



Managing Yourself Through Change

The Components of Change

We are all impacted by change. Some of them we accept easily, others, not-so-much. But, even if it isn't a change you are excited about, you can make the whole process better for yourself by understanding the components of change and coming up with a process for dealing with change that works well for you. One of the most overlooked components of change is the fact that it is very personal. Not only is each change unique. The way each person reacts to each change is unique.

Every change is made up of the same components. By understanding these components you gain a better understanding of the reactions you have to change, and you can use that insight to help yourself get through changes with as little stress as possible. Also, the better you are at adopting change, the more successful you will be in your career because companies reward people who are able to accept change. Companies know that they must change to stay competitive in their industry. Companies that don't embrace change are left behind, and employees need to be able to adopt to change if the company is going to be successful. After all, companies are simply a collection of individuals working toward the same goal.

The 5 Components of Change

1. **Awareness**—in order for anyone to accept a change, they have to know that a change is expected of them. This is the only component of change that is out of your control. Somebody else has to tell you that the change is coming.
2. **Desire**—how willing are you to accept the change? Every person has their own desire to accept any given change. This means that a single change communicated to a group of people will automatically have different responses by each person in the group. Some will adopt it easily, some will resist. The important thing to remember is that the desire to adopt the change may or may not have anything to do with the change itself.

For example: your company is rolling out a new software system. Your response is to resist this system because you feel that it is an attempt by your leadership team to micromanage you. When we pull back the layers, we find that you used to work for a micromanager who implemented a software system in order to have more visibility to the things you were accomplishing. As a result, in your mind, you have connected micromanagement with a new software system. The reality is, the manager you had was the micromanager....not the software.

3. Knowledge—This is what most people think of when they think of change management. Giving the people who need to make a change the information necessary to make the change. It typically takes the form of training. Your responsibility in this component of change is to make sure you are giving it the attention it deserves. If training is provided, you need to take responsibility to attend it and pay attention. This isn't always easy because we are all busy. But, your role is to make sure you make the time necessary to get the knowledge you need in order to adopt the change. Without this knowledge, you can't be successful.
4. Ability—Once you've had the training, you will be expected to start putting it into practice. Anytime we encounter a change, it knocks us off our routine, which means that we are likely to take a hit to our productivity. Your responsibility during the Ability part of change is to recognize that you will likely take a productivity hit, and make whatever adjustments are necessary to accommodate the change. It may be a mental adjustment—giving yourself permission to be frustrated, but knowing that it will eventually pass as the change becomes your new routine. It may also be a physical adjustment—recognizing that something is going to take more time than it used to because you are having to learn a new process or routine, and building in extra time to get things done. You also have responsibility to go after answers to questions that come up that weren't addressed as part of the training.
5. Reinforcement—A change is only successful if it sticks. Reinforcement covers the activities that ensure that the change gets adopted and becomes the new norm. As you start to adapt to the change, you need to notice if you are adopting it. If not, you need to figure out what is keeping that from happening and address it.

Recommended Resources:

Who Moved My Cheese— Spencer Johnson

The Power of Habit—Charles Duhigg

Prosci—the leading organization on Change Management (www.Prosci.com)