Commonly used in situations where...	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Education and communication</b>	There is a lack of information or inaccurate information and analysis.	Once persuaded, people will often help with the implementation of the change.	Can be very time consuming if lots of people are involved.
<b>Participation and involvement</b>	The initiators do not have all the information they need to design the change and others have considerable power to resist the change.	People who participate in the change will be committed to implementing it, and any relevant information they have will be integrated into the change plan.	Can be very time consuming if participants design an inappropriate change.
<b>Facilitation and support</b>	People are resisting because of adjustment problems.	No other approach works as well with adjustment problems.	Can be time consuming, expensive and still fail.
<b>Negotiation and agreement</b>	Someone or some group will clearly lose out in a change and that person or group has considerable power to resist the change.	This can be a relatively easy way to avoid major resistance.	Can be too expensive in many cases if it alerts others to negotiate for compliance.
<b>Manipulation and co-optation</b>	Other tactics will not work or are too expensive.	This can offer a relatively quick and inexpensive solution to resistance problems.	Can lead to future problems if people feel manipulated.
<b>Explicit and implicit coercion</b>	Speed is essential and the change initiators possess considerable power.	This approach is speedy and can overcome any kind of resistance.	Can be risky if it leaves people mad at the initiators.

Reference: Adapted from South Australia's Change Management Resources 2014.