

Resistance Management Toolkit

Purpose of the toolkit

This document is intended to provide guidance and support to leaders and managers around managing resistance and helping teams manage change. This is in response to the changes that are being implemented as a result of the introduction of the new suite of Construction and Building Services Engineering qualifications.

How to use the toolkit

The first section outlines the potential reasons and sources of resistance, while the second section provides eight steps to apply successful implementation.





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Introduction

The most effective managers of resistance are those who have credibility and respect with the individual who is resisting a change. This means that the leadership are best placed to manage resistance within their respective areas.

Why does resistance happen?

While resistance is the normal human reaction in times of change, good change management can mitigate much of this resistance.

Some centres, teams, and/or individuals may find the introduction of the new qualifications difficult, and as they move into an unknown future state, they may develop feelings of anxiety and stress.

Research on the function of the brain shows that resistance is not only a psychological reaction to change, but also a physiological reaction. When presented with a new way of doing something, the physiological reaction is to revert to what the brain already knows. Human beings can adapt their behaviour, but it is a difficult process, even for the brain itself.

What does resistance look like?

Resistors can be vocal or silent. Two primary types of resistors are:



Vocal Resistor

Sample behaviors

- Actively resist or questions change strategy
 - Does not change behaviors, even after repeated explanation or guidance
 - Communicates obstacles experienced during change
 - Retains an enduring negative reaction to change
 - Publicly voices and spreads negative opinion about change
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- Easy to observe
 - Main characteristic for organisational resistance identification and management

83% of resistors identified by organisations are vocal resistors.



Silent Resistor

Sample behaviors

- Feels negative about change but doesn't express to peers
 - Does not change behaviors, even after repeated explanation or guidance
 - Reacts indifferently or negatively to change but does not speak up to manager or others
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- Hard to observe
 - Not typically considered a behavioural marker of resistance

17% of resistors identified by organisations are silent resistors.



Sources of resistance

When preparing for resistance, it can be worth spending time looking at likely sources. These are some examples of common sources of resistance for most changes:

- staff who are highly invested in the current way of doing work
- people who created the current way of doing work that will be changed
- employees who expect more work as a result of the change
- those who advocated a particular alternative than was decided upon
- people who have been very successful and rewarded in the current way of doing work.

These groups are likely sources of resistance and should be addressed proactively with targeted tactics to reduce the objections. While every organisation has some people who will resist anything new just because it is new, the vast majority of employees who demonstrate a reluctance to get involved have legitimate concerns. The role of leaders and managers is to uncover what those concerns are and come up with targeted countermeasures. People resist change for a wide variety of reasons, ranging from a straightforward intellectual disagreement over facts, to deep-seated psychological prejudices.

For some people resisting change, there may be multiple reasons. Adding to this complexity is the fact that sometimes the stated reason hides the real more deeply personal reason. You will also need to recognise that people work through a psychological change process as they give up the old and come to either embrace or reject the new.

Stages of resistance

Denial



Feelings of anger
and frustration



Acceptance, either
negative or positive

A leader's role is to understand those concerns and take action to either solve or reduce the issue, or demonstrate that the concerns are unfounded.





Eight steps for managing resistance

Resistance happens at an individual level for specific and unique reasons. One employee's perspective on the change may be very different to another employee's, even if they are in the same department. An individual change management model, like awareness, desire, knowledge, ability and reinforcement (ADKAR), gives you a foundation for understanding how one person goes through change and is a tool for understanding why a particular individual is resisting a change.

The following 8 steps will give you some concrete actions to take with your teams.

1. Listen and understand objections

- a critical step any manager should take when creating desire to change is to listen
- in many cases employees simply want to be heard and to voice their objections
- understanding these objections can often provide a clear path towards resolution
- listening can also help managers identify misunderstandings about the change.

2. Focus on the 'what' and let go of the 'how'

- for some types of change, it is effective for managers to let go of the 'how' and simply communicate 'what' needs to change (focus on outcomes)
- this process transfers ownership of the solution to employees.

3. Identify barriers

- to be mindful and understand that barriers may relate to family, personal issues or physical limitations
- fully understand the individual situation with the employee. What may appear to be resistance or objections to the change may be disguised barriers that the employee cannot see past
- determine ways that your centre may be able to address these barriers.



4. Provide simple clear choices and consequences

- building desire is about choice. Managers can facilitate this process by being clear about the choices employees have during change
- communicate in simple and clear terms what the choices and consequences are for each employee
- illustrate 'What's In It For Me' for each employee
- by providing simple and clear choices, you can put the ownership and control back into the hands of employees.

5. Create hope

- many people will respond to the opportunity for a better future
- managers can create desire to change by sharing their passion for change, and by creating excitement and enthusiasm
- people will follow a leader that can create hope and whom they respect and trust.

6. Show the benefits in a real and tangible way

For some employees seeing is believing, so demonstrate the benefits of change in a real and tangible way:

- share case studies of how others have managed a similar challenge
- invite guests to provide personal testimonials of how they've overcome challenges
- visibly demonstrate successes.





7. Make a personal appeal

A personal appeal works best with honest, open relationships where there is a high degree of trust and respect. A personal appeal may sound like:

- “I believe in this change”
- “it is important to me”
- “I would like your support”
- “you would be supporting the college/our department in making this change work.”

8. Convert the strongest dissenters

- managers can use special interventions to convert strong and vocal dissenters
- the strongest dissenters can become your strongest advocates
- they are often equally vocal in their support as they were in their resistance.



What not to do when managing resistance

Resistance to change is normal and should be actively managed. In order to manage resistance effectively in your areas try to avoid the following:

- fight employee resistance
- try to get employees to “like” the changes; focus on acceptance
- take it personally
- avoid the employees who have questions, even if you do not have the answer
- expect to have all of the answers all of the time
- avoid giving unwelcome news
- ignore, avoid, or hope that the resistance will go away
- leave employee communication solely to the senior leadership team.



Resistance management plan

This is an example template to help plan your resistance management.

Determine the nature of the resistance you will encounter and develop a strategy to eliminate or lessen the resistance

List members of the group of stakeholders

List their individual and group reasons for resisting the change initiative

Note level of resistance
(High, Medium, Low)

Write down your strategy for dealing with the resistance.

Plan and note WHO will implement and HOW