

Coping with Change in the WORKPLACE

No matter where you are in life, it's a certainty that change will be dropping by soon. Sometimes the impulse is to lock the door and pull down the blinds. That's understandable. Change is a real stressor, even when positive.

But there's no hiding from the facts. The pace of technological advancement requires a more adaptable and flexible workforce. Today, your ability to manage change plays an ever-increasing role in both your career and your mental well-being.

Change can be exceptionally difficult to deal with, especially when it's unexpected. During these times, fear and anger often become our default responses.

A transitional period in which you feel uncomfortable is natural. Forgive yourself for it. In the meantime, there are several things you can be doing to smooth the process.

The Bombshell

Clarify goals: Uncertainty can be a driver of fear and negativity. Determining the goals that are responsible for a particular change allows you to tailor your response and place your focus on results rather than emotion.

Resist snap judgments: Changes are sometimes thrust upon us with little notice or explanation, forcing us to act before we have complete information. It's frustrating to operate in the dark. It seems we're hardwired to have an opinion on everything. Spending your energy on gathering information rather than mulling over outcomes will help you stay productive and maintain peace of mind.

Try to see the big picture: Change always comes with some negative effects. Separate the short-term growing pains from longer-term considerations, and consider both the direct and indirect effects that change will have on you and your environment.

Troubleshoot: You are likely going to be operating with some unknown outcomes. Brainstorm probable scenarios and put together a plan for dealing with trouble spots. This will save you headaches down the road and give you a sense of purpose and control in the meantime.

Use what you already know: Successful people are usually good at adapting their existing knowledge and skill sets to new situations, and you can be too. Chances are that you already have the necessary tools. Most changes are procedural, organizational, or technological — leaving the underlying fundamentals untouched. When you're lost, begin by tapping into what you already know.

Managing Expectations

No transition is smooth. Expect a certain amount of inconvenience and upheaval. Change tends to require one step backward for every two steps forward. Unexpected hurdles, misjudgments, and workarounds are the rule, not the exception, and working through the process can be a grind. Accepting that the road is likely to be bumpy for a while will help you to keep frustrations at bay.

They've Made a Mistake!

Let's be honest; not all change is good. Sometimes ill-advised change is foisted upon you without your consent or input. If the deed is done, the best you can do is let it go, adapt, and control the only thing you can — your reaction.

Avoid the temptation to sabotage the process either overtly or through inaction in order to teach decision makers a lesson. You'll most likely end up setting yourself up as the scapegoat should things go badly.

Contribute and help as best you can, and let the change run its course. Bad decisions reveal themselves over time. Don't damage your career and reputation by "helping" others realize their mistakes.



Change and Your Career

Remaining positive and assured isn't easy in times of change, but it is these moments that define your professionalism. The next time workplace change turns your life upside down, take measure of the opportunities presented.

The ability to deal with change effectively is one of your strongest potential assets. Displaying a calm demeanor and a thoughtful, results-oriented approach to change indicates a flexibility and leadership that is highly coveted in the workplace.

Your positive approach will not only mark you as the kind of employee others want to work with, but also tend to get you noticed and promoted. Change is inevitable. Your response often determines whether it's a negative event or a positive one.



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