

Managing Change – Essential Questions For Your Team

How change has changed

Change has always been around, but how we talk about dealing with it has changed! Early "change management" workshops were called "Coping with Change". Then they became "Dealing with Change" and "Managing Change" and now are often called "Leading Change" - on the basis that if it's not broken, break it!

But whatever the title, how we deal with the outcome of changes to departmental structures and work-roles is critical to team performance.

People don't fear change, they fear loss

If I told you that your house had just burnt down, you'd be unhappy. But if I told you that you had won \$2m on X-Lotto, you'd be happy. They're both changes - so why do we react differently to them?

The difference lies in the fact that one of these changes involves a loss while the other one involves a gain. So when we talk about change, we need to realise that people don't fear change, they fear the loss that change might bring.

If we want to improve our team's performance and plan for the future during a time of change, we need to begin by finding out what losses our team members fear.

Essential questions for your team

Start by asking your team members how strongly they feel, on a scale of 1 - 10, about these 5 possible types of loss as a result of the changes:

Security - do they feel as though they are no longer in control, or don't know where they stand in the organisation?

Competence - do they feel like they no longer know what to do or what value they bring?

Relationships - do they feel that contact with familiar people is vanishing, or that they no longer have a sense of belonging?

Sense of direction - do they feel as though they don't know where they are going, or why they are doing their work?

Territory - do they feel that they no longer own the work or the physical or psychological space that once belonged to them?

Once you know the answers to these questions, and have discussed why they feel that way, you are able to plan what can be done to address those feelings and maintain productivity during the transition and beyond.

Remember: find out what people think they are losing and why, and change can be turned from a negative into a positive.