

How personal change can be a barrier to organisational change

It is said that change is one of the certainties of life, so if change is inevitable why do we find it so challenging to deal with? In today's modern society change is everywhere – the economy, the environment, the government. Traditionally perhaps people could rely on their workplace to be a place of more solid ground. However the landscape in which the 21st century business operates is very different and as a result organisational change is essential to progress.



As humans, we go through a lot of personal change coupled with the backdrop of organisational change, this can often mean that we have to change personally in order to progress and 'move with the times'. Organisational change can impact on us in a practical way, a promotion, a change of role, more or less responsibility, learning to be done, yet what is the personal impact of this and when we are in this period of change – what is the impact on the organisation we work for?

Often personal change and organisational change go hand-in-hand and to effect change – a new structure, tool, practice or system will, more so than not, require individuals to change their behaviours and habits and adopt new habits and ways of working.

Organisational change can often mean 'people change' – which can have a huge impact on the relationships and dynamics within teams – it may require people assuming new roles, less siloed working, new relationships and more collaboration and this can present different challenges on a personal and an organisational level.

More often than not in the process of personal change – we often resist or come up against barriers to change emotionally.

When personal change is inflicted upon us – feelings of stress, fear, anxiety, lack of input or apathy towards the change can be experienced as well as discovering different personal ambitions which are misaligned with the change. These feelings and reactions can have a huge impact on how one acts and provoke irrational behaviours.

What impact does this have on organisational change?

Irrational behaviour and strong emotions as reactions to personal change can have a detrimental impact on organisational change – causing delays, lost or less productivity, sabotage and loss of face.

How can an individual overcome their challenges and deal with personal change positively?

Inwardly, the path of personal change can often feel confusing, lonely, uncertain and ambiguous. One can easily choose the perspective that “I’m the only one that has ever felt this way” and there is no support out there for us to help us on our path of personal change and discovery. Coaching is a proven method of enabling individuals to learn about themselves and deal with change. In ‘Why Should Anyone be led by you’ Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones comment on the impact of coaching to help individuals through change and new situations in order to assist in their learning “although coaching styles and methods vary, there is typically a shared ambition to create opportunities for individuals to practice skills in familiar and new situations and to receive feedback on their impact”. Coaching is part of Connectwell’s offering, we believe in the value and power of coaching as a way for individuals to receive support and bold challenge in order to deepen their learning, take action and move beyond their potential.



How can organisations help individuals overcome personal change?

Our view, at Connectwell, is that there are a number of steps and actions that managers and leaders can take to enable employees to manage and deal with personal change and recapture a positive environment following a period of change. The impact of concerted and considered management and effort to recapture a positive environment following a period of change can result in greater efficiency and effectiveness, quicker decision making and overall a quicker recovery from the symptoms of personal change. This may require altering behaviours or a change in style or approach for managers and leaders to achieve the desired outcomes. Linked to the services we offer at Connectwell, here are three ways leaders and managers can help individuals through personal change to minimise the impact personal change will have on business outcomes and performance.

1. **Acceptance , Acknowledgement and Authenticity** – Leaders and managers must accept there will be an adjustment process and a learning curve for individuals. Whilst in this acclimatisation period, it is essential for leaders to focus on the strengths and potential in the team and work on unlocking the potential of individuals that can be unleashed during and post a change process. Our view is the extent to which leaders and managers display authentic leadership can have a huge impact on how employees respond to and deal with change. Authentic Leadership doesn't mean having all the answers, or getting it “right” first time or all the time. What it does mean is making tough decisions, asking bold questions, demonstrating integrity and living by our values, as leaders in business and as individuals. Are you the most authentic leader you can or want to be? How could demonstrating your authentic leadership help your organisation and those you work with in a period of uncertainty or change?

2. A positive environment – An environment that encourages open communication, support and trust is essential for an organisation in order to support employees dealing with personal change. Within the CIPD's report on Engagement, published May 2012 on Transactional and Emotional Engagement they examine the key components needed to have employees that are both transactionally engaged i.e. they get their job done and emotionally engaged i.e. there is a deeper connection between employee and organisation and employee feels connected to the values and purpose of the organisation. Within the report one employee's emotional engagement with their team and manager is attributable to a change in management. One interviewee described poor communication, lack of trust and co-operation within the team the staff were reluctant to voice their ideas because of past experiences of not being listened to – all of which created an unpleasant working environment. It is the responsibility of management to build trust amongst employees and often this requires some level of personal change for members of management – deeper listening, change in habits, demonstrating a deeper respect for employees, adapting and developing these habits are qualities of authentic leaders. At Connectwell we advocate fostering practices that feed a positive environment e.g. regular feedback and more openness; thus empowering the whole team or organisation to take responsibility for sustaining this positive environment . This will lead to positive outcomes and a more engaged workforce through the period of change.

3. Support and Growing Stronger – Organisations that support the learning and growth in a period of personal change can enable employees to feel empowered, supported and engaged in periods which characteristically can be disempowering and confusing. Enabling employees to feel valued and more engaged requires leaders to draw upon the combined capabilities and drive of the whole organisation and teams to create a stronger, more sustainable basis on which to thrive post major change. Through working with tools such as Connectwell's high performing teams model and provision of 1-1 support for leaders we are able to support leaders to lead change in an engaging and empowering way.

ROI—Relationships Outcomes with Impact

At Connectwell we believe strongly in creating value and delivering tangible results. We recently worked with a client undergoing a major cultural shift coupled with operational change. We were tasked to bring together the senior operations team and the HR community to share aspirations and begin to create a jointly owned framework while at same time building the relationship between these two critical groups. A dialogue was started and an appreciation and respect developed amongst these leaders, this filtered down to employees, the impact was more collaborative working, improved communication and increased knowledge sharing between teams . This meant an increase in efficiency, productivity and more effective and quicker decision making.

This is one example of how we help organisations to manage and deal with change, it can sometimes be challenging to recapture a positive working environment during or following a change period. Connectwell provides an objective, safe, supportive and innovative approach to enable individuals and teams to cope with and manage change in a way that is authentic and engaging. If you would like to learn more about the Services we offer and how we could assist you and your organisation, visit www.connectwell.co.uk.