

Article: Tips for Managing Change Without Conflict

How does one overcome resistance to change without creating conflict?

During organisational change there is potential for internal conflict to arise - often between those members of the organisation who see the change as a positive and those who can only see it as a negative - at least in personal terms.

If you are to overcome resistance to change without creating conflict, you first need to be aware of the perspective of the other person (see our last article on 'Tips for Avoiding Conflict Situations'). In order to do that, it helps to be aware of the four distinct psychological phases that a person will experience when involved in a change process that they are either resistant to or uncomfortable with:

Stage 1: Denial Phase

- Apathy and disinterest
- Mental numbness
- 'It will soon be over'

Stage 2: Resistance Phase

- Anger
- Putting up obstacles
- 'Can't / won't do this'

Stage 3: Exploration Phase

- Still worried about the future, but looking for benefits in the change
- 'What if...?'

Stage 4: Commitment Phase

- Clear focus and plan
- Managing resources
- 'Right then, this is my next step'

Theory: Each of these four stages needs to be addressed individually to move the person or team onto the next stage.

Here is a 'stage-friendly' model for influencing change, overcoming resistance and minimising potential conflict:

Stage 1: Denial Phase

Give thorough and precise information to make the situation clear.

Stage 2: Resistance Phase

Listen carefully to what is being said. Look at the situation from their perspective. Use influencing skills to gain commitment. Focus on the positives.

Stage 3: Exploration Phase

Break issues down into small parts. Focus on key elements, step by step. Rule out inappropriate information, assumptions and ideas. What is realistic?

Stage 4: Commitment Phase

Set overall goals and desired 'final destination', as well as step-goals for each stage of the process.