

# Solutions for Supervisors

April 2019

## Navigating Change

Are you familiar with that old mantra “change is hard”? Many of us roll our eyes and want to respond “no kidding” and leave it at that. As a supervisor, it is important to remember that validating the difficulties of change isn’t where our responsibility ends. Today’s change leaders (including you!) inspire people with a **compelling vision**, engage employees throughout the transition process, approach resistance with curiosity, and set the example of flexibility and commitment.

To pave the way for smooth change transitions, share a compelling vision. Employees want to know where they are going, why things are changing, and what will remain the same. According to the Harvard Business Review, a root cause of employee resistance to change is fear that the organization will no longer resemble the place employees have come to value, identify with, and love. Therefore, effective change leaders must articulate how an organization’s core values will be preserved, despite the uncertainty ahead.

Throughout the process, **communicate frequently** with these tips in mind:

**Be clear and consistent:** Share what you know including what is changing, when, and how. Use examples of relatable work issues. Tie communication back to the original compelling vision, reiterating the case for change and what will stay the same.

**It is OK to not have all the answers:** The general rule is that the more informed your people are and the more they trust you, the more uncertainty they’ll be able to handle. If you don’t have an answer, say so. Then promise to follow up as soon as you know more, and keep your promise.

### From your Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

**Remember that EAP is here to help in any way that we can. Call on us for consultation and assistance anytime!**

**For more information about how to best handle employee work performance problems call your EAP at:**

**TTY dial 711 for VRS then dial 1.800.769.9819  
[www.workforceeap.com](http://www.workforceeap.com)**

**Work Force EAP offers many educational programs designed to help leaders become more effective in supervising their staff. For a complete course listing or to schedule a training, contact us or visit our website.**

Remember to articulate “what’s in it for me?”: Help your employees understand how they will benefit personally; they will more likely commit to the transition and may become change champions among peers.

To fully **engage employees** in the process, you need to do more than talk at them. Get your employees talking with you about their fears and concerns. Create forums for these conversations, anticipate the toughest questions, listen



with empathy, and come prepared with as many answers as possible. Don't assume that employees will come to you with their concerns organically: more often, employees talk amongst themselves and can spread incorrect information and discontent before you realize what is happening. Get ahead of the rumor mill.

If and when employees begin to grumble, **approach resistance with curiosity**. Think of it as a useful red flag, informing you that something isn't working. It is time to ask questions and listen carefully, particularly to those on the front lines whose insights and experiences are critical to executing a successful change.

As a supervisor, you can't eliminate change anxiety, but you can influence it. The most profound way to do that is to **set a good example** of how to approach uncertainty with flexibility and commitment. Likely, you rose to a position of leadership by seeking out and taking advantage of new opportunities.

You know that change is part of the human experience and recognize that it isn't what happens to you in life that matters, but how you respond to it. Your employees are looking to you to figure out how they should react. Commit to the change process, implement it to the best of your ability, and trust that employees will follow your example.

Work Force EAP offers executive coaching and employee training on Navigating Change, among other topics.



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