

Dealing With Resistance to Change



**Conducted for First 5 Santa Cruz County
Service Integration Brown Bag Lunch**



Nicole M. Young, MSW
Optimal Solutions Consulting
(831) 594-1498
nicole@opti-solutions.com
www.opti-solutions.com

Road Map

Desired Outcomes

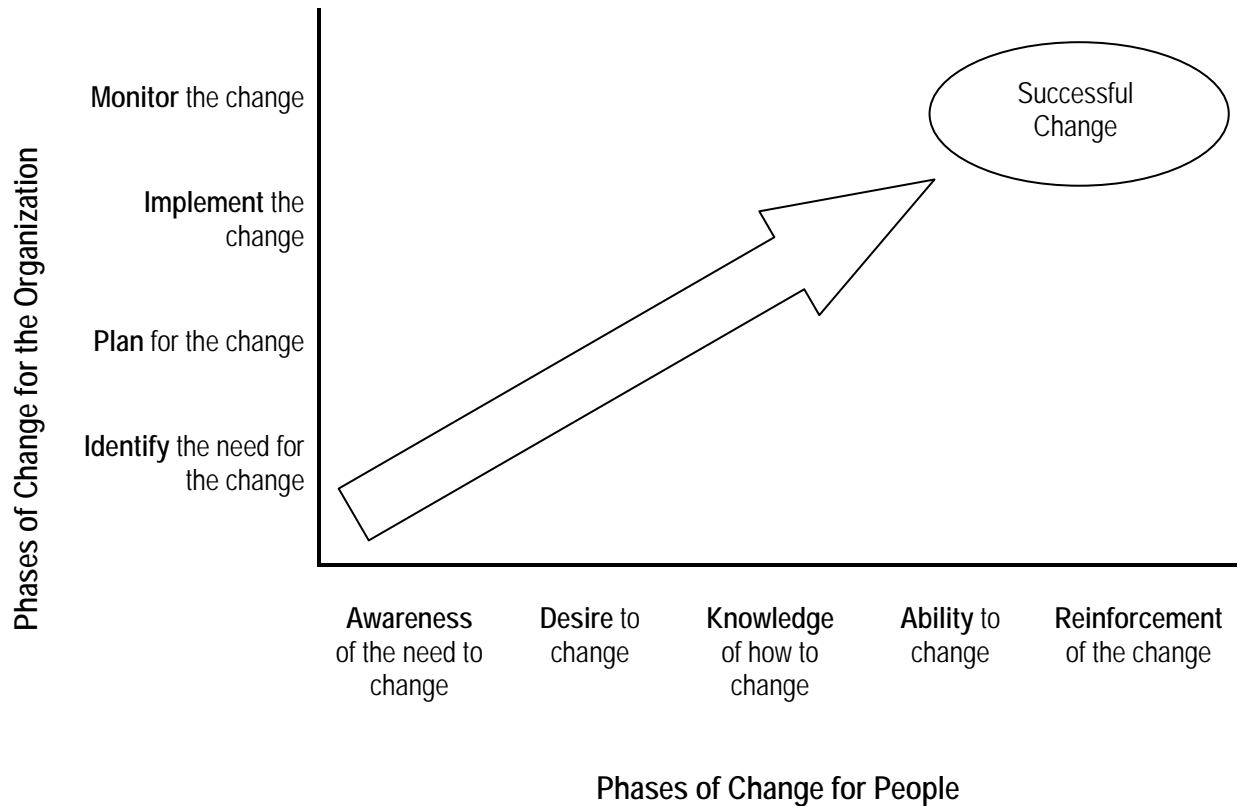
Participants will:

- Identify reasons why people resist change
- Learn the difference between positive resistance and negative resistance
- Learn strategies for responding to different types of resistance

Agenda

- I. Welcome/Overview/Introductions
- II. A Model for Managing Change
- III. Reactions to Change
- IV. Strategies for Dealing With Resistance
- V. Closing/Evaluation

Dimensions of Organizational Change



Adapted from: "ADKAR" - a model for change management, Change Management Tutorial Series, <http://www.change-management.com/tutorial-adkar-overview.htm>

Exercise:

1. Think of a major change in your program or organization that you are involved in or responsible for implementing (can be a past, present or future change)
2. Rate where your program or organization is in each of the Phases of Change for the Organization and for People using this scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Haven't started/ Doesn't exist at all		Moderate progress/ Exists to some degree		Completed/ Totally exists

Reactions to Change

Type	People who are this type	What this type typically says/does
Supportive (Positive Resistance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take initiative to make change happen ▪ Anticipate the need for change ▪ Are committed to finding ways to make the change work ▪ Want change efforts to be effective and productive 	
Neutral (Passive Resistance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appear to agree or “go along” with change, but don’t commit to help implement it ▪ Are indecisive or unwilling to publicly state their opinions about the change ▪ Let people know they don’t support the change, but they don’t actively work against it ▪ Complain about changes without offering any solutions 	
Resistant (Negative Resistance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Point out all the faults or downsides of the change and blame those who are implementing it. ▪ Attempt to block the change effort. Their resistance may be openly expressed or “underground.” ▪ Attempt to sabotage the change effort. They may want the changes to fail in order to be right. 	

Key Concept: People’s reactions to change may alternate between, or be a combination of, the different types of resistance.

Common Reasons for Resistance

1. **Perception that current change efforts are presented and/or handled poorly**
 - Timing conflicts with other initiatives and/or priorities
 - Change is imposed “from above”
 - Little or no communication about the need for change and the benefits
 - Little or no opportunity for input
 - No clear goals or process for implementing the change
 - Questions and concerns about the change are ignored
 - Lack of consistent leadership and/or accountability in implementing the change
 - Inadequate systems or organizational support that will enable people to implement the change successfully

2. **Perceptions about past experiences with change efforts**
 - Change efforts were handled poorly
 - Change efforts did not lead to the desired outcome
 - Change resulted in a negative outcome for individuals and/or the organization
 - Change efforts left people feeling it did more damage than good

3. **Stage in life cycle**
 - Value stability vs thrive on challenge that comes with change

4. **Personality/Temperament**
 - Internal characteristics that make it easier or more difficult for individuals to handle change

5. **Brain science**
 - Learning/doing creates neuropathways (brain connections)
 - Neuropathways strengthened by repetition

6. **Fear of _____**
 -
 -
 -
 -
 -
 -
 -

Key Concept: The more you understand the reasons for resistance to change, the better prepared you will be to respond effectively.

Strategies for Dealing With Positive Resistance

Put yourself in the shoes of the person who is reacting to change efforts with Positive Resistance.

1. What does the Positive Resistor *really* fear?

- Ineffective, unproductive change process (waste of time)
- Poor communication
- Exclusive or top-down decision-making
- Change leaders will be blind to the potential pitfalls of change
- Loss of quality of relationships (process/ product valued over people)
-

2. Strategies for responding:

- Articulate your approach to the change efforts
- Communicate clearly and consistently throughout the change process
- Provide opportunities for input and/or shared decision-making (“People like their own ideas best”)
- Acknowledge and address the potential pitfalls of change
- Demonstrate that you genuinely value people and the work relationships
- Ask open-ended questions to draw out the true source of resistance (“What specifically won’t work?” “What part do you think will be most difficult?”)

3. How would you respond to the resistance in Scenario 1?

Strategies for Dealing With Passive Resistance

Put yourself in the shoes of the person who is reacting to change efforts with Passive Resistance.

1. What does the Passive Resistor *really* fear?

- Being blamed if something goes wrong
- Being shut out by peers who are openly resistant to the change
- Being forced to leave his/her comfort zone
- Being targeted or reprimanded for asking questions or raising concerns (challenging authority)
-

2. Strategies for responding:

- Use the same strategies for responding to the Positive Resistor **and**
- Provide safe, structured opportunities for people to ask questions, raise concerns and provide input (may need to be anonymous or confidential)
- Respond to questions and concerns in a neutral/objective manner
- Break the change process down into stages or steps and ask “What assurances would you need in order to go through this first step? (Obtain commitment to begin the change process.)”

3. How would you respond to the resistance in Scenario 2?

Strategies for Dealing With Negative Resistance

Put yourself in the shoes of the person who is reacting to change efforts with Negative Resistance.

1. What does the Negative Resistor *really* fear?

- Loss of
 - Control
 - Defined role in the organization
 - Power (formal and informal)
 - Ability to determine his/her own rate of productivity
 - Ability to set his/her own “rules”
 - Freedom (loose standards for accountability)
 - Predictability
 - Employment
 - “Ease” of doing his/her job
 -

2. Strategies for responding:

- Use the same strategies for responding to the Positive and Passive Resistors **and**
- Agree with and validate the Negative Resistor’s concerns (acknowledge challenges upfront)
- Maintain focus on the real issue of *how* to implement the change vs debating *whether* to implement the change
- Ask open-ended questions to distinguish between Positive Resistance and Negative Resistance
- Formal discipline may be necessary if Negative Resistance is a pattern and the person is not responsive to your efforts to work through the resistance

3. How would you respond to the resistance in Scenario 3?

Proactively Addressing Resistance to Change

1. Communicate

- Develop a common understanding of the vision, goals and strategies of the organization
- Explain the reasons for change and the approach to the change efforts
- Describe other options that were or are being considered
- Share appropriate information as soon as possible (can be done in stages). Delaying the sharing of information might be done out of a desire to protect people, but it often makes the situation worse because people can make assumptions, spread rumors and build a movement against the change.
- Use multiple methods or channels to establish continuous, 2-way communication about the change efforts (e-mail, meetings, on-line surveys, etc.)

2. Create a sense of urgency

- The costs and risks of not changing need to be *greater than* the perceived risk of changing

3. Balance “inoculation” with “benefits”

- Identify or acknowledge some of the challenges that will be encountered during the change efforts to show that you are not ignoring potential problems or pitfalls.
- Explain the benefits of the change efforts using language that corresponds with people’s types of resistance, learning preferences and communication styles.

4. Build trust all along the way

- Request input early on and allow as much input as possible (or reasonable)
- Seek out people who are receptive to change and get them excited with you so they can help create a ripple effect
- Involve key/strategic partners (may include Negative Resisters who can influence others)

5. Set people up for success

- Establish systems, procedures and tools to support people’s efforts to implement the changes (training, peer support, coaching, newsletters, etc.)

6. Manage the change efforts

- Develop and implement a plan for change
- Collect, analyze and act on feedback

7. Reinforce the change efforts

- Build opportunities for celebrating accomplishments and milestones into the action plan
- Reward the “early adopters”