

CHANGE MANAGEMENT 101: ANSWERING COMMON CHANGE QUESTIONS

If you are responsible for communicating the details of a change programme or new initiative, it is likely that you will face questions about it from your team. Some of these will be general questions about the nature of the change and its likely impact, and others will be more about resistance to the change itself. This template covers the top ten most common questions that people are likely to ask about change, and contains suggestions to help you put together appropriate responses in advance.

Using this template

- This guide can be used by any manager who needs to communicate with their team about change in their organisation, team or department. You can use it as a reference tool to ensure that you have considered each area as part of your presentation or briefing.
- It is best used at the outset of a change programme or initiative, as part of a manager's preparations to tell a group of people about change for the first time.
- It can also be used on an individual basis with team members who need 1:1 support.
- The template covers ten **potential questions** and then provides some **suggested responses**.
- Once you have digested this information consider **your response**, using our suggestions as inspiration.

Potential Question	Suggested Response	Your Response
<i>Why is this change happening?</i>	Ensure that you are able to clearly explain the reasons for the change, and why it is happening now. For example, is the aim in your organisation to increase output, save money, expand a product line or to take advantage of changing market conditions or new opportunities? Help your team to understand the reasons for the change by explaining the logic behind it.	
<i>What does the team/department/organisation hope to achieve by introducing this change?</i>	It is important to summarise what the intended benefits or end goal of the change programme is. People need to have an understanding of the overall vision that they are working towards, why it is worth their effort and why making these changes will be better in the long run than maintaining the status quo. Be positive and reassuring, and explain why the change is a good thing for your team, department or organisation as a whole.	
<i>What are the risks of not changing?</i>	Spelling out the risks of inaction can help to galvanise your team into positive action and make the change a reality. Although it is important to be honest with your employees about what could happen if the planned changes don't take place, don't get carried away painting a highly negative (or inaccurate) picture. Set the change into context, and explain the practical impacts of not moving forward, e.g. that your organisation may fall behind its competitors due to availability of better products or a slicker customer experience elsewhere.	
<i>How will the change affect our team as a whole?</i>	Your team will want to know specific details about how the forthcoming changes will affect them. Fear of the unknown can cause anxiety for some employees, particularly in a rapidly changing	

	environment. Talking through the actual impact of the changes on their day-to-day work can help employees feel a greater sense of control. With major changes, your team may need to adapt to new work, use new tools and technologies or even report to a new manager. With radical changes to a business, some employees may be transferred to completely new roles in other departments and may even move to other locations. Think carefully about how you deliver news about particularly radical changes, and plan what you will say in advance.	
<i>Are there any planned redundancies or major restructuring as a result of this change?</i>	If your organisation is planning to reduce headcount as part of the change process, it is important to communicate this information to those concerned at an early stage. Remember too, that the way in which this news is delivered has a significant impact on redundancy 'survivors', i.e. those left behind in the organisation after the redundancies have taken place. It is essential that you can explain which area(s) will be affected, and how your organisation plans to support people throughout this process.	
<i>Will my job responsibilities change?</i>	This is the number one question you are likely to face from your team members when organisational change is imminent. People want to know exactly how their existing duties and responsibilities are going to change, so it is important that you are honest in your responses in order to gain support and start to develop buy-in from employees. As well as outlining how their responsibilities will change, explain why they are changing. For example, many organisations seek to reduce their reliance on manual procedures in order to focus efforts on more complex tasks, or	

	introduce new software to speed up key processes to keep up with competitors.	
<i>What support will be provided to help me cope with the change?</i>	If you have previously indicated that job roles are likely to change, then this question will naturally follow. When faced with the prospect of a major change to their job role, many people can feel anxious about how they will manage. You can help to counter these concerns by explaining how they will be supported, e.g. will there be additional training to help them get to grips with new systems and processes? Will your organisation provide coaching and mentoring as part of the transition process? It is important that people don't feel that they'll be left to their own devices, so be sure to have thought about a suitable programme of support to help your team get up to speed.	
<i>How will the success of the change be measured?</i>	As well as understanding how their role fits into the bigger picture of organisational change, it is important to outline how the success (or otherwise) of the change initiative will be measured. Key areas to think about include: what will 'success' look like in practical terms? What are the key milestones that need to be reached on the journey towards the end goal of the change programme? How will progress towards these key points be measured? What will happen if progress starts to slip or something goes wrong?	
<i>What if I think the organisation has tried this before and failed?</i>	Some employees (particularly those who have been with their organisation for some time) have often seen many different change initiatives come and go, and may experience change fatigue as a consequence. With this question, it is important to acknowledge their views and opinions, but try not to become drawn into a debate about the	

	merits of this change programme over one which happened in the past. Focus on the benefits the change will bring, and the part they have to play in making it a reality.	
<i>What will happen next?</i>	Your employees are likely to want to know when the planned changes will start, and what will happen around them. It can be helpful to share the planned change programme and key milestones with them so they know roughly what to expect and when.	