

# Resistance to change

## Leadership and learning hub

### Different responses to change

[Leadership competencies for Queensland](#) outlines the responsibility leaders have to embrace change and lead with focus and optimism in an environment of complexity and ambiguity. Research tells us that a major obstacle to success for change projects is employee resistance, combined with ineffective management of the human element of change.

People respond differently to change. Some feel excited and stimulated, active and resourceful, others may feel overwhelmed and confused, overlooked, unheard, unappreciated and angry. Never underestimate your team's capacity for resisting change and the impact that you, as a leader can make by effectively managing the human aspect of the change process. Use the following exercises to analyse where resistance may arise in the change process and how you can prepare to offset it.

#### Statements that reveal resistance

What are you experiencing in your team?

Statements/Attitudes	Yes	No
Change is not needed		
The status quo is working fine		
The proposed change does more harm than good		
The plan for implementing the change is objectionable		
There is no opportunity to have input into this change		
Change simply adds more work and confusion		
Change requires more effort than to keep the status quo		
The timing of the change is bad		
Is there a lack of respect for the person responsible for the change?		
Is there a desire to challenge authority?		
Where there were negative attitudes towards your agency/team before the change?		
Have people heard about the change second-hand?		

A significant number of 'yes' responses indicate a significant number of individuals are resistant to change.

#### What is behind resistance?

The strength of resistance can give you an idea of the degree to which the change has latched onto something meaningful. Discovering what is valuable for your team can be important for designing or amending change strategies.

One of the most common mistakes made by leaders when they encounter resistance is for them to become angry, frustrated, impatient or exasperated. The problem with an emotional reaction is that it increases the probability that the resistance will intensify.

When confronted with reactions that reflect resistance consider asking yourself the following questions:

Questions	Answer/s
Why has the resistance occurred at this point?	
What is being resisted and why?	
How is the resistance being demonstrated?	
Are there any outside influences causing or adding to this behaviour?	

## Reasons for resistance to change

Tick the appropriate column and add any necessary comments, such as 'the resistance is present at all levels of the team/agency'. The greater the number of 'maybe' and/or 'no' responses, the greater the resistance is likely to be.

Aspect of resistance to change	Yes	Maybe	No	Comments
Is the purpose of the change clear?				
Are the implementers involved in the planning?				
Is the reason for change based on personal reasons?				
Are the patterns of the team being acknowledged?				
Is communication about the change effective?				
Is there a secure climate in which failure is acceptable?				
Is everyone coping with the work volume?				
Is there a clear incentive to adopt the change?				
Is the status quo satisfactory to most?				
Does the change initiator have respect and trust?				
Does everyone understand the intended result of this change?				
Does everyone feel secure (physically, emotionally and psychologically)?				
Are people generally feeling comfortable with the unknown?				
Is it possible to identify a team that feels it has the most to lose?				
Is the rationale for the change and desired output from the change process adequately understood?				
Are some skills being made obsolete or less relevant by the change?				
Is a significant organisational cultural change required?				
Does the change involve extra work?				
Do the people affected by the change process feel that it is their change process?				
Are the rewards adequate for the effort required to achieve the change output?				
Has this change surprised you/your team?				
Do you/your team trust senior leadership to manage this transition effectively?				