



CHANGE MANAGEMENT

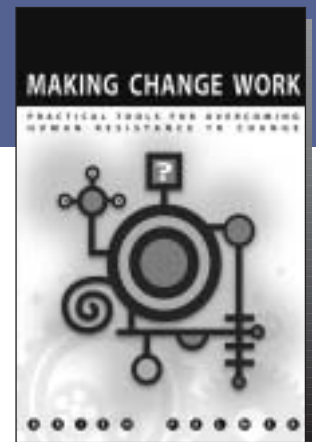
Overcoming Resistance To Change

by **Brien Palmer**

Executives, managers, project sponsors, project leaders, team leaders and team members trying to improve their organizations will face predictable resistance from those who will be affected by the change.

Unfortunately, this tendency—the lack of

This article is adapted from *Making Change Work: Practical Tools for Overcoming Human Resistance to Change* by Brien Palmer, which was published earlier this year by ASQ Quality Press, <http://qualitypress.asq.org>, item #H1202.



In 50 Words Or Less

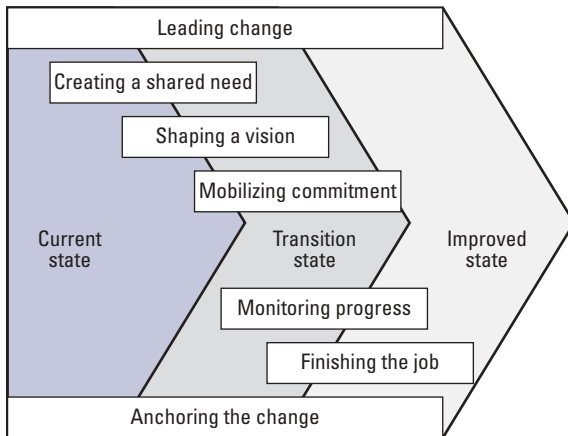
- **Changes that fail usually do so because of human, not technical, reasons.**
- **First assess your organization's capacity for a particular change.**
- **Overcome resistance with a seven-element change model.**

acceptance of change by the people affected—often causes a project to fail, even if the desired change is perfectly logical and necessary. In fact, changes that fail usually do so because of human rather than technical reasons—because the promoters of the change did not attend to the healthy, real and predictable reactions of normal people to disturbances in their routines.

Measuring Readiness

The price of a failed change is widespread loss of credibility of the noble objective you were trying to achieve. That price is too high. Change should, therefore, not be attempted until your organization's readiness to change has been measured. This

FIGURE 1 Change Model



article provides two methods to gauge your organization's readiness for change. The first method focuses on whether the organization can be reasonably expected to absorb more changes of any kind, the second on the particular change in question and whether the organization is adequately prepared for it.

Evaluations of readiness are best done as an improvement team effort. You might invite your sponsor or champion as well unless you feel his or her presence could hinder the open exchange of ideas.

Can your organization absorb any more change efforts? The ability of any organization to assimilate change is finite. No matter how worthy, your project will not succeed if your organization faces too many other changes. Picture a sponge filled to capacity—it will not hold more water until some capacity opens up.

In general, you should not undertake any project unless it has at least an 85% reasonable chance of success. In management consulting circles, for example, there is a general reluctance to accept an engagement that has a likelihood of failure. In fact, many consultants consider it unethical to accept a project like this.

Determine whether your organization has a more than 50% chance of having the capacity to make this change without becoming overwhelmed.

FIGURE 2 Change Model Elements

1. Leading change

The change effort has a champion who sponsors the change, provides adequate resources, develops management support and supports the goal with words and deeds.

2. Creating a shared need

The reason for a change, whether driven by threat or opportunity, is instilled within the organization and widely shared through data, demonstration, demand or diagnosis. The need for change must exceed resistance to it.

3. Shaping a vision

The desired outcome of change is clear, legitimate, widely understood and shared.

4. Mobilizing commitment

There is a strong commitment from key constituents to invest in the change, make it work, and demand and receive management attention.

5. Monitoring progress

Progress is real. Benchmarks are set and realized. Indicators are established to guarantee accountability.

6. Finishing the job

Once change is started, it endures and flourishes. Necessary learning and skills are transferred throughout the organization.

7. Anchoring the change in systems and structures

Appropriate management systems, such as IT, performance reviews and audits, are used to reinforce and anchor the change.

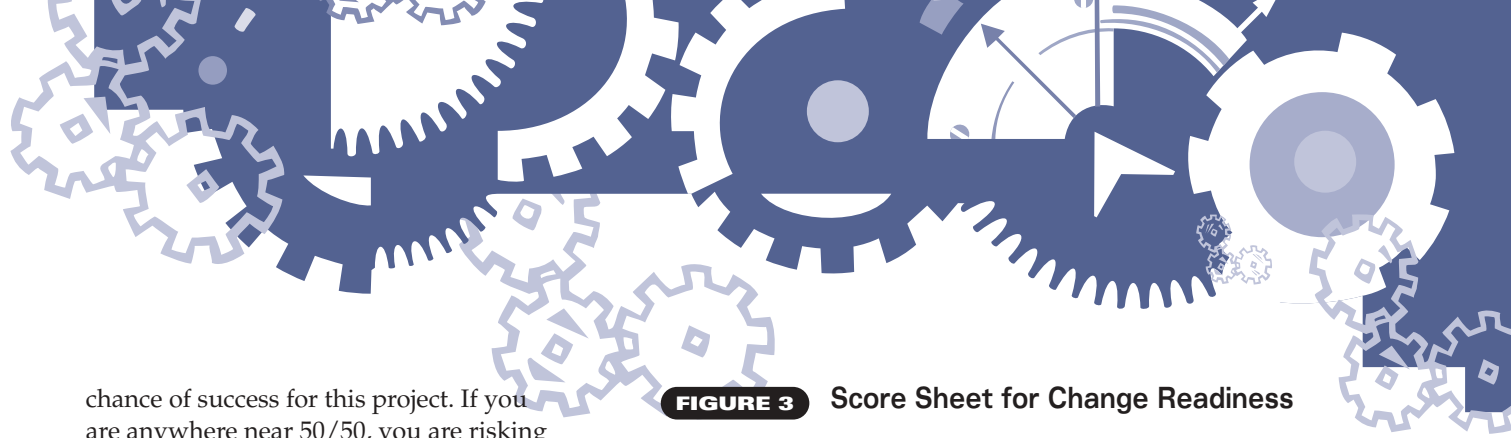
1. Leading change

7. Anchoring the change

To do so:

- List all the major activities that are ongoing and will compete for manpower, money and attention.
- Estimate the level of effort (small, medium or large) each project will take.
- Estimate the level of effort required by this current project.
- Consider the current load of the organization. Most organizations run lean, so they already have limited time to address any additional efforts.

Hold a dialogue with the improvement team members, and use good judgment to estimate the



chance of success for this project. If you are anywhere near 50/50, you are risking too much. In all likelihood, your estimate is already too optimistic because your team is probably already emotionally invested in the improvement to some degree.

If you do not see a reasonably high chance for success—say 85%—you should defer the work until more favorable times. Better to have a successful project at a future date than a stressful and unsuccessful one now.

How prepared is your organization for this particular change? Next, we move beyond your organization’s ability to absorb more change in general and examine its readiness for the project in question.

Ask each team member to consider the current project and rate your readiness with respect to each category in the change model in Figures 1 and 2. Discuss each element briefly so team members all have a good understanding of what they are rating.

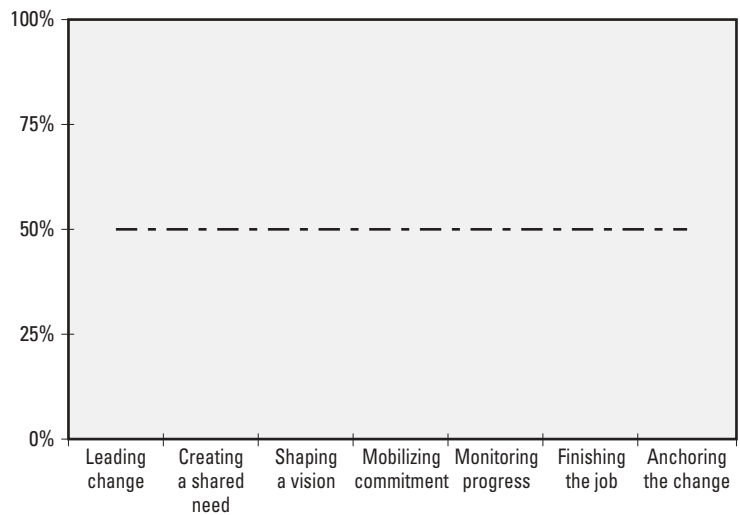
Scoring Matrix

Use the matrix in Figure 3 as guidance on how to determine a score of 0 to 100 within each category. Don’t worry too much about the precision of the numeric scores—this tool is designed to stimulate a dialogue about your readiness. Whether you rate something a 60 or a 62.35 is not nearly as important as whether your team collectively agrees you are prepared (or unprepared) in a particular area.

When team members are finished, ask for their scores. The facilitator should sketch Figure 3’s graph on a whiteboard or flipchart and ask each team member to give his or her result in turn. (Discourage discussion until all the scores are recorded so people don’t feel pressured to change their scores.)

Taking one topic at a time, consider scores that vary by 20 points or more. Ask team members why they scored the category as they did. Support professional differences of opinion—a team with 100% agreement is not healthy. Talk until you reach consensus on a composite score. Record this consensus score, and go on to the next topic.

FIGURE 3 Score Sheet for Change Readiness



The Two Out of Three Rule

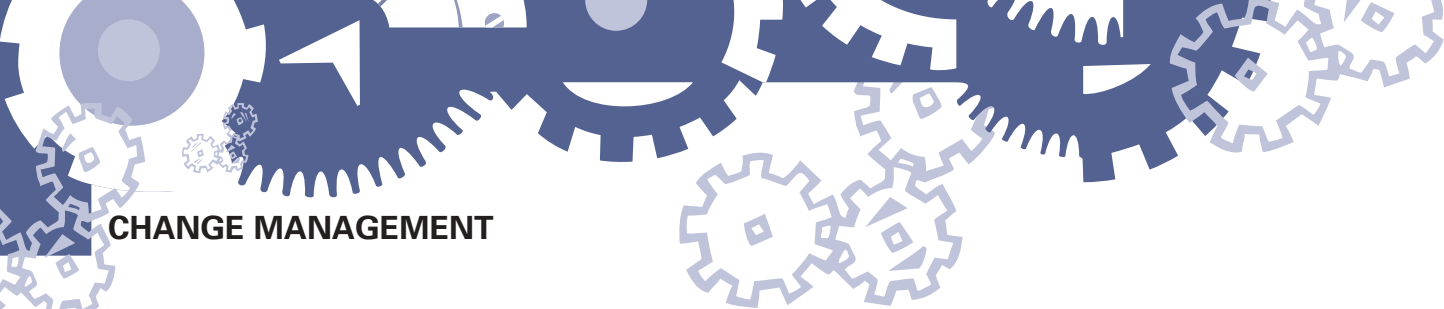
For successful initiation of a project, two of the first three categories must exceed 50%. Mobilizing commitment must always be more than 50%. If any category is below 50% by group consensus, either take the appropriate actions or defer your project.

For example, suppose your team scored a 25 on creating a shared need, because most of the organization does not currently understand the need for the change in question. You will either need to take some actions (such as holding focus group meetings, writing newsletter articles or having managers discuss the need during staff meetings) or reconsider the logic behind the project (maybe the organization as a whole will never support it). In either case, you will be able to make an informed decision on how to proceed.

Later in the project, two of the last three categories also must exceed 50%, but they do not always need a more than 50% rating at the beginning. This can be developed later.

Assess Your Results

Take an honest look at the results of both of these reviews: the capacity of your organization to accept more change and its current readiness to make the change in question. If you don’t pass



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both reviews, don't start. Your project is likely to fail. You are much better off deferring the project until conditions are right (see Table 1). It is better to have a later success than an early failure.

If you are part of a project facing poor organizational readiness, bring your sponsor into the dialogue. Discuss your team's concerns and predict the risks of moving forward in the current environment. Ask the sponsor if he or she is willing to incur these risks. Ask about the timing of the project. Explore alternative ways to mitigate the risks noted.

This may take some courage in the early stages of a project, but this is the mark of a good leader. Better to raise concerns early than discover them after considerable time and money have been invested.

On the other hand, if your team is convinced you are ready, you have a very good indication of where to focus your attention as the project proceeds. At this point, you will already be ahead of most projects in most companies with respect to the human aspects of change. Keep it up, and you

will be making a major contribution to your project and your organization.

A Model for Overcoming Resistance

The framework depicted in Figure 1 is a change model—a context within which the specific tools and activities take place. As you can see from the center of the diagram, all changes move from the current state through a transition phase into the desired improvement state.

In the beginning, it is important to create or affirm a broadly understood need for the change along with an idea of what the outcome will look like (shaping a vision). As the change effort gets under way and throughout it until the end, the change effort must always have a sufficient amount of resources dedicated to it (mobilizing commitment). As steps are completed, you must have a way to track them (monitoring progress) and ensure the effort reaches completion (finishing the job).

From the very beginning until the end, the change effort must have the backing of management and leadership from an accountable person or people (leading change). Likewise, at all stages you must ensure the change will fit into the environment, including the organizational structure, the business culture and the work processes.

For example, if you are automating a paper based system, you must ensure the users will not simply keep using the old paper system. You need to address areas such as workflow changes, training and education, rewards and recognition, and transition planning so the new system will be aligned with the work environment.

When You Omit a Piece

For the highest assurance a particular change will succeed, all the elements in Figure 2 should be in place. If one area is weak, this does not necessarily portend disaster but does present a real risk. If you

TABLE 1 Change Readiness Determination Guidelines

Category	~10%	~50%	~90%
Leading change	Nobody is in charge.	Leader is pretty clear; management commitment is clear in some areas.	Clear sponsor, clear management commitment, no doubt.
Creating a shared need	Most people are happy the way things are.	Many people think we need a change.	Everybody knows we need a change.
Shaping a vision	What vision?	Some consensus on what is needed, but some apathy.	Everybody knows the needed outcome.
Mobilizing commitment	Joe might help someone.	We have some resources dedicated but will need more to finish.	We have all the needed dedicated resources.
Monitoring progress	Everybody has his or her own opinion. That's it.	We measure some things but also go by gut feeling sometimes.	We have clear metrics for every activity we are doing.
Finishing the job	Looks like a dump and run.	We've made some plans but have a way to go.	We're ready: pilot run, training, recognition and so on.
Anchoring the change	Why do we have to do anything?	We started talking about this but haven't really finished.	We know exactly what to adjust to embed this change.

- denotes approximation.



FIGURE 4 Potential Consequences

							When you leave out a piece . . .
Leading change	Creating a shared need	Shaping a vision	Mobilizing commitment	Monitoring progress	Finishing the job	Anchoring the change	change is slow, lacks attention and resources.
Leading change	Creating a shared need	Shaping a vision	Mobilizing commitment	Monitoring progress	Finishing the job	Anchoring the change	change has a low priority, receives no attention and starts then stops.
Leading change	Creating a shared need	Shaping a vision	Mobilizing commitment	Monitoring progress	Finishing the job	Anchoring the change	change gets off to a fast start that fizzles; there's no clear direction.
Leading change	Creating a shared need	Shaping a vision	Mobilizing commitment	Monitoring progress	Finishing the job	Anchoring the change	nobody owns the baby; the project is not sustainable.
Leading change	Creating a shared need	Shaping a vision	Mobilizing commitment	Monitoring progress	Finishing the job	Anchoring the change	there's no chance for feedback and improvement.
Leading change	Creating a shared need	Shaping a vision	Mobilizing commitment	Monitoring progress	Finishing the job	Anchoring the change	cynicism, nay-saying and a "fad of the month" attitude abound.
Leading change	Creating a shared need	Shaping a vision	Mobilizing commitment	Monitoring progress	Finishing the job	Anchoring the change	mixed signals, anxiety and frustration increase.

choose to take a risk, do so in light of the potential consequences, which are illustrated in Figure 4.

One manufacturer, for example, attempted to replace several disjointed software systems with one integrated enterprise resource planning (ERP) system.

Because of poor project management, the user community was insufficiently involved in the planning stages, and the project failed dramatically. Opponents then said, "Told you so! We just can't do ERP in our business."

In fact, having an ERP was a great idea. The project failed because of poor change management practices. It took years for the organization to recover and install an ERP successfully.

People don't resist change as much as they resist being changed. So your job, as an agent of change, is to explain why the affected people should want to change. Convey the same understanding and enthusiasm you and your team have. Cultivate readiness, not resistance.

BRIEN PALMER is managing principal of Interlink Management Consulting in Export, PA. He co-founded and serves on the board of the Council on Realizing Excellence in Management (<http://www.CoREM.org>), a nonprofit that promotes leadership excellence. Palmer earned bachelor's degrees in philosophy and geology from Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, OH. A member of ASQ, he serves on the board of directors of the Pittsburgh Section and is an ASQ certified quality auditor.

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