

You need to communicate to get
information.
You need to communicate to get
cooperation.
You need to communicate to let others
know what you're doing.
You need to communicate to get
feedback.
You need to communicate because few
people live in isolation.
You need to communicate because
human beings are social creatures.
– *Edward de Bono, author, scholar*

Introduction

Communication is the key to change success. Change is new information, and growth is the application of this new information. For the communication process to be successful, it must be done in such a manner that the receivers of the information are moved to make application of this new information. Your receivers require on-going communication that will connect the dots between where they are now and where you want to be.

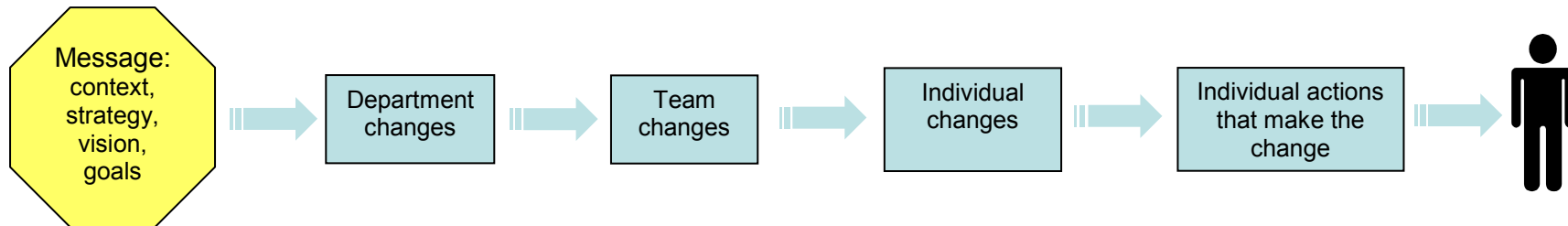
Your goal is to impose the right amount of structure and information in order to support and foster continued growth and performance. It is important that all stakeholders are saying and hearing consistent messages, and that you use large systems that communicate loudest to people – thereby driving decision moments and actions.

Connecting People and Strategy

By being purposeful with its communication process you will be able to avoid “demand-pull communication”. “*Demand-pull*” stems from management deciding what people need to know, and not by those doing the work deciding what they need to know in order to achieve the goals of the business. When Receivers do not get the information they need, they are apt to resist. This is often because they are the ones on the line to deliver the results.

Change Leaders and Agents cannot afford to announce large goals and changes without explaining the “what” to the people who have to implement them. Leadership’s role is to reach an agreement on goals and performance targets – with the input from those who will be held accountable for hitting the targets – and then to explain these goals and targets to the people in the organization who have to deliver (i.e., “*What we are trying to accomplish*”, “*What numbers are important and why*”, etc).

Information needs to be explained in ways that can be understood by the people who are required to change, and deliver results. The graphic below shows the required process people need in order to understand the link between the organization, department, team, and individual goals and actions.

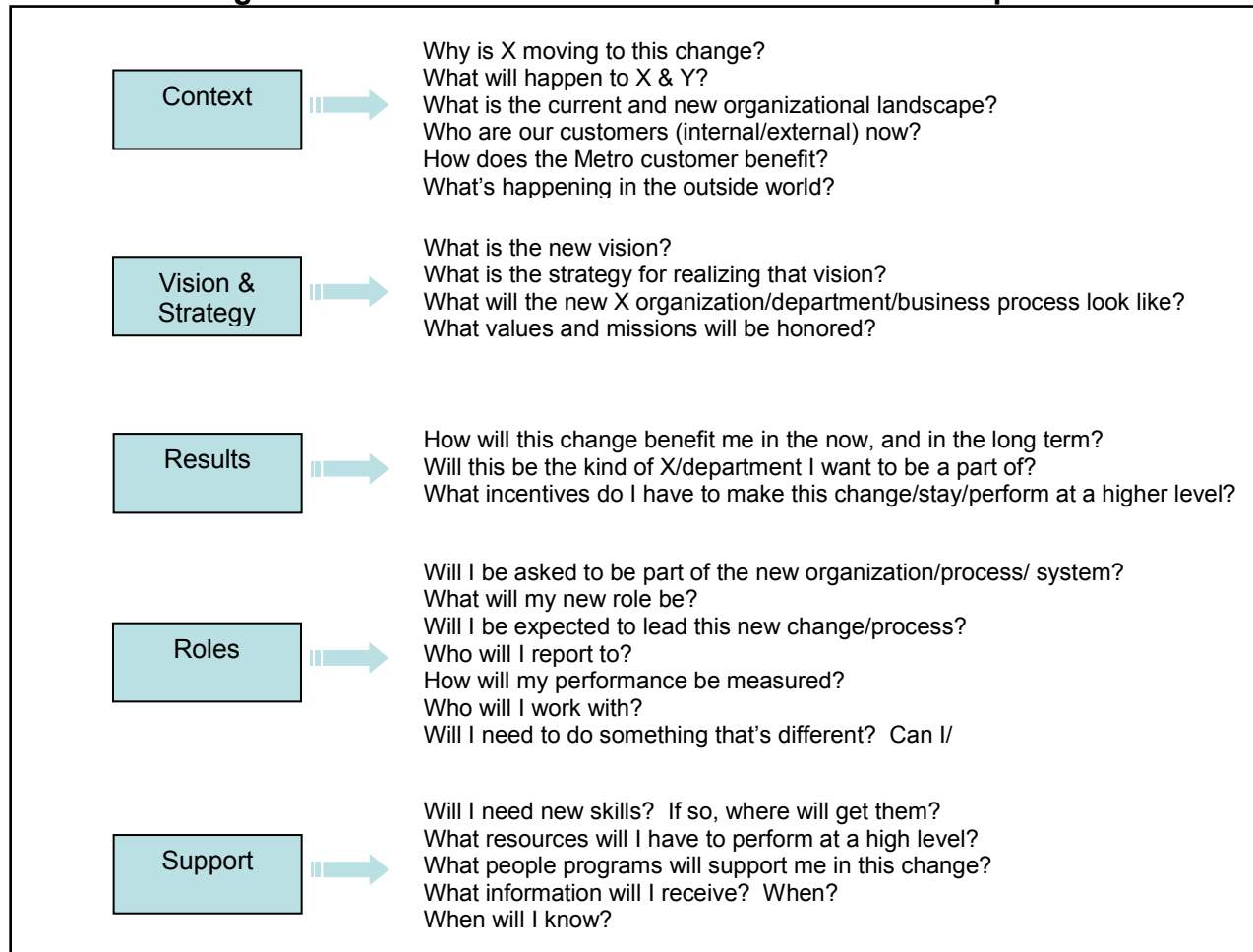


The process of tailoring your messages to a specific receiver group follows this diagram. The main function of change communication is constructive change by developing a vision, aligning people to that vision, and then motivating them to move toward the fulfillment of that vision. Shared beliefs and values are necessary to fulfill a vision.

Communication sources should focus and deploy the content of their messages to answer these questions:

When creating this kind of message...

...answer these questions.



Communication Source Matrix Graphic

Using Your Communication Plan to Address Resistance

Generally, overcoming resistance to change is a process of affecting what people think, feel, decide, and do. Repeated messages need to verify facts, clarify beliefs, challenge unviable beliefs, and suggest more viable beliefs. By using tools such as the Resistance Assessment, basic belief systems can be defined and receiver resistance can be categorized. Once defined, communication strategies can be employed to address specific belief systems. Tailor general change and project messages/communications by determining the resistance belief that your specific stakeholder or targeted group is operating under, and apply the corresponding strategies.

Resistance Belief

Communication Actions Steps

Descriptive Beliefs	
<p><u>Needs are being met already.</u> No incentive or motivation to change -- the receiver is content with the way things currently are. The change is viewed as unnecessary or negative.</p>	<p>Communication efforts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain why the change is necessary. • Focus messages on how the change will meet needs better. • Change their focus. • Address fears of loss. • Highlight challenges and future states.
<p><u>View those responsible for the change as untrustworthy.</u> Believe leadership either doesn't have their best interests at heart or isn't being open and honest with them about the change and its impact. Energy is expended protecting themselves instead of cooperating with others.</p>	<p>Communication efforts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that messages are consistent with actions and stated plans. • Focus on the benefits of the change. • Focus on their role in the change. • Keep messages simple and truthful, with only facts that can be backed and/or followed through.

Resistance Belief

Strategies for Communication

Predictive Beliefs	
<p><u>Believe the change will make it harder to get needs met, or to perform their job.</u> The change is a threat vs. something that can help. Facts will tend to be less significant than the actual beliefs stemming from them. Example: if change is only presented as making work easier, employees will worry about positions being eliminated. Fear, and reliance on values that emphasize protecting oneself and one's domains, is exhibited .</p>	<p>Communication efforts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure facts are current, accurate, and complete. • Provide additional information beyond just the necessary. • Cover various interpretations of the facts. • Solicit feedback on Receiver's view of potential positive results. • Provide suggestions/solutions that make the change easier. • Provide direction on making the change work. • Solicit alternatives that might be more effective. • Provide follow-up communication on agreements that were reached.
<p><u>The risks outweigh the benefits.</u> The belief here is that the change is/will be harmful or negative, thus the Receiver is hesitant of the change.</p>	<p>Communication efforts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide adequate information on the costs and risks. • Tie communication to accurate and updated information. • Provide additional information to correct inaccurate or mistaken beliefs. • Increase repetition of communications. • Listen and respond to issues and concerns - create a feedback loop focused on factual/updated information. • Connect benefits with currently held values. • Challenge additional benefits.
<p><u>Believe the change is unnecessary to avoid or escape a negative situation.</u> Receivers view the change as another way to get more work out of them. Examples of negative situations are a decline in revenues, budget, productivity, quality, morale, head-count, etc. Often fueled by a lack of global perspective and vision for the future state.</p>	<p>Communication efforts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to issues and concerns - create a feedback loop focused on factual/updated information. • Repeat accurate and complete facts. • Provide additional information to correct inaccurate or mistaken beliefs. • Increase repetition of communications. • Develop feedback loops focused on making the change more effective. • Provide communication tools to the Receiver for implementing the change. • Communicate end results and final outcomes. • Follow-up on agreements reached to improve outcomes. • Communicate confidence in the organization's ability to complete the change successfully.

Predictive Beliefs	
<p><u>They believe the change will fail.</u> Receivers don't have confidence the change will work, or they don't believe the resources are available to implement the change successfully. Often fueled by a fear of not being able to adjust to the change. The fear is often covered by insisting that the change won't work, and arguments against the change are made regardless of what is communicated.</p>	<p>Communication efforts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacture opportunities to “listen” to concerns. • Assess the accuracy and completeness of currently held “facts”. • Provide additional information to correct mistaken or inaccurate beliefs. • Seek feedback and suggestions. • Focus communication efforts on visualizing positive outcomes. • Document and communicate follow through on agreements reached to improve situations. • Communicate confidence in the ability to make the change successfully.
Evaluative Beliefs	
<p><u>Believe the change process will be handled improperly.</u> Resistance of not only the change itself, but also the methods used to bring it about. Resistance usually comes from a lack of input into decisions; dissatisfaction with how the change was introduced; the change is a surprise; or they feel manipulated and deceived.</p>	<p>Communication efforts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for and listen to their concerns. • Recognize and own up for mistakes to allow the issue(s) to fade. • Provide additional information (not excuses), as needed. • Solicit suggestions to avoid disconnect. • Be honest about suggestions and directions that can and cannot be accepted -- indicate the “why” behind each decision. • Follow through on agreements reached and/or promised?
<p><u>The change is inconsistent with current held values.</u> Values represent beliefs about what is important, resistance comes when with change that is inconsistent with their current values and/or priorities.</p>	<p>Communication efforts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek feedback that describes the inconsistencies between the change and current values, and address these concerns in the next round of communication. • Assess if active values are genuine. • Provide access for help and more information. • Review inconsistencies to determine if they are perceived or real. • Acknowledge people's concerns within existing communication vehicles. • If the change cannot be modified, state this honestly and openly within existing communications. • Use communication and in-person dialogue tools to a common ground. • Reinforce the benefits of the change. • Create feedback loops that surface other issues over the change.

Change Resistance Assessment

Support for the changes you are rolling-out can be defined as the opposite of resistance. Within the changes that you may be implementing, there are eight basic reasons (or rational points) why individual Receivers, teams, and customers will support the change.

1. **They believe their needs are not currently being met.** They have become dissatisfied with the status quo. They hold the perception that they are not getting ahead, or that they are losing ground.
2. **They believe this change will make it easier to get their needs met.** They hold the perception that the change will eliminate redundant, tedious, or undesirable work.
3. **They believe the benefits outweigh the risks.** There will be some level of personal gain if they accept the change...the risks are worth taking.
4. **They believe this change is needed to avoid, or get out of, a harmful or stressful situation.** Examples of this would be a decline in productivity, quality, morale, budget, etc.
5. **They believe the change process is being (or will be) handled properly.** They hold the perception they are being treated fairly and properly. They trust those responsible for the change. They are given the opportunity to provide input into the change; on an on-going basis. People should be asked for input if:
 - They will be affected by the change
 - You need their commitment to get the change implemented
 - They have needed information or ideas
 - They are/will be expected to be involved
 - They can learn from the experience
 - You want to expand or strengthen your base of support
6. **They believe the change will work.** They hold the perception that it is the right time for this change. They trust that the right resources (people, time, money, support, etc.) are allocated.
7. **This change is congruent with their values.** They will support the change if it's consistent with their standards, or is representative of something they believe is important.
8. **They believe those responsible for the change can be trusted.** Even if a person does not completely agree with this change, they are more likely to go along with it if they trust those who are responsible for placing it in motion. People tend to have confidence in those they trust, and will be suspicious of those they don't trust.

Developing and rolling-out effective resistance mitigation and change management efforts requires tethering the change to one, or more, of the above reasons for support. Conversely, there are many possible causes of resistance, and they mirror the above reasons people adhere to in regard to supporting a particular change. When an individual (or group) starts developing a working rationale for resistance their facts, beliefs, and values tend to form patterns.

The identification of these patterns can become instrumental in dealing with resistance. The following are common causes for resistance that may be encountered.

1. **They believe their needs are being met already (Descriptive Belief).** They have no incentive or motivation to change, because they are content with the way things currently are – “if it’s not broken, don’t fix it”. As long as this viewpoint is held, the change will be viewed only as unnecessary or negative.
2. **They believe the change will make it harder to get their needs met (Predictive Belief).** They see the change as a threat vs. something that could help. In this belief, facts tend to be less significant than the actual beliefs stemming from them. An example: where a change is presented as making work easier, employees will worry about positions being eliminated. Their concerns will need to be addressed to gain support for the change. These beliefs lead to fear and to reliance on values that emphasize protecting oneself and one’s domains.
3. **They believe the risks outweigh the benefits (Predicative Belief).** Some people will migrate to the side of seeing too little risk with a particular change, while others will be far on the side of seeing too much risk. The focus here is on situations in which people believe the change is harmful or negative when it isn’t actually true. As long as they keep the belief that the risks outweigh the benefits, they’ll be hesitant of the change and try to defend themselves against it. It is imperative that time is taken to help them explore what they consider to be the risks, otherwise their beliefs will prevent them from considering the benefits.
4. **They believe the change is unnecessary to avoid or escape a negative situation (Predicative Belief).** Examples of negative situations are a decline in revenues, budget, productivity, quality, morale, head-count, etc. They may believe the change is just another way to get more work out of them. Often this represents a person who is in denial. It’s important for them to face reality or be left behind.
5. **They believe the change process was/will be handled improperly (Evaluative Belief).** People are capable of resisting not only the change itself, but also the methods used to bring it about. This will happen if they didn’t have any input into the decisions, they don’t like how the change was introduced, the change was a surprise, the timing of the change was bad, or they feel manipulated and deceived by management.
6. **They believe the change will fail (Predicative Belief).** People will resist change because they don’t have confidence it will work, or they don’t believe the resources are available to implement the change successfully. The anxiety stemming from these concerns will make it more difficult for people to support the change effort. When people are afraid they won’t be able to adjust to a change, they cover the fear by insisting that the change won’t work...they argue against the change regardless of what is said. At this point it’s important to look beneath the surface to get at the real issue and deal with the resistance up-front.

7. **The change is inconsistent with their values (Evaluative Belief).** Since values represent people's beliefs about what is important, they will resist change that is inconsistent with their standards and/or priorities. Gaining support for new or different priorities is key to leading others through change.
8. **They believe those responsible for the change can't be trusted (Descriptive Belief).** People will resist change if they believe that leadership either doesn't have their best interests at heart or isn't being open and honest with them about the change and its impact. If people have trouble trusting each other in routine times, they will trust each other even less during times of change. Mistrust puts people in a defensive posture, causing them to focus on the risks of the change, not the benefits. It also causes them to expend large amounts of energy protecting themselves instead of cooperating with others.

Change Leaders and Agents will be better equipped to manage change and the communication process once they have assessed the beliefs that their specific Receivers are operating under. The Change Resistance Communication assessment tool can be used on an individual, team, or departmental basis. Application of the tool can also be used in multiple ways. First, subjective, by being administered by the Leader/Agent on behalf of the individual/group. This is a much quicker method, yet yields a subjective opinion only from the Leader/Agent who is providing the data on behalf of the individual/team. The second, objective, requires each individual/team to provide the tool's data themselves. While this is much more time and effort consuming, it provides greater accuracy and richness in data. Decisions on the administration of the tool require balancing time, resources, data quality, and the current level of understanding and relationships of the individual/team/department. Results from administration of the tool will produce specific change related initiatives and communication processes that will redirect employee and customer behavior.

Resource References: *The Key to*