

6 Steps for Navigating Constant Change in the Workplace

written by vickyp | September 11, 2013



Like it or not, change within your workplace is constant. The nature of the change may not be known to you at any given moment, but you can be sure change is on the way. This does not mean all change is effective as a means to an end, or is even necessary at all. However, your ability to adjust and adapt to change is an important 21st century job skill.

An important first step in navigating change is to be aware of its impact on your emotions. You need to be able to check in with yourself and control your emotional reaction to change. Frequently stop and consider your thoughts and feelings. Deal with your personal stage in the process of change that is occurring around you.

Stages of emotional adjustment to change

1. Shock and surprise – Step back and take time to process information before reacting to it.
2. Denial and confusion – Identify and ask specific questions about the process. Be prepared that you may not like or agree with what you hear.
3. Anger and frustration – Avoid public negativity. Clarify where your frustration belongs. Understand your feelings are normal. Be prepared to walk away and regain your composure when necessary.
4. Depression and resistance – Be active and reach out to other people. Focus on what is under your control to change.
5. Bargaining – Maintain objectivity and identify your key priorities.
6. Agreement – Clarify the role you will play before, during and after the process of change.
7. Moving forward – Take proactive steps to manage the process of change by looking forward at what you can do and not looking back at what may have been lost.

Change is a process. During the process of change you can take actions that enable you to gain control and move forward.

6 steps for navigating change in the workplace

1. **Embrace the idea of ongoing change** – your mindset is the key to adjusting to change. If you consider the value of change and are looking forward, you position yourself to grow.
2. **Listen and stay informed** – understand what the change is and why. After doing this, identify your goals and expected outcomes.
3. **Identify how you will be impacted by change** – keep your eyes and ears open for further changes. Conduct a personal SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats).
4. **Develop a plan and set goals for addressing change** – this may include educating yourself and developing new skills and relationships. Step back and re-evaluate the change process frequently.
5. **Keep open lines of communication with others:** Ask questions and check in with others impacted by the changes. As change occurs there will be periods of adjustment. Sometimes you will make mistakes and head in the wrong direction. Do not let this throw you off to the entire process of change.
6. **Believe you can succeed during** – Even if you have to ‘fake it’ until you believe it, your attitude is a significant contributor to your ability to succeed. Your fears will hold you back. Let them go. Demonstrate a willingness to be open to the change process.

Those who embrace change and focus on their ability to successfully navigate change fare the best. Adjusting to change includes being aware of your thoughts, emotions and actions and moving forward one step at a time.