

# ***Adapting to Change in the Workplace***

*“Life is change. Growth is optional. Choose wisely”. Not bad advice. If we could just do this consistently, we would spare ourselves a lot of unnecessary grief! The truth of the matter is: most people admit that they don’t know a good way to handle change.*

## **FACTS ON CHANGE**

*The very nature of life suggests that change is all around us. From aging, to the 4 seasons, to relationships, to geographical moves (job transfers, marriage, home purchases) to career changes involving buyouts, downsizing, and retirement. Of course we all realize some of the adjustments that go along with these unsettling events. Change is awkward and rarely comfortable. More times than not it seems tediously slow to adapt and for sure it forces us to face our fears of the unknown. On the other hand, there can be a positive face to change. It generally promotes personal growth and oftentimes opens the doors to new opportunities that we would have never realized without the change.*

## **REACTIONS TO CHANGE**

*There are a variety of reactions to change in the workplace that are predictable.*

### ***Resistance***

*The most common and initial response is resistance. We resist because somehow we feel change is beyond our control. We are all creatures of habit, comfort and security. Change on the surface can threaten all 3. It is so natural to resist, yet the inability to eventually adapt can truly threaten our current employment status. If we don’t move with change we eventually get left behind.*

### ***Fear***

*It makes sense that the root of all resistance is fear. You know, fear of the unknown. Many questions pass through our mind .What if my position is cut next? What if I’m not employable elsewhere? What if my job performance decreases? What if I can’t get the new computer program down? Somehow*

*we need to push pass the fears and embrace the new possibilities. Why?  
REHEARSING FEAR OF CHANGE PARALYZES US!  
Only moving toward our fears can help us conquer this unfriendly foe of  
change. It is said that “it’s always safer to venture and face the fear than to  
remain in a dissatisfying situation”.*

### ***Adapting***

*It is far less stressful to adapt to change than to fight it and become bitter.  
Facing change means taking control of it rather than simply allowing it to  
happen to you. There is great relief when we embrace change and stop  
denying that it exists. Since change is inevitable in the workplace we should  
move with it. If we don’t adapt in time, there is good possibility that we  
won’t adapt at all.*

### ***Anticipate***

*It is far healthier to actually anticipate change than to be consistently  
shocked by it. There are a few good reasons to stand on our emotional tip  
toes looking for change to occur:*

- \*Anticipating change can take away the personal violation we feel.*
- \*Anticipating change keeps us from taking advantage of the organization.*
- \*Anticipating change is a more realistic way to see the future.*

### ***Perspective***

*I’m convinced that the determining factor that separates the employee who  
handles change successfully from one who doesn’t is a matter of perspective.  
For example instead of saying or thinking, “ what will I lose”? say, “ what  
will I gain”? This isn’t merely an exercise in positive thinking, but it’s the  
reality that suggests that until we can enjoy the change we will never  
embrace it. The more we imagine the new situation at work, the more  
confident we’ll feel. In addition, we usually find that once we embrace the  
change it’s not as bad as we thought it would be.*

## MANAGEMENTS ROLE

*It is stated, "A change imposed is a change opposed". Management plays the most important role in the change process of an organization. There are three essential steps that leadership can take to lead their staff along to a healthier work environment regardless of the changes.*

### **1) Clarify the Purpose of the Change**

*The first step in clarifying the need for change is to convince the staff that the way things have been was unsatisfactory. Leadership needs to show them why the change at hand will enhance work productivity as well as benefit them personally. Until staff is convinced that the change is even necessary they will have a hard time transitioning.*

### **2) Clarify the Vision Through the Change**

*With a new sense of uncertainty in the staff, it's imperative to give specifics on what the office will look like through this transition period. What are the new roles, if any, guidelines, structure and objectives through this transitioning period? Is training necessary? What is expected now? The clearer the strategy and plan, the more supportive and at ease your workers will be.*

### **3) Facilitate the Change**

*Staff involvement is critical if you want them to buy in. Let them share their ideas and opinions as to how they can help in the change process. The first thought that goes through the mind of a worker when change comes is, how will this impact me or my department personally? They also want to know how they will benefit from this process. You as a leader may be surprised as to how creative and productive the process can be if they speak to it directly. Perhaps a "transition team" can be developed to help see this whole process through.*

*Adapting to change in the workplace is a must if organizations and staff are to grow personally and corporately. Hopefully there will come a moment*

*when you look back at a change professionally a productive pivotal time in your life!*