



WELLBEING CONSULTING

It's Time We Reframe Change

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The one thing that is inevitable in life is change. Everyone navigates change differently, and many view change as something that is hard, challenging, and maybe even something to resist. When we dig deeper into organizational change, we see that over 70% of change initiatives fail to achieve their goals citing employee resistance and low managerial support. (1)

We often make assumptions that if it is workplace-related, employees must accept the change, be nimble, and buy into it. However, we often forget that for many, the workplace might be one of the most stable things in individuals' lives. Your manager, your colleagues, maybe the space you sit in every day – at home or at the office, your responsibilities, your routine.... All equal consistency.

Having a feeling of stability is critical for one's wellbeing. When an organization goes through change, it can be hard for many reasons. And previously stated, change is inevitable, especially for a company to innovate, grow, and remain relevant.

Organizational Change & Psychological Safety

For people to be honest and speak up about their reactions to the organizational change, there needs to be a high degree of psychological safety within the company. Employees that report low psychological safety may be less prepared to handle this constantly changing nature of work. (2)

An employee might feel less likely to speak up if they do not understand the change or disagree with it. Building a foundation of trust, creating an environment where employees feel safe, and having a genuine connection to your team all play a role in building that psychological safe place for employees.

It is critical for employees to feel supported to inform you how they are processing the change. We see that a high-change environment can lead to turnover amongst teams. If employees feel empowered to speak with their managers about how the change is impacting them professionally and maybe even personally, you will be able to address it directly, which will reduce the potential for turnover amongst teams.

In addition to the employee's relationship with their manager, team dynamics play a critical role in developing psychological safety. If someone does not feel comfortable on a team, they will be less likely to express their ideas, concerns, be vulnerable, actively participate, etc. which can lead to disengagement as well as departure from an organization.

Organizational Change & Wellbeing

Thinking about organizational change through the lens of wellbeing is critical. One thing we do not spend enough time thinking about is how individuals process change, and the complexity of how people work through change in bigger systems.

Change increases stress levels for many people – workers undergoing recent or current changes at work are over twice as likely to report chronic work stress 55% compared to 22%. (3) Additionally, research shows that 83% of workers suffering from change fatigue say their employer has not provided enough tools or resources to help them adapt. (4) We should prioritize resources that will alleviate stress and minimize negative reactions to change.

Successfully making organizational changes requires us to recognize how individuals process change on a personal level. Dr. Prochaska and DiClemente's six-stage model of change emphasizes the cognitive journey people undertake when preparing to make a life change. (5) The first three stages of this model focus entirely on mental and emotional processing, rather than immediate action. In the context of organizational change, this framework highlights the importance of allowing individuals adequate time to cognitively engage with the change. Often, however, organizational shifts are introduced abruptly, leaving little opportunity for employees to process the implications for their wellbeing and readiness to act .

1. **Precontemplation** (*Subconscious*)
2. **Contemplation** (*Conscious*)
3. **Preparation** (*Getting Ready*)
4. **Action** (*Making the Change*)
5. **Maintenance** (*Sustaining the Change*)
6. **Relapse** (*Reverting Back*)

What Can You Do as a Leader?

As a leader, invest your time in truly understanding the complexity of how individuals process changes and how you can best support your teams. It is critical to reframe change as a necessity in today's world and no longer view hesitant employees as resistant or negative but rather try to understand where they are potentially stuck in their change process and how you can help.

Thinking through and taking action on how you can support the individuals on your team process change in a constructive way, create a psychological safe environment, provide clarity, simplify the process, and model a growth mindset.

Three Change Frameworks

The ADKAR model developed by Prosci Change Management's founder Jeff Hiatt helps leaders identify and address individuals' barriers to change, highlighting if people get stuck in certain areas of the change process, they will have various behavioral and emotional responses. (6) When employees are caught in various cycles of change, it can be detrimental to the larger system at play, leading to confusion, resistance, anxiety, backsliding, and more. The ADKAR framework can be immensely helpful as it is a practical resource that highlights individual needs and emphasizes addressing barriers, building capability, enhancing resources, and reinforcing positive outcomes.

Proteus International created “The Change Arc,” which highlights a pattern of behaviors in response to a change. When a workplace change is introduced to employees, they are often thinking, “what is changing for me,” “why is this happening,” and “what will it look like in the end.” (7) The goal is to help shape that path and create opportunities to help shift people’s mindset from “this will be difficult to easy” or “this change is weird to now this feels normal.” Once someone believes change is doable and can understand the future, they are much more likely to embrace it. (7)

Switch Change Management Model is a simple framework that focuses on addressing different parts of our brains and how they impact our decision making. The Switch model highlights that we need to appease both the rational and emotional side of our brains. Our emotional mind is driven by feelings, instincts, and intuition, while our rational mind is deliberate, considering pros and cons carefully, and looking for data, facts, evidence, etc. Our goal as leaders is to balance both by engaging the rational mind to create clear goals and plans while motivating the emotional mind to inspire action and create momentum. (8)

For inquiries about how PartnerWell can assist you and your team, contact us at partnerwell@tpgrp.com.

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