Surviving and thriving through organisational change

Dr Rona Hart
Research Fellow
MAPP – MSc Positive Psychology Programme
School of Psychology
University of East London
Organisational change
Outline

• Introduction to organisational change.
• Part 1: The organisation’s perspective:
  • Why organisations change
  • Kotter’s models of organisational change and change failure
• Part 2: The employees’ perspective:
  • Employees’ experiences of change and responses to change.
  • Bridges’ model of change
Part 3: The psychological perspective:

How to make change kinder for employees.

The workshop will therefore look at organisational change from both the perspective of the organisation and the perspective of employees.

The workshop includes several exercises.
About me

- Positive Psychology Practitioner providing group and individual counseling.
- Degree in counseling and group therapy.
- Research Fellow at MAPP, School of Psychology, UEL.
- MBSR / MBCT trainer.
- Began to explore change in the context of cross cultural moves - international relocation / immigration / expatriation.
Interest was provoked as a result of personal experience (9 international moves, 24 house moves) and my PhD study (educational choices of immigrants).

Currently working on interventions to facilitate coping, resilience and posttraumatic growth in cancer survivors.

Therefore applying change management theories and strategies to facilitate illness adjustment.
About me

- You may be wondering how Positive Psychology is related to organisational change.
- There is a section within Positive Psychology called Positive Organisational Scholarship, which applies ideas of Positive Psychology to the workplace and group settings.
In the past decade we’ve been hearing phrases like these quite often:

“Change has become a constant feature in organisations”.

“Organisations have to continually change in order to survive.”

“We live in a fast changing environment. Organisations must adapt to the pace of change in their markets”.

“Those who do not progress – regress”.

“Organisational changes are now occurring at a faster pace and more often than they did in the past”.

“We can expect more changes in the future”.

**Organisational change**
Organisational change

- Do these phrases resonate with your experience?
- Can you say – yes, these phrases reflect reality in my organisation? Or maybe not?
Types of organisational changes

- Let’s do a similar assessment for your organisations.
- Exercise 1 has a list of organisational changes.
- Circle each type of organisational change that you have experienced in your organisation, in the past year, and write how many times each type of change occurred in your organisation.
- If you are a student or were not employed last year choose any other organisation that you are familiar with for this exercise.
Types of organisational changes

- Now I’d like you to go straight to exercise 2 to discuss the changes that you have seen in your organisation.
- Do the exercise in pairs please.
Types of organisational changes
Exercises 1+2

- What did you learn from these exercises?
We can see that there is some truth in the phrases we’ve seen before: change are introduced quite frequently into organisations, and we can certainly expect to experience even more changes in the future.

But WHY?

Why do organisations change? Or why do they need to change?
Why do organisations change

• Look at the changes that you have listed in exercise 1 and 2 and consider the WHY question:
• Why were these changes introduced?
Why organisations introduce changes

- Organisations often react to changes that occur in their external environments, and to market demands.
- **Strategic drift**: when an organisation keeps to its old strategies while the environment changes.
- The organisation is likely to *drift apart* from its market and is at risk of becoming irrelevant to its clients.
- **Examples**: old fashioned medical doctor. Clients apply pressure on professionals to change.
Why organisations introduce changes

Changes in the environment

- Customer behaviour
- Competition
- Regulations and policies
- Economics
- Politics
- Technology

Strategic renewal

- New product or services
- New markets
- New business models
- New modes of operation

Organisational change

- Goals
- Tasks
- Processes
- Structures
- Policies
- Roles
Why organisations introduce changes

- Organisational change is therefore often introduced out of the need to adapt to external demands.
- Such changes are essential for the survival of the organisation.
- They bring new risks, and are often difficult to execute, but they also create new opportunities and inspire innovation.
Why organisations introduce changes

- Obviously, not all organisational changes occur in response to external demands or changes in the environment.
- Some occur as a result of internal demands, circumstances or innovations.
- Leading companies continually produce new products and innovate, therefore constantly creating internal changes.
- They often prompt changes in other organisations.
The most common goals of organisational change are therefore to prevent strategic drift, and ensure survival,

Or to improve profits/costs, productivity or efficiency.
Organisational change

- Change generates instability and uncertainty across the organisation which interferes with its day to day functioning, and lowers productivity.
- This is because employees’ energy and time is devoted to figuring out the change, thus leaving less time and energy to do their usual work.
- Some changes directly disrupt work routines and temporarily lower productivity.
- Change often creates a ripple effect - unanticipated changes or problems that staff have to deal with.
Organisational change

• But, change also creates new opportunities.
• It provides a platform for innovation, creativity, improvements and new solutions to emerge.
• Obviously, when it is successful and people adapt well – it will achieve its goals.
One of the paradoxes of organisational change is that in order to achieve the goals of improving profits, productivity or efficiency – organisations have to undergo a process that is likely to temporarily lower productivity, efficiency and profits!

The important word here is – temporarily: if the change takes too long – the costs of poor productivity, efficiency and profits could be detrimental.
Organisational change

- So organisations have to **balance out the benefits** they expect to see at the end of the change process – with the **short term disruptions** that it will cause.
- And this explains why organisations are trying to make the process of change as quick as possible.

- But this leads to another problem: **change failure!**
- **Quick change** = not giving people enough time to think it through, to “digest” the change, acquire the learning that is needed or to implement it properly => **high risk of failure.**
Kotter (1995; 2012) argued that organisational change is immensely difficult to implement. He found that 70% of all organisational changes fail to achieve their objectives!
What is change failure?

Failure is:
- When a change initiative is not implemented at all.
- Example: NHS scanners.
- When a change is highly disruptive to the organisation resulting in very poor productivity.
- When the change is much more expensive than expected.
Organisational change – success and failure

- When a change is much slower than expected.
- When the end result does not deliver the desired goals.
- When the change is followed by loss of staff and expertise that are hard to replace.
- When the ripple effects produce too many problems or chaos.
- All these can lead to loss of clientele or market share, loss of reputation or public confidence, poor performance and low profits.
Organisational change – success and failure

- Kotter’s (1995) conclusion:

- Organisational change is needed as the survival of the organisation may depend on it.
- But it is **VERY RISKY**!
- Failure is more likely than success, and the cost of failure can be very high.
Organisational change – why it fails

- Kotter (1995) conducted an analysis as to why organisational changes fail.
- These are the most common factors that he identified, that can cause failure:
  - A lack of PLAN to guide the change.
  - Failure to define clear rationale for the change.
  - Inconsistent communication (which makes it difficult to get others to cooperate).
  - Ignoring the organisational culture (and the possibility of mismatch and employees’ resistance).
Organisational change – why it fails

- Weak implementation and follow-through by those involved (can be a result of poor buy-in and employee resistance).
- Not investing enough resources (time, money, etc) in the change.
- Gaps in change agents’ knowledge or skills (change agents are those leading the change).
- Fear of feedback which leads to lack of knowledge how the change is being implemented, and inability to spot and deal with problems.
- Declaring success too early which causes people to reduce their effort and investment.
- Neglecting to reinforce the change.
Kotter (1999; 2012) created an eight-step plan for implementing successful changes:

- Establish a sense of **urgency** by creating a compelling reason for why change is needed and what is at stake if change does not happen.
- Get people involved in a discussion about the required changes and generate a consensus that change is needed (75% buy in).
- Form a **coalition** (5-8 people) with respected leaders from different departments, and enough power to lead the change.
Organisational change – strategies for success

• Create a **new vision** to direct the change and strategies for achieving the vision. It needs to show a clear picture of what the future will look like, and how to implement the change.

• **Communicate the vision** throughout the organisation to ensure buy-in and reduce resistance. Discuss openly and address people’s concerns and anxieties. Lead by example: communicate the vision through behaviours and actions.
Organisational change – strategies for success

• **Empower** others to act, remove barriers to change implementation and encourage creative problem solving.

Given that employees can pose major obstacles to change, it is important to involve those who support the change and empower them to act as change agents. At the same time it is important to identify people who resist, and help them buy in.
Organisational change – strategies for success

• Generate and reward short-term wins to maintain staff motivation and performance.

Look for small steps that can be implemented with few resources and little criticism and apply them first. Reward those involved in achieving these targets.
Organisational change – strategies for success

• Consolidate wins and improvements, assess progress, and make adjustments and new changes. After every step evaluation is essential. Set new goals to continue momentum, and learn from success and from mistakes.

• Reinforce the changes by anchoring the change in organisation’s culture.

Continue to discuss the change vision, its progress and success. Recognise members for their contributions. Develop a culture of continuous change.
Organisational change – strategies for success

• Kotter noted that each of these steps are essential for success and it is important not to skip any step.
• He also argued that change requires considerable time. Speedy changes rarely produced satisfactory outcomes.
However, he also emphasised that there is no recipe for successful change!

Change is dependent on the people involved and on the organisational context.

Therefore his plan should be adapted and be tailored to fit a particular organisational setting and circumstances.

In the next exercise we’ll try to implement Kotter’s models to a real organisational change situation.
Beyond Kotter’s model:

Two models of change: planned vs. improvisational change (Orlikowski & Hofman, 1997).

Planned change: when the change goal is agreed and the strategy is planned from the beginning to its end, and much time is spent on planning each and every step.

This model can be described as “think your way into action”.

Models of organisational Change
Models of organisational Change

- **Improvisational change**: when the change strategy is to agree on the goal, and then take the first step, and plan the next step and make decisions as you go.
- This model allows the organisation to take advantage of opportunities that occur along the way.
- This model can be described as “act your way into thinking”.
Models of organisational Change

- In today’s fast changing environments, we need both models, but more often need to apply improvisational changes.
Models of organisational Change

- The planned change model is more suitable when the change is anticipated, when the organisational context is fairly stable, and highly structured.

- It also requires having good quality information, being able to foresee all interdependencies that can cause ripple effects, having good cooperation from employees, and time and other resources are accessible and available.
Models of organisational Change

- The planned change model is not very useful in conditions where there is a less structured environment, when there is a need to react quickly, or when organisational changes occur frequently or simultaneously, when information is incomplete, when there is high interdependency, when employees resist, or when resources are scarce.
Models of organisational Change

- The improvisational change model is more suitable in such situations.
- It can be implemented when the change is anticipated as well as in times when it is not: when it emerges as an opportunity or when the change is introduced in reaction to environmental changes.
- It is opportunity based, so at each point conditions are assessed and action is taken accordingly.
Models of organisational Change

- The planned change model is more popular, despite the fact that it may not be suitable in many cases.
- It is more popular since people feel safer to carry out change when they know they thought it through, and when they feel more in control.
- The improvisational change is perceived as more risky, less controlled and more chaotic.
Organisational change

- End of part 1: The organisation’s perspective:
- Types of organisational changes.
- Why organisations change.
- Kotter’s model of organisational change.
- Kotter’s model of change failure.
- Planned vs. improvised change.

- Questions?

- Part 2: Organisational change from employees’ perspective
When we looked into organisational change from the organisation’s perspective, we saw that the need to change is (in most cases) a *matter of survival*, and that change is very *common*.

We also learned that most changes are *difficult* to implement, are likely to be *disruptive* to the organisation, and *risky* – since the chances of failure are high.

Because of all these reasons – the survivalist need to change, the frequency of changes, the disruption change causes and the risks involved - we need to learn how to navigate the currents of change successfully.
The first step in managing organisational change successfully – is to get employees to cooperate.

In order to gain employees’ cooperation it is important to be able to see the change from employees’ point of view, to understand how they are experiencing it, and to try and implement it in a way that will make the process kinder to them.
It is also important to understand that organisational change leads to personal change that each person experiences differently, depending on their personality, past experience with change, and current circumstances.

These are the points that I shall cover next:

How employees experience change, what process they are undergoing, and what can you expect during change periods.
So let's look firstly at how employees experience organisational change (exercise 4).
The questions in exercise 4 are very useful if you are a therapist working with people who are experiencing change.

My own experience when working with people who are struggling to adapt to change, is that they are very immersed in their own negative attributions and emotions, and rarely ask themselves all these concrete questions, which can give them a more realistic view of what’s going on and reduce their stress.

Example: Client complaining about how his organisation informed them of new change.
Organisational Change: why Employees react

• Organisational change disrupts on-going conditions and routines, which employees have gotten used to:
  • It interrupts employees’ work habits and routines.
  • It challenges the status quo (power relations, norms, agreements).
• Change is risky and therefore when people undergo change they face the unknown, and the uncertainty that comes with it.
Organisational Change: why Employees react

• Change disturbs the peace, order, security and stability that a person created in his or her work, often creating chaos that people find it difficult to cope with.

• It might require a person to set new goals, re-think strategies and re-prioritise. These are key aspects of work that change the meaning of work for a person.

• There is always a learning process in change. Unlearning may be required.
Organisational Change: why Employees react

• Change can shake a person’s self-efficacy and confidence, especially if standards and required outputs have changed.
• Control is extremely important for psychological wellbeing. Change often seems chaotic and may render people the feeling that they have lost control.
• Having to adapt – physically, cognitively, behaviourally and psychologically is time and energy consuming and can be psychologically draining.

• These are aspects of change that employees are reacting to.
Organisational Change: Employees’ perspectives

- Now let's look at employees’ psychological responses to organisational change: their thinking (sense making processes), their emotions and their behaviours (exercise 5).
Organisational Change: Employees’ responses

- What did you observe?
- What are people communicating to each other through their words, by expressing emotions verbally or non verbally, and through their behaviours?
In conclusion:

- Employees react to change and communicate their thoughts about the change through their words, through displays of emotions, and through their behaviours.
Employees’ responses to change

- The literature highlights two common employee reactions:
  - Stress
  - Resistance to change
Stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)

- **Stress:**
- The transactional model of coping with stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) sees stress as an equation where on one side there are challenges and demands, and on the other side of the equation are a person’s resources that can be used to deal with the challenge of the demand.
- According to the model, when the demands that a person faces are greater than the resources that he has (or thinks he has), then the person is likely to experience stress.
- I will later discuss how to reduce employees’ stress.
Stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)

Situation or event (change)

Primary appraisal: is this a threat?

Perceived threat

Secondary appraisal: Can I cope?

No threat perceived

No stress

High levels of stress

Challenged Mild stress

No

YES

NO
Behavioural responses to changes

- **Resistance:**
  - When people do not cooperate with the change efforts or reject it.
  - Resistance can vary between no cooperation to some cooperation, and whether it is overt or covert.

- **Overt resistance:** not engaging with the change, criticising, complaining, walking out, etc.

- **Covert resistance:** loss of employee motivation and commitment. Covert behaviours: absenteeism, sloppy work, slow work, etc.
Employees’ responses to change

Several points to take away and additional notes:

- People react to change in different ways (verbally, emotionally or behaviourally).
- When the change is undesired, forced or feared - reactions are likely to be negative.
- Even when a desired change is introduced – some reactions are likely to be negative!
- It is important to understand that these reactions are very normal and can be expected.
Employees’ responses to change

- In times of change, people tend to become stressed, experience confusion and fear, and thus react with resistance.
- Furthermore, most people find it difficult to cope with change, or manage change effectively, and find it difficult to learn and adapt to the new situation.
Employees’ responses to change

- The degree to which people express emotions, talk about the change or resist change - depends on the organisational culture.
- There are some cultures where employees will not dare to overtly display their reactions, and much of their communication will be covert, and done out of the office.
- In other cultures reactions – both positive and negative - would be welcomed.
Employees’ responses to change

• Employee “buy-in” is extremely important for successful change implementation.

• “Buy-in” involves: understanding why the change is needed, accepting the change and the way it’s implemented, and cooperating with it.

• When people feel that the change is imposed on them – they are less likely to buy-in and more likely to resist it.
Employees’ responses to change

- The difference in employees’ reactions to change when it is imposed on them compared to when they themselves initiated it is huge!
- **Imposed change** = less cooperation, more resistance, focus on “me” and on negative aspects of the change, sense of victimhood, less resilience, less perseverance.
- **Initiated change** = better cooperation, focus on “we” and on positive aspects of the change, stronger sense of control, more resilience, more perseverance.
Employees’ responses to change

- It is therefore important to involve employees in the decisions regarding the change, so that they do not feel that the change was forced on them, feel that they were part of the team that initiated it, and therefore feel more in control of it.
Employees’ responses to change

- Adults have a patterns of behaviours that they habitually display when change occurs, depending on their personality characteristics and early experiences.
- The big 5 personality characteristics have been associated with the ability to handle changes well.
Employees’ responses to change

The BIG 5 Personality Indicators:
How do they relate to people’s responses to change?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality Indicator</th>
<th>LOW (1)</th>
<th>HIGH (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OPENNESS</td>
<td>Practical; rational; skeptical; shies away from “new”</td>
<td>Loves “new”; intellectually curious; creative; adventurous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONSCIENTIOUS</td>
<td>Easygoing; relaxed; spontaneous; not many rules;</td>
<td>Disciplined; efficient; organized; responsible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXTROVERSION</td>
<td>Likes solitary time; shy; reserved; quiet; independent</td>
<td>Outgoing; enthusiastic; active; novelty-seeking;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREEABLENESS</td>
<td>Uncooperative; antagonistic; suspicious;</td>
<td>Cooperative; kind; affectionate; friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEUROTICISM</td>
<td>Not easily bothered; secure; emotionally resilient</td>
<td>Tense; moody; anxious; sensitive; prone to negative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employees’ responses to change

- Several studies have found that women cope better than men with change, and this has to do with one of the big 5 personality characteristics.
- Can you think why women might cope well with change?
- Which personality characteristic makes them better able to cope with change?
Employees’ responses to change

- Another factor that has been associated in the literature with the capacity to handle change well is Emotional Intelligence (EQ).
- It was also found that managers and change agents with high EQ who introduce change into their organisations are more successful than those with low EQ.
- Why is that?
EQ – Emotional Intelligence

- Perceiving Emotions
- Understanding Emotions
- Managing Emotions
- Using Emotions

Emotional Intelligence
EQ – Emotional Intelligence

- Intra-personal domain:
  - Being aware of one’s own emotions
  - Understanding the meaning of emotions
  - Using emotions to facilitate thought and action
  - Managing emotions to function effectively (self regulation).

- Inter-personal domain:
  - Being aware of other people’s emotions
  - Understanding the meaning of these emotions
  - Using this knowledge when working with others to facilitate cooperation
  - Helping others manage their emotions
EQ – Emotional Intelligence core skills
Employees’ responses to change

- Several studies found that people’s career stage affects how they react to change.
- Older and senior workers are likely to find it more difficult to accept change and more likely to resist change, and stick to their routines and habits.
- Younger people find it easier to cope with change, partly because they are more used to working in a fast changing environments.
- However, younger people may show less commitment to their organisation, less resilience and perseverance, and are more likely to leave when things become difficult.
Employees’ responses to change

- People bring with them to work their emotional baggage – their previous experiences with change.
- For some people change means crisis, and it therefore provokes emotional distress, negative interpretations of the situation and resistance.
- Other people may have had good experiences with past changes and see it as an exciting opportunity.
Employees’ responses to change

- People’s circumstances at the time when the change is introduced can also affect how they react: if they are going through other changes in their lives (moving home, having a baby, marrying, divorcing, illness, death in the family, etc) – they are likely to find it difficult to cope with another change at work.

- In some cases they may display symptoms of adjustment disorder, which we as therapists need to look out for and offer support.
Adjustment Disorder (Carta et al., 2009; DSM-V)

- Adjustment disorder is a condition that occurs when a person is unable to cope with, or adjust to a major life change, or a loss.
- It’s prevalence is estimated as high as 20% of psychiatric consultations for adults.
- Since the symptoms resemble those of depression, it is often called “situational depression”.
Adjustment Disorder (Carta et al., 2009; DSM-V)

- Adjustment disorder can be triggered by major changes such as: divorce, death of a loved one, illness, being a victim of crime, an accident, giving birth, surviving a disaster, job loss, etc.
- It lasts on average a few months (4-6).
- Suicidal risk is high.
- It significantly interferes with the person’s normal functioning.
Adjustment Disorder symptoms

Physical
- Headaches
- Stomach aches
- Palpitations
- Sleep disturbance
- Fatigue

Behavioural
- Withdrawal from social contact
- Dangerous or destructive behaviour
- Poor work performance
- Changes in appetite
- Substance abuse

Emotional:
- Sadness
- Hopelessness
- Lack of enjoyment
- Crying spells
- Nervousness
- Suicide ideation
- Anxiety
- Worry
- Desperation
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling overwhelmed
Adjustment Disorder treatments:

- Brief counselling / psychotherapy (solution-focused, resource-focused, adaptation focused, or meaning focused).
- Social support (support groups).
- Relaxation training.
Adjustment Disorder (Carta et al., 2009; DSM-V)

- In the context of organisational change it is more likely to occur in people already experiencing other major life changes, or those facing job loss.
- People who lose their jobs following an organisational change are in danger not only of having adjustment disorder but also of long term high stress levels, depression, anxiety, and other psychological disorders.
- In times of organisational change – it is important to offer this group significant support, especially if they are over 50 years old.
Adjustment Disorder (Carta et al., 2009; DSM-V)

“Scarring effect” – job loss leaves a permanent psychological mark (loss of confidence, anxiety and depression, lower levels of happiness) on a person, that remains with them even after they find a job.
Organisational change: stage-based models

- There are several stage-based models that describe organisational changes and the transition process that people experience: the stages of adjustment that people undergo as the change unfolds.
- We will examine Bridges’ (2009) model, which is probably the leading model of employees’ reaction to organisational change.
According to Bridges’ model, people who are experiencing organisational change, undergo 3 stages:
Bridges’ (2009) Transition model

Phase 1: Ending

- All changes start with the awareness that a period or a situation is coming to an end.

It is often displayed through:

- A sense of loss, stress, anxiety, resentment.
- Emotional overreaction.
- Some people undergo a grief process.
- Grief process (Kubler-Ross, 1997) involves several stages: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Fear, Depression, Acceptance.

- What is lost?
Bridges’ (2009) Transition model

What is lost?

- Relationships, feeling of “us”.
- Structures, schedules, routines, procedures.
- Control, influence and autonomy.
- Meaning, goals, priorities, values, beliefs. How things made sense.
- Responsibility, turf.
- Future becomes unclear, career goals and plans may need to change.
- Beliefs that one has of himself or the organisation.
Bridges’ (2009) Transition model

Phase 2: The neutral zone
- A temporary state between the old state & the new state.
- People experience uncertainty, confusion and disorientation.
- There is no routine. Nothing is automatic and nothing can be taken for granted.
- A person doesn’t know where he fits in.
- Everything feels up in the air, chaotic, unreal, empty and meaningless.
- Low performance and productivity are common as people are trying to figure out what to do instead of how to do things.
Bridges’ (2009) Transition model

- As a result of poor productivity people may experience loss of confidence and self efficacy.
- Fatigue is common.
- People may experience anxiety resulting from lack of control.
- Disengagement is a common response.
- Some people experience dis-identification from the organisation, position or role (people might say: I used to be … but…).
- Some people will experience mood swings.
- Other people get stuck in anger, frustration, worry and criticism. Energy is spent on being negative and infecting others. Victim attitude.
Bridges’ (2009) Transition model

- Gossip and rumour may be at their worst during this stage as people are trying to make sense of what is happening.
- Collective moods tend to be negative, and can change quickly from hope to despair.
- On the other hand this is where creativity and innovation can occur, as vacuum provokes innovative thinking.
Bridges’ (2009) Transition model

Phase 3: New Beginning

- Learning and adjustment process: people will need to learn new skills or systems. They may also need to de-learn old habits or skills.
- They begin with reduced competence which hampers their performance, and can reduce self efficacy and confidence. Mistakes can be expected.
- There is a sense of risk and fear of failure because it is unclear whether the new system will bring the desired outcome, yet it is clear that the old system is gone.
Bridges’ (2009) Transition model

- After a while:
- Mastering the new skill / system.
- Confidence and self efficacy return to normal levels.
- Excitement - seeing the new opportunities
- Creativity, innovation and sense of renewal.
- Acceptance, adaptation and realignment
Bridges’ (2009) Transition model

- **Bridges’ conclusions:**
- Change is a normal part of life, but any change, good or bad, is often stressful.
- Employees have to undergo all stages of change for a change process to be completed successfully.
- “If people do not make the transition – change does not happen”.
Bridges’ (2009) Transition model

- No matter how desired or exciting the change is – expect a sense of loss.
- A significant component of the model is the feeling of loss and grief, which occurs at the beginning. It is similar to a person's reaction to the death of a loved one.
- Change comes in stages and the in-between stage is the most difficult because of the uncertainty and lack of control that occur in this stage.
- No matter how competent people are – expect a sense of confusion and loss of self confidence at that stage.
Bridges’ (2009) Transition model

- The sense of loss and disorientation often lead to loss of trust in the organisation, and stronger sense of self preservation (“me” emphasis, turf wars – “this is mine”).
- Bridges found that during times of change communication within the organisation deteriorates. This is because the structures and routines that supported the communication may be changing, or have broken down temporarily.
- It may lead to more unrest and conflict between employees, and breakdown of teamwork.
- And these in turn lead to low morale and low commitment.
Bridges’ (2009) Transition model

• And we already mentioned low performance, poor productivity and lack of efficiency are common in all three stages of change.

• All of these are not unusual. These are normal reactions to change.
Another important point that Bridges makes:

One of the expectations we have is that if we initiate a change it should be fully controllable. But that is rarely the case!

There are barely any changes that are fully in our control.

All changes, whether initiated or forced on us, have parts that are in our control and parts that are out of our control.

The only thing that we do control – is the meaning we give it!
Bridges’ (2009) Transition model

- What I found in my work:
  - Bridges’ stages do not always occur in that sequence.
  - People can be in the “new beginning” area, but have not “digested” the ending. So in a sense they “drag” the ending stage forward.
  - I also found that people tend to have a pattern of response to change: some people always find the ending stage difficult. Others may find the in-between stage repeatedly difficult. And others find the new beginning difficult. In a sense people tend to “get stuck” in the same stage every time they undergo change.
Bridges’ (2009) Transition model

- In the next exercise (no 6) I’d like you to try and implement Bridges’ model.
Organisational change from employees’ perspective

- End of part 2: Organisational change from employees’ perspective.
- How employees experience organisational change.
- How employees react to changes.
- Bridges’ stage model of transitions.
- Questions?

- Part 3: The psychological perspective:
  - How to make change kinder to employees?
Surviving and thriving through organisational Change

- So far we’ve seen that organisations need to change, in order to survive, but that change is highly disruptive and risky.
- We’ve also seen that employees reactions’ are mostly negative, and if they do not cooperate – change efforts are not likely to succeed.
- In this part we will look at strategies to make organisational change kinder to employees, in order to reduce stress, increase buy-in, defuse resistance and make the process more effective.
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- Communication
- The first strategy that can ease the change process for employees is to ensure that there is consistent and reliable communication between management, change agents and employees.
- As we’ve seen, Kotter found that one of the reasons why change initiatives fail, is the lack of communication, and he found that in many organisations the channels of communication collapsed during change.
- It is important to ensure that this doesn’t happen.
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- When there is not enough communication during times of change, the void is filled by rumour and gossip.
- These are collective meaning making processes.
- Problem is they feed on lack of information and disseminate misinformation.
- Gossip and rumours can be dangerous to the change process, since they feed into people’s fears, they may magnify problems, and can result in less cooperation and more resistance.
The second strategy that can ease the change process for employees and can reduce resistance is to get employees involved in the decision making processes and in introducing the change. When people are involved in making decisions and in introducing the change, they are more likely to feel in control, responsible for its success and less likely to resist it.
Preparing employees is important before implementing changes. Many changes are implemented without prior preparation or time for employees to digest. Preparation should include understanding the need for the change, an explanation about the implementation process, provision of appropriate training (if relevant), and bringing to employees’ awareness the possible challenges they may face.
Preparation should also include helping employees understand the process of change that they will experience (Bridges’ model).
Social support

Earlier I noted that women create social support systems around them that enables them to cope better with change.

The learning that can be gained from this, is that social support systems are essential in times of change.

They can help build people’s resilience and can lower stress levels in time of crisis.
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- BUT – beware: support systems can become toxic!
- They can create a push to adapt to the change, but they can also create a push to resist the change.
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- Reality checks
- As we’ve seen, there are several points in the change process where people’s meaning making processes (both individual and collective) can derail the process.
- It is important to conduct reality checks to ensure that people’s interpretations have not wandered too far from reality.
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- For example, during the ending phase people might feel that everything has changed, and all that was dear to them was lost.
- It is important to check against reality: what’s really changed? What’s really lost? What has not changed / lost? Where are the areas where’s there still continuity and stability?
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- Temporary structures and routines
- This strategy is useful as employees go through the “neutral zone” phase.
- Because the old routines are no longer in use and the new ones have not been created, it is recommended to create temporary structures and routines that can give people a sense of stability.
- These temporary arrangements can include short term goals, temporary schedules, temporary tasks and routines.
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- They need to be simple and comfortable so that they are easy to implement, and do not add more stress to employees.
Comfort zone

This strategy is highly important during the “neutral zone” stage and when employees experience the new beginning state and are starting to acquire a new skill or new system.

It is important to provide employees with time and space where they can relax and recuperate, and get away from the chaos of the neutral zone and pressure to perform of the new beginning.
Acceptance:

As employees go through the change they experience many losses: sense of security, control, routines, people, turf, etc.

It is important to allow people time to grieve and accept what is lost.

One way to ease acceptance is through mindfulness practice.
Mindfulness is defined as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally” (Kabat Zinn, 1994: p.8).

Mindfulness practice can help to promote acceptance of one’s experiences (including thoughts and emotions) as they are, by encouraging the person to engage with the experience, yet at the same time, to disengage from it and see it as an observer.
Gradual learning and adaptation process:

This strategy is particularly tailored for the “new beginning” phase when employees need to learn a new skill or system.

The strategy states that when learning something new, it is important to “chunk it down”: to break big tasks into smaller steps, master one step, and only then move to master the next one.
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- Beware of change overload (Hart, 2012)
- Change overload is a situation where a person has to deal with many changes that occur at the same time.
- There are many new things to learn and adjust to, and too many demands.
- The person has no routine, no stability, and no comfort zone. Everything around him or her is unfamiliar and takes effort to figure out.
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- In this situation people’s stress levels and disorientation can become very high, and their performance and productivity are likely to be very low.
- Try to avoid introducing more than one change at a time.
Deal with stress:

In the past decade our understanding of stress has improved significantly.

As a result of the research into stress we now know that stress needs to be dealt with directly.

This is because we now know how harmful stress is to our bodies: nearly 80% of all illnesses are triggered by stress, and stress can slow down recovery from illness.
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- Mental illness can also be triggered or exacerbated by stress.
- Continuous stress is especially problematic as people do not have time to recover.
- The reason why stress is so harmful is because stress responses literally cause our immune system to shut down, making our bodies more susceptible to illness.
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- Several ways to reduce stress in the workplace:
- Allow people time to rest and insist they take time-out.
- Mindfulness practice.
- Physical exercise.
- Socialising.
Organisational change

Outline

• End of part 3: The psychological perspective:
• How to make change kinder for employees?

• Questions?
Organisational change

- Introduction to organisational change.
- Part 1: The organisation’s perspective:
  - Why organisations change
  - Kotter’s models of organisational change and change failure, and into planned vs. improvisational changes.
- Part 2: The employees’ perspective:
  - Employees’ experiences of change and responses to change.
  - Bridges’ stage model.
- Part 3: The psychological perspective:
  - How to make change kinder for employees?
Thank you very much for your participation!

Here are my details –
call or email me with any questions or comments

**Dr Rona Hart**

44-20-89313333

Director@hart2hart.co.uk
References

References
