

Quality Improvement

Leading Change

Making the case for change



Why do we need to change? Why do we need to change now? Answering those questions is key to helping others understand the need for the change. **For change to happen, it helps if the whole organisation or team really wants it.** Developing a sense of urgency around the need for change may help you spark the initial motivation to get things moving. Remember the team are probably attached to the status quo, it may not be the most efficient way of working but it's the familiar way.

Relationships

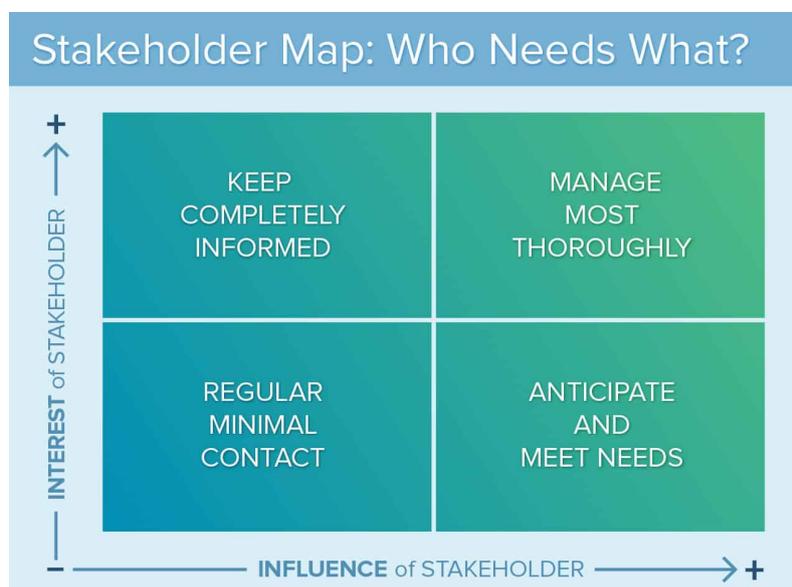
You need to **convince people that change is necessary**. This often takes strong leadership and visible support from key people within your organisation.

Ask yourself:

- Who has a stake in this change?
- Who needs to be a champion?
- Who needs to support it?
- Who just needs to go along with it?



A quick stakeholder map and communication plan might be a helpful place to start working out who needs to be on board. You can find effective change leaders throughout your organisation – they don't necessarily follow the traditional company hierarchy. **To lead change, you need to bring together a coalition, or team, of influential people whose power comes from a variety of sources**, including job title, status, expertise, and political importance.



Communication



What you do with your vision after you create it will determine your success. Your message will probably have strong competition from other day-to-day communications within the organisation, so you need to **communicate it frequently and powerfully**, and **embed it within everything that you do**. Don't just call special meetings to communicate your vision. Instead, talk about it every chance you get.

When you keep it fresh on everyone's minds, they'll remember it and respond to it.

It's also important to "walk the talk." **What you do is far more important – and believable – than what you say**. Demonstrate the kind of behaviour that you want from others.

Think carefully about how you want to communicate your change remember different audience might need different methods of communication. See "selling your change" handout for further information.

Resistance

Resistance is in the eye of the beholder. The people resisting don't see what they are doing as resistance – they often see it as survival. Resistance to change is a reaction to the way a change is being led. There are no born "resistors" out there waiting to ruin otherwise perfect plans. **People resist in response to something.**



Level 1 – I Don't Get It.

Level 1 involves information: facts, figures, ideas. It is the world of thinking and rational action. It is the world of presentations, diagrams, and logical arguments.

Many make the mistake of treating all resistance as if it were Level 1. Well-meaning leaders give people more information – hold more meetings, and make more PowerPoint presentations – when, in fact, something completely different is called for. And that's where Levels 2 and 3 come in.

Level 2 – I Don't Like It.

Level 2 is an emotional reaction to the change. Blood pressure rises, adrenaline flows, pulse increases. It is based on fear: People are afraid that this change will cause them to lose face, status, control – maybe even their jobs. When Level 2 is active, it makes communicating change very difficult. We stop listening. So no matter how terrific your presentation is, once people hear "downsizing" their minds (and bodies) go elsewhere. And this is uncontrollable. They are not choosing to ignore you, it's just that they've got more important things on their minds – like their own survival.

Organizations usually don't encourage people to respond emotionally, so employees limit their questions and comments to Level 1 issues. They ask polite questions about



budgets and timelines. So it may appear that they are with you, but they're not. They are asking Level 1 questions while hoping that you'll read between the lines and speak to their fears. And here is a really tricky part – they may not even be aware that they are operating on such a basic emotional level. Aim to create the environment to discuss the emotional response. Be honest, get them engaged and try to create excitement rather than fear.

Level 3 – I Don't Like You.

So maybe they like you, but they don't trust you – or don't have confidence in your leadership. That's a hard pill to swallow, I know. But lack of attention to Level 3 is a major reason why resistance flourishes and changes fail. And it is seldom talked about. Books on change talk about strategies and plans (all good stuff, to be sure) but most of this advice fails to recognize a major reason why change fails.

In Level 3 resistance, people are not resisting the idea – in fact, they may love the change you are presenting – they are resisting you. Maybe their history with you makes them wary. Perhaps they are afraid that this will be “a flavour of the month” like so many other changes, or that you won't have the courage to make the hard decisions to see this through. But maybe it's not you. People may resist those you represent.

“Change without migraine” <https://rickmaurer.com>

Supporting People through Change

Change is challenging. Depending on the individual, the scale of the change and how much it affects them will all play a part in how people respond. The emotional response to change is often similar to the Grieving Cycle of Denial > Anger > Resistance > Gradual Acceptance > Commitment. It takes people time to move through these stages and the leader's role is to help and support people through. Remember it takes time; be kind and offer support to get the team through.

