
LEADING POSITIVE CHANGE



10 Leadership strategies for managing constant change.

by **Bec Bland**

Leadership and Flourishing
Culture Consultant and Coach

How can I successfully manage the constant change happening within my organisation? This is a common question from leaders and managers tasked with introducing and implementing endless change initiatives within their work context.

Constant change is exhausting. We naturally resist change, especially when it's the kind of change imposed upon us in the workplace, often in a hierarchical way, by powerful others.

Often the changes that are so 'urgent' and 'important' either fail, or aren't given sufficient time to embed before another new change takes its place.

How is it possible to stay energised and positive about change, AND keep your integrity as a leader in tact? With every new change, you notice a lot less buy-in from staff, relationships

LEADING POSITIVE CHANGE

become even more fractured as trust is lost, and disillusionment and disengagement kick-in.

Our world and workplaces are becoming increasingly VUCA; volatile, unpredictable, complex and adverse. A recent study by Locos and Boonstra (2020), revealed that 88% of middle managers in more than 650 international organisations experience their business environment as complex, dynamic, and even chaotic. Only 12% of middle managers experience their environment as more or less stable and predictable.

Change management research shows that up to 70% of change initiatives fail. In short, leading change in our VUCA workplaces means changing the way you lead.

Research in Positive Organisational Scholarship suggest positive change approaches that lead to the development of strength, resiliency and extraordinary individual and organisational performance. So that, instead of leaders experiencing the loneliness and exhaustion of constant change, you and your members collaborate with purpose, positivity and energy towards a vision of a better future and new possibilities.



10 LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

Change management research has consistently shown that the role of leaders in the change management process significantly impacts the success of change, and also the wellbeing, resilience and effectiveness of their members.

Here are 10 leadership strategies to help you manage constant change in a positive, empowering way.

1.Change Acceptance

Whether we like it or not, change is constantly happening, and will continue to do so, especially in the workplace. The COVID pandemic, financial crisis, large-scale natural disasters, adverse weather, war, climate change, and rapid advancement in technology and AI all present challenges for businesses which they must respond to in order to survive. And this means making changes. Things are not going back to a pre-pandemic ‘normal’,



and nobody knows what the next ‘new normal’ will be. Chances are, there isn’t going to be one. There’s no longer a one-size fits all approach to business. Businesses that want to not only survive, but thrive through uncertainty and turbulence, know that they need to listen, engage their workforce, create and innovate (see strategy 2).

Accepting the inevitability of constant change is the first step to successfully managing it.

10 LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES



2. Create and Innovate

The best way to predict the future is to shape it. In order to meet the demands of an uncertain and unpredictable future, it's important for businesses and leaders to create and innovate, in order to find out what works best for them and their people. In other words, change is good. However, it doesn't always feel like it with top-down change initiatives solely aimed at cutting costs and increasing profit.

Therefore, it's important for leaders to quickly change the mindset around change, from 'just another money-saving initiative' to an opportunity to create a better future.

The best businesses are abandoning traditional top-down, hierarchical change initiatives in order to tap into the knowledge and resources of all members, making it safe for idea sharing, and the piloting of new systems and processes without fear of failure or repercussions. Some change managers and researchers are moving

10 LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

away from planned change towards ‘playful transformations’ which is the collaborative play, dialogue and creation of new opportunities. Boonstra, 2022.

3. Involvement

If there’s no involvement, there’s no buy-in. Involving all members in the change process is vital if you want the change to work. As previously discussed, top-down change imposed on others will meet the most resistance, so as a leader, it’s important to take the time to hear the views and opinions of the people affected by the change, responding with gratitude and compassion.

In order to overcome the inevitable resistance that accompanies imposed change, traditional change management strategies often involve Leaders conveying a sense of urgency in order to gain the buy-in from staff, i.e. it’s worse to stay the same than it is to change. However, recent research shows that vilifying the status quo is a dangerous way to initiate change that breeds unnecessary fear and anxiety, McLaren, T. et al, 2023.

Working appreciatively to leverage what’s already working, and communicating the importance of a desired future state, is a far more effective way to manage the constant change of turbulent workplaces that doesn’t have such a negative impact on member stress and wellbeing.



10 LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

4. Purpose

Clarifying a higher purpose can help people find intrinsic motivation to engage with change and challenge.

Viewing yourself as a positive change agent and encouraging others to connect with a higher purpose and fulfilment of potential will inspire creativity, innovation and engagement.

5. Learning with others

Let go of the idea that as a leader, you need to have all the answers and be perceived as the change 'expert'. In positive change management, leaders are continuously engaged in the process of learning. They are learning and changing 'with' others, co-creating trusting relationships and surrendering control.

Model the process of moving with confidence into uncertainty by adapting effectively and



engaging others in the learning process.

6. Future Vision

Personify a vision that invites others to an attractive new future and compelling possibilities. Help others to see the future opportunities of change by conveying hope and optimism.

The best way to create a positive future vision is by co-creating it with your members, drawing out their ideas through Appreciative Inquiry.

10 LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES



7. Strengths Focus

With every new change initiative, consider what's already going well. Who has the natural strengths, skills and talents to effectively implement the change? What strengths need to be dialled-up in order to make the change successful?

Understanding your members' natural strengths, and encouraging them to use them to achieve change initiatives and overcome challenge, will help to anchor and motivate your team during challenging times.

Likewise, how can you use your natural leadership strengths to effectively manage change?

8. Compassion

Change is hard, and constant change is exhausting. If not carefully

10 LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

managed, it can feel like everything is happening in crisis mode, so acting with compassion matters deeply to your people. Invest time and be ready to hear the opinions, problems and challenges relating to change, always responding compassionately.

Research has shown that attending to people's emotional needs shapes how they feel about themselves and their organisation. People are emotionally vulnerable in times of change, and change brings an array of emotions such as uncertainty, loss, anxiety and confusion. Evidence suggests that experiencing compassion during difficult moments in change can help people better navigate the process, Huy, 2002.

9. Relationships

Effective change leaders are 'other-focused'. They put the collective good ahead of their own personal agenda, placing an emphasis on



10 LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

teamwork, participation, and openness.

Leaders who act with the greater good firmly in mind, and who care about others in the process, build connection, collaboration and trust through the change process.

10. Positive Emotions

Change is often associated with identifying and correcting problems, which cultivates the prevalence of negative emotions such as anger, frustration and anxiety. People fear making a mistake in relation to changes and worry about negative repercussions.

To counter-balance the negativity associated with change, it's important leaders recognise and reward excellence, frequently expressing gratitude that values the efforts of others. Positive leadership action such as this dramatically increases



positive emotions, and the engagement and performance of members.

Finally, looking after yourself as a leader and having the right support will help reduce the overwhelm of change in turbulent work contexts. Coaching is a great way to develop your leadership skills, and trial new strategies for managing change.

For more information about change management and positive leadership, visit www.becbland.com.