



SUPPORTING THE CHANGE JOURNEY

Part 1: Stages of Change

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Introduction

Let's face it. Change can be uncomfortable—even when it's the right thing for your nonprofit organization. And there can be a lot at stake. Volunteers and employees who are uncomfortable with the changes you have in mind may resist, sabotage, or disengage from the organization.

Like other things in life, people go through stages to adopt new ways of doing things. You will need to provide adequate time for volunteers and employees to make changes in their work routines. Knowing where people are before and after each stage in the change process can also help you support your employees and volunteers in navigating the journey. Feel free to refer to this [companion infographic](#) if you wish.

1. Awareness

Change begins with employees and volunteers being aware of potential changes to their jobs and the organization that you're planning to make. As this stage begins, these potential adopters have little or no information about the change, no opinions about it, and are passive about the changes you have in mind.

Awareness begins by providing information about the changes that are coming—how they will benefit your employees and volunteers, the organization, and the community you serve. With this stage complete, employees and volunteers will understand the nature of the change, why it is necessary, and the risks of not making the change.

2. Desire

With adequate information from the awareness stage, employees and volunteers start to contemplate the change. They begin to have personal concerns about the change, start forming their own opinions about it, and ask questions about how the change will affect them.

With their concerns addressed, questions answered, and opinions formed, employees and volunteers desire to try out the change.

3. Tryout

Given their desire, employees and volunteers move on to try out the change. These tryouts begin with participants imagining the change in their minds and then trying it out in their training. In the mental tryout, they envision how their jobs and the larger organization will be with the change in place. During this time, their concerns and questions become more task-focused.

Having seen the change in their heads, participants are ready to learn how they can use the change on the job. This is where training comes into play, and participants gain the knowledge and skills they need.

4. Adoption

Moving into the adoption stage, the change is no longer just a future concept, but a present expectation. Your employees and volunteers understand the change is here to stay, and they are expected to integrate it into their work routines. They are on board and accepting this shift.

Nonetheless, this stage still involves participants asking detailed questions relevant to using the change. Participants may also offer suggestions for improvement, contributing to the refinement of your change process. By the end of this stage, the change should be seamlessly integrated into their work routines.

5. Reinforcement

Implementing the change is only half the battle. Reinforcement is a critical key to long-term success. During this stage, employees and volunteers receive feedback that reinforces their continued use of the change.

Your employees and volunteers will also become accountable for the change. They see the consequences and outcomes of using the change. By quickly resolving any emerging barriers, your employees and volunteers don't just use the change--they sustain it.

Conclusion

While change can appear to be a simple set of physical tasks, there is a lot more to the mental journey for those affected by the change. It begins with becoming aware of what the change is and what the benefits are before people desire to learn more about how it affects them. Participants then start testing out the change mentally and physically until the change is implemented, accepted, and completely integrated into their daily practices.

Now that you are more familiar with the stages, the next part of this series will describe the questions that volunteers and employees will ask and tactics that you can use to help them move through the change journey.

References

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For more information, visit the [Process Management Lab](#).