



**INTRODUCTION**  
to **Change**  
**without migraines**™

**Rick Maurer**

Version 4

## **Introduction to Change without Migraines™**

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## Learning about the Change without Migraines™ Approach

With all the attention placed on change management over the past fifteen years or so – large consulting firms created change management lines of business, many books were published that described change management processes in detail, and countless dollars were spent on training – success is still uncertain.

When I wrote *Beyond the Wall of Resistance* (1996), the failure rate of large changes averaged about 66 percent. I have seen no evidence that the failure rate has lessened. In fact, some studies suggest that failure is even higher today.

### Why Change Fails

Many of the change theories and strategies are sound and based in proven practice. So, what gives? With all that we know about the ingredients of successful change, success should be much higher. Here's my take on it. I think there are three major reasons (and maybe even more) why change fails:

- Change is really hard, and the effective leadership of change demands time and attention to nuance. I have seen otherwise fine change management strategies falter because the leaders and their consultants adhered to “the book” too rigidly. They missed the cues that something different was needed.
- The potential power of resistance is taken too lightly. We still assume that if we explain things really well, then most people will go along. This misses a fundamental point – people resist for a variety of reasons, not just a lack of information.
- Leaders don't like to give up control. In fact, none of us do. (I know, you're the exception to that rule. But for everyone else, this rule applies.) Change threatens our belief that we are in control. Change causes disruptions, and those disruptions could result in downsizing, shifts of who is in charge, changes in priorities, and that list goes on.

So even though we might say – and believe – that we are 100 percent behind a major change, when the going gets rough, our commitment shifts over to our own survival. And we may unconsciously subvert the very changes we spoke out in favor of.

For example, these leaders may believe that people don't need to be coddled. They don't need to be involved. They need to be told what to do. And once you tell them, they'll do it. Even more "enlightened" leaders may give into the cultural pressure to appear strong and look like a leader.

## **Another Way**

Those are all powerful forces working against successful change, and I certainly don't have magic answers for dealing with those three big issues. But I do know how to get people to address those major stumbling blocks, shedding light on those challenges is a major first step.

I am giving you this book and the accompanying videos, audios, and PDF files with the hope that they will help you lead (or consult to those who lead) change in your organization more effectively.

I call my approach Change without Migraines™. You might think of it as the foundation for building sound change strategies or the foundation for adapting your favorite strategy.

I have used this approach for well over ten years, and it works. My clients use it, and strangers send me e-mails or pull me aside at conventions and tell me that Change without Migraines™ works.

But don't take my word for it. I urge you to read this short book and watch the videos while wearing your most critical hat. Be merciless. Criticize everything. Do the ideas ring true – or not? Are my suggestions practical or pie-in-the-sky fluff? Then, if you think Change without Migraines™ has merit, begin to use it. Once you've used the model a couple of times, make it better. Expand the theory. Add new tools. Apply it in places where I might never have considered using it. For example, when I started my free e-mail newsletter, *Tools for a Change*, I noticed that a lot of clergy were

reading it. I don't write about places of worship. I know very little about the challenges they face, yet these men and women found the model helpful. And that makes me very happy. A schoolteacher told me that I should write a book just for teachers. I am probably not going to do that, but I hope that she will.

Finally, let me know what you're up to. It will help me learn, and in turn, I can pass that knowledge on to others.

I wish you well.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Maurer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "R" and "M".

Rick Maurer

## Applying the Cycle of Change

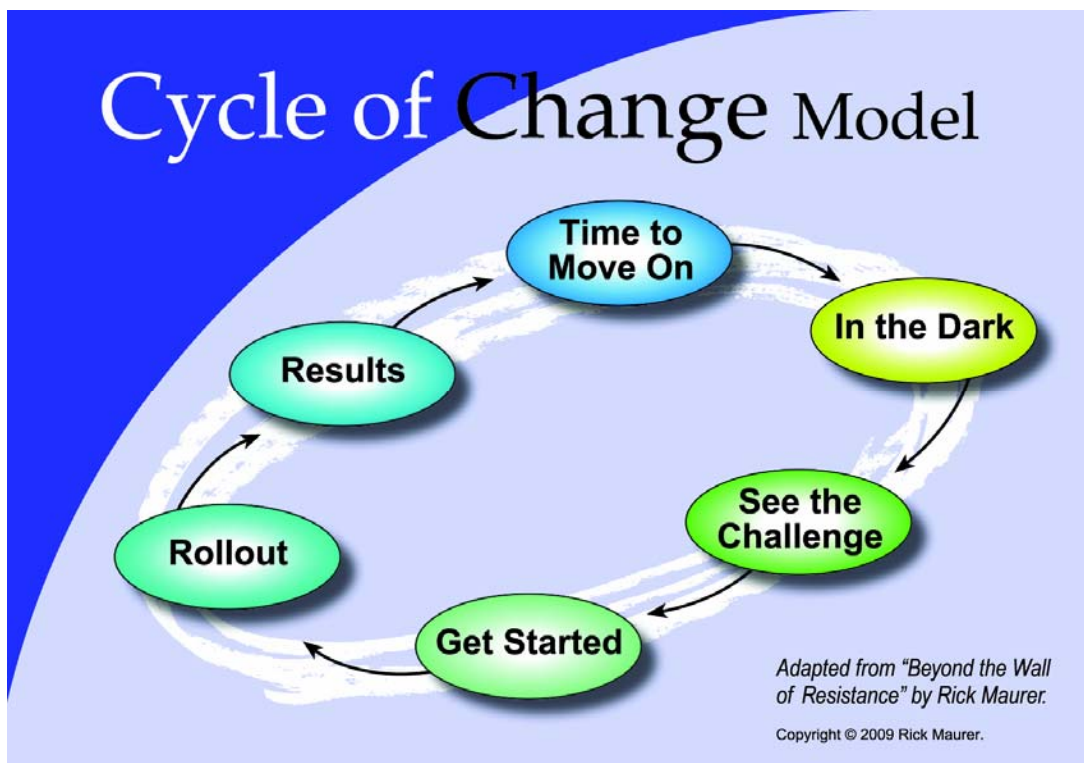
In combination with the levels of resistance, the cycle of change is the foundation of my approach to change. (The cycle of change was adapted with permission from the cycle of experience developed at the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland, a place where I studied and continue to teach part time.)

Change occurs in cycles. Once we know where we are in the cycle and where others might be, we begin to see options.

The cycle of change can help you:

- **see that no change lasts forever**
- **understand why resistance is occurring**
- **predict the consequences of using a particular approach to leading change**
- **monitor progress and take corrective actions**

There are six stages in the cycle: In the Dark, See the Challenge, Get Started, Rollout, Results and Time to Move On.



## **IN THE DARK ("ONE OR TWO O'CLOCK" ON THE CYCLE)**

When people are at this stage, they have very little information about the need for change. Therefore, there is little reason for them to go along with you since they don't see a need to do anything differently.

Changes are extremely difficult when stakeholders are in the dark.

Although they may be "in the dark" with regard to the challenges you see, they probably are totally in the light when it comes to other challenges and opportunities facing the organization. And they may be doing just fine working on their own projects (i.e. their cycles of change). In other words, your change is an interruption to what they are already doing.

## **SEE THE CHALLENGE (THREE O'CLOCK)**

This is the most important point in the life of a change.

Once key stakeholders see the same challenge or opportunity, it is possible to begin working on a change. The late thought leader on change, Kathie Dannemiller, spoke about the importance of the shift that occurs when everyone recognizes the challenge or opportunity facing them. When this shift occurs, people are ready to do something, and that leads to the next stage.

## **GET STARTED (FOUR TO SIX O'CLOCK)**

This is the stage that gets the most attention in change management literature. It is the time when you create a vision, get people involved, develop plans, set timelines, goals, and measures of success.

Too often leaders begin here and skip the first two stages. While that may seem logical, it misses the important step of helping people get out of the dark and see the same picture of challenges and opportunities that you do.

## **ROLL-OUT (SEVEN TO EIGHT O'CLOCK)**

This is the implementation phase. All the analysis is done. People have gotten training. New systems are in place. You turn the key and “go live.”

Unfortunately, too many changes end right then. The roll-out phase simply means you announced that the new program was now in place. It doesn't guarantee that anyone will do anything differently as a result.

Declaring victory and actually seeing real results are quite different. If you end at roll-out, all you have done is invested a lot of time, money, and good will into a change that failed.

## **RESULTS (NINE O'CLOCK)**

You have met your goals and you are achieving real results. At this stage, the change is no longer a change. It is now part of the way you do business. It is the new status quo.

All of your planning and implementation activities have led up to this point.

The results stage might last for a long time – maybe years, or it could be a short-lived success. How long the results work depends on the work environment, changes in the demographics of your market, competition, changes in technology, and many other factors.

## **TIME TO MOVE ON (10 TO 11 O'CLOCK)**

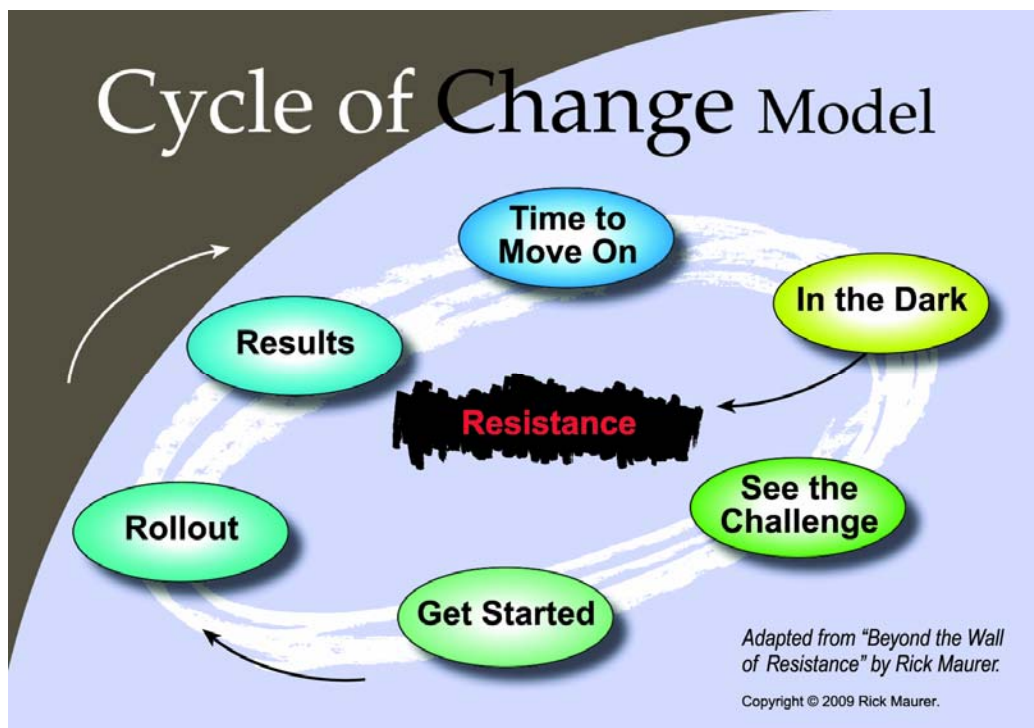
Nothing lasts forever. At some point, it will be time to move on. Even the best programs eventually run their course. It is important to keep your eyes open for signals that it is time to move onto something new. Some organizations miss those important signals that it is time to move on.

## The Biggest Mistake

Getting out ahead of others on the Cycle of Change is the biggest mistake you can make. Imagine this scenario: as you read financial reports and see the challenges your competitors are mounting, you recognize that it is time to do something. You think about what to do and decide to hire a consultant to help you develop a plan for addressing these threats. As you near the time to make this change a reality, you realize that you failed to tell others about it. You get people together to tell them why the company needs to make dramatic changes. You assume that the clarity of your message will be enough to move them from In the Dark to Get Started. That seldom happens.

Instead of rising in applause at the brilliance of your thinking, they begin to resist you. You expected their arrow to move from one to four o'clock, but instead it dives into the center of the cycle – into resistance. The more you push, the more embedded they become in the resistance. And now you've got a problem that was entirely avoidable.

By the way, this is a common mistake. We all make this mistake in little and big ways every day – at work and at home. We get out ahead when we should have stayed engaged.



## Resistance to Change Why it Matters and What to Do about It

Nearly two-thirds of all major changes in organizations fail. That should be pretty sobering information.

Fortune 500 executives say that resistance was the primary reason their changes failed. Eighty percent of chief information officers said that resistance, not a lack of technical skills or resources, was the main reason why technology projects failed.

But these statistics are only partly right. Resistance is *not* the primary reason why changes fail. ***The real problem is that leaders plan and instigate major changes in ways that create inertia, apathy, and opposition.***

For example, an executive announces that the company will begin restructuring next week. Employees and middle managers start to resist. As the project unfolds, executives see resistance appear in many forms – malicious compliance, in-your-face arguments, and sabotage. The executives respond by pushing the change even harder. They make demands, and employees increase their opposition. The change goes far over the allotted budget, deadlines are merely pipe dreams, and the change fails.

Does this scenario sound at all familiar to you? If so, you're not alone.

### **You've Got to Know What Creates Resistance to Change**

Resistance is in the eye of the beholder. The people resisting don't see what they are doing as resistance; they often see it as survival.

Resistance to change is a reaction to the way a change is being led. There are no born "resistors" waiting to ruin otherwise perfect plans. People resist in response to something. Think of resistance as a cause and effect phenomenon. When you feel resistance, ask, "What are the causes of this opposition?"

Resistance protects people from harm. Suppose that I'm a novice downhill skier. It's resistance that keeps me from taking the chair lift to the top of Bodycast Mountain. In an organization, resistance keeps me from saying yes to an assignment that I think will kill my career. People may read the risks wrong, but in their minds the danger is real.

The better we are at seeing what causes resistance, the easier it will be to build support for our ideas. In other words, if we understand resistance, we can also understand the support for change.

### **Three Levels of Resistance**

Here are the reasons why people resist change.

#### **Level 1 – I Don't Get It.**

Level 1 involves information: facts, figures, and ideas. It is the world of thinking and rational action, presentations, diagrams, and logical arguments.

Level 1 resistance may come from:

- **lack of information**
- **disagreement over interpretation of the data**
- **lack of exposure to critical information**
- **confusion over what it all means**

Giving people information is the most common way organizations try to deal with resistance. Many make the mistake of treating all resistance as if it were Level 1. Well-meaning leaders give people more information. They hold more meetings and make more PowerPoint presentations when in fact, something completely different is called for. That's where Levels 2 and 3 come in.

#### **Level 2 – I Don't Like It.**

Level 2 is an emotional reaction to the change. Blood pressure rises, adrenaline flows, pulse increases. It is based on fear. People are afraid that this change will cause them to lose face, status, control – maybe even their jobs.

Level 2 is not wishy-washy. You can't tell people to "get over it" and expect them to respond with "Wow, thanks, I needed that." Level 2 runs deep. When it kicks in, we can feel like our very survival is at stake.

When Level 2 is active, it makes communicating change very difficult. When adrenaline shoots through our systems, we move into a fight-or-flight mode (or we may freeze like a deer in the headlights). We stop listening. No matter how terrific your presentation is, once people hear "downsizing," their minds (and bodies) go elsewhere. This is uncontrollable. They are not choosing to ignore you; it's just that they've got more important things on their minds – like their own survival.

Organizations usually don't encourage people to respond emotionally, so employees limit their questions and comments to Level 1 issues. They ask polite questions about budgets and timelines. Although it may appear that they are with you, they're not. They are asking Level 1 questions while hoping that you'll read between the lines and speak to their fears. The really tricky part is that they may not even be aware that they are operating on such a basic emotional level.

### **Level 3 – I Don't Like You.**

Maybe they do like you, but they don't trust or have confidence in your leadership. I know that's a hard pill to swallow, but lack of attention to Level 3 is a major reason why resistance flourishes and changes fail. It is seldom talked about. Books on change talk about strategies and plans, but most of this advice fails to recognize the fundamental importance of trust in leading change successfully.

In Level 3 resistance, people are not resisting the idea. In fact, they may love the idea you are presenting. They are resisting *you*. Maybe their history with you makes them wary. Perhaps they are afraid that this will be "a flavor of the month," like so many other changes, or that you won't have the courage to make the hard decisions that will see this change through.

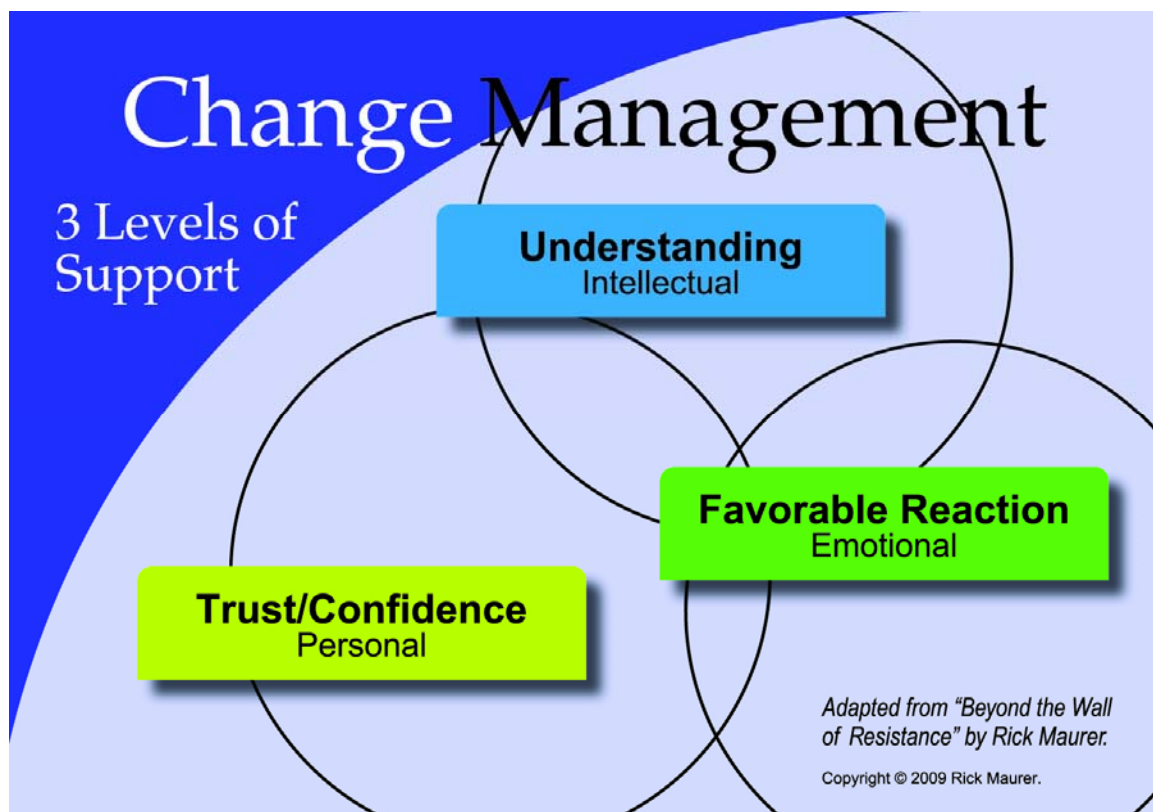
It may not be you; rather, the people may resist those that you represent. The moment that people hear that someone from headquarters is present

and wanting to help, they often become skeptical. If you happen to be that person from headquarters, you're going to have a hard time getting those people to listen to you.

Whatever the reasons for this deeply-entrenched resistance, you can't afford to ignore it.

People may understand the idea you are suggesting (Level 1), and they may even have a good feeling about the possibilities of this change (Level 2), but they won't go along if they don't trust you.

Please note that Level 3 distrust in you doesn't have to be true in order for it hinder your ability to get things done. If people believe you can't be trusted, then they'll act on that until they are proven otherwise.



## The Cycle and the Three Levels

Support and resistance are two sides of a single coin. People either understand you or they don't (Level 1). They are either excited by the prospect of a change or are afraid (Level 2). They either have trust and confidence in you or they don't (Level 3).

These three levels are *always* alive either working for or against you. At every stage of a change, you should be able to identify where people are with respect to Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 issues.

This information can help you develop or modify strategies. For example, if people are "in the dark" and they don't trust you, then simply giving them the facts (Level 1) won't be sufficient because they probably won't be listening to someone they don't trust.

## How You Can Turn Resistance Into Support

Here are a few ideas to get you started addressing the various levels of resistance. Remember that all three levels could be in play simultaneously.

### Level 1 – Make Your Case

- Make sure that people know why a change is needed. Before you talk about **how** you want to do things, explain **why** something must be done.
- Present the change using understandable language. If your audience isn't made up of financial specialists, detailed charts showing sophisticated analysis of the numbers will be lost on them.
- Find multiple ways to make your case. People take in information in different ways – some like to hear the data, and others prefer visual sources like pictures or text. Some people learn best in interacting in a group or in conversation. The more variety in the communication channels, the greater the chance that people will comprehend what you have to say.

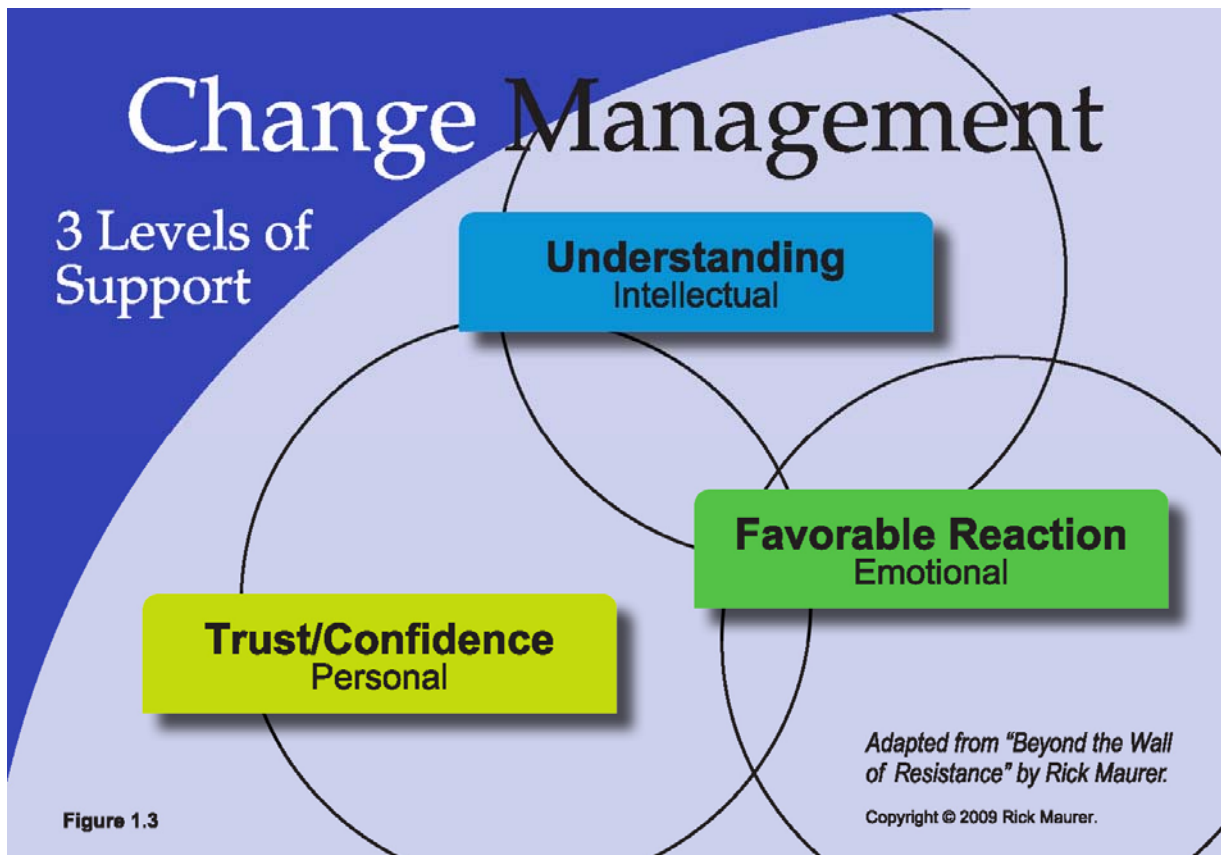
## **Level 2 – Remove as Much of the Fear as You Can and Increase the Excitement about What’s Positive about the Change**

- Emphasize what’s in it for them. People need to believe that the change will serve them in some way. For example, you could explain that work will be easier, relationships will improve, career opportunities will open up, or job security will increase.
- Engage the people in the process. People tend to support things that they have a hand in building.
- Be honest. If a change will hurt them – downsizing, for instance – tell them the truth. It’s the right thing to do, and it stops the rumor mill from inventing stories about what might happen. Also, honesty bolsters their trust in you (a Level 3 issue).

## **Level 3 - Rebuild Damaged Relationships and Tend to Neglected Relationships**

- *Mea Culpa*. Take responsibility for things that may have led to the current tense relations.
- Keep commitments. Demonstrate that you are trustworthy.
- Find ways to spend time together so they get to know you and your team. This is especially helpful if the resistance comes from those whom you represent and not just from your personal history together.
- Allow yourself to be influenced by the people who resist you. This doesn’t mean that you give in to every demand, but rather that you can admit that you may have been wrong, and that they may have ideas worth considering.

The Israeli statesman Abba Eban once said, “Men and nations behave wisely, once they’ve exhausted all other alternatives.” My hope is that this short white paper may help you behave wisely *before* you go through all those other alternatives. I wish you well.



## **The Most Important Thing You Can Do to Make a Change Successful – and It's Also the Most Neglected**

*Making a compelling case for change is this most important thing you can do – and it is the most neglected.* When organizations ignore or gloss over this stage, they often pay with massive resistance, budgets that go out-of-whack, and severely missed deadlines.

Did you ever roll out a major change only to find out that hardly anyone supported you? Then for the next few months you found yourself working night and day trying to push this change forward? Often it felt like you were dragging people – pleading with them, threatening, or just doing the work yourself?

If you've ever experienced this (and I suspect most of us have), I think you'll find this chapter helpful.

Making a compelling case for change is the most important thing you can do to build support for any major new initiative. Makes no difference if it is merger integration, a reorganization, restructuring, reengineering, implementing new software, Six Sigma, or whatever – making a strong case that something different is needed must come first.

Sadly, most people ignore this critical phase in the life of a change. My research shows that people who ignore or speed through this stage risk failure. Those who give attention to making the case so that people can truly understand why change is called for enjoy a higher success rate – and much lower resistance.

Typically, here's what happens. A small group of leaders sees the need for a change. They look at the numbers and realize that they've got to do something now! Whatever it is, it's got to happen today! Driven by a strong sense of urgency, these leaders rush to action. They introduce plans. They make assignments. They do all kinds of things to get started. What they miss is that nobody else seems to see this urgent need to do something differently.

These leaders just made a huge mistake. They introduced “how” before they answered “why.” They moved to action by telling people “how” the change will be planned and implemented without ever explaining “why” it was so important to do something – anything – differently.

Read on to learn how to avoid the trap of moving to **how** before **why** is answered.

### **Address Why before How**

Before rushing to action, you might slow down and consider your response to the following questions.

1. Does your own team feel an urgency to change? If not, this is probably the place to start. Too often, an executive (or middle manager for that matter) introduces something without getting his or her own group on board. And the place to begin is with making a case.
2. Who else must feel urgency to change?
3. What’s the gap between what they see and what you see?
4. How can we bridge that gap in order to make the most compelling case for change?

Addressing these questions with all groups of stakeholders makes it pretty likely that you’ll be covering why before how.

### **Cast a Wide Net**

You need to be able to identify everyone who has a stake in this change. Often, leaders make a case to a small group of people. When that group gets excited, the leaders believe that they’ve just earned the support they need. And that’s a mistake.

Take a moment and write down all the stakeholders *who must support you* on this change.

Consider the following:

- Who needs to be a champion for this change?
- Who needs to support it?
- Who needs to go along?

Asking these questions may cause you to cast a much wider net and find stakeholders who you might have missed otherwise.

I was helping a group of managers in a software engineering firm debrief a project that had stalled. They told me that six months into the project, the mail room balked, and that stopped everything. While they had done a fairly good job of involving stakeholders, they completely forgot about the mail room. These types of missteps are avoidable if you just stop and ask yourself, “Who has a stake in the outcome?”

## **Mind the Gap**

You can't ride the tube in London without hearing warnings to “mind the gap.” That's the gap between the train and the platform.

Same goes inside organizations. You must pay attention to the gap between what you see and what others see.

List the places where your view of what's going on differs from other stakeholders.

Is it a huge gap or something small?

Does the gap occur because you have access to data that others don't see? Do you feel urgency but they don't? Or are they suspicious of you and any message you bring them?

Your response to these questions creates the foundation for your strategy to bridge this gap and make a case.

## Bridging the Gap

Here's what you can do.

You must make sure that people know that something new is called for and that a change is needed today. It is tempting to make a case by just giving people information. But that's not nearly enough. To truly make a case, you need to address three things.

1. People must understand what you're talking about. (Level 1.)
2. People must feel emotionally why this change is critical. "If we don't do something, we could be out of business?" (Level 2)
3. People must trust the source. If people don't trust you, they'll be suspicious of what you tell them. If this is the case, then you may need to bring in someone in whom people do trust. (Level 3)

One company lost a major contract to provide service to a state government. This was a big deal. If this financial loss wasn't turned around, they could be in serious trouble. So instead of parading the executives in front of the employees, as I am certain they had done many times before, they did something completely different. They invited an official from the state's contracting office to explain why their company lost. That person had credibility, and people took that message seriously.

Her message gave people information (Level 1). Her position gave her credibility (Level 3). The evidence itself led most people to feel the potential risk (Level 2).

You should try to include all three levels any time you want to influence others. If people get, like it, and trust you, your ability to make a case for change is quite high. However, if any of these are missing, you'll get indifference, inertia, and resistance. Not a good way to start a major change.

Here is a common way leaders introduce people to change. Some well-meaning leader gets up in front of the team and gives a PowerPoint presentation. This slide show is a mind-numbing display of data. As the

audience looks at slide after slide after slide field crammed with tons of bullet points and numbers, their eyes glaze over. Then their brains glaze over. They're not listening. Mark Twain once wrote, "No sinner was ever converted after the first twenty minutes of a sermon." Same goes for PowerPoint presentations, but I'd make it 10 minutes max.

Every day people try to get people on board by subjecting them to hundreds of PowerPoint slides. It doesn't work. You've got to ask yourself, "Why should people care after being talked to in such a boring manner?"

Making a compelling case for change is all about engaging people. The best way to do that is to build your strategy around the three levels. Make sure people get, like it, and trust where the information is coming from.

At Level 1, make sure people have the capacity to understand what you're talking about. If they don't have MBAs in finance, and your presentations include massive financial analyses and projections, you'll probably lose your audience before you ever get started.

Speak their language.

At Level 2, offer an emotional wallop. Urgency is an emotional thing. It springs from fear or excitement. Make sure your case taps into our natural, deep-seated emotional well.

At Level 3, make sure people trust the ones who deliver the message.

And if you can't find anyone who they trust (and that can happen), consider the following:

- Open the books so people can look at the same data that you see. (By the way, opening the books is a good strategy no matter what the level of trust.)
- Give them opportunities to talk with people like them in other organizations who faced similar challenges.
- Give people time to mull over what you tell them.
- Keep communicating in various ways.

## How Can You Tell That You've Made a Case?

It's not enough to simply think you've made a case; you've got to know that you got your point across at all three levels so that people got it, liked it, and trusted what you told them. Without that assurance, you will spend way too much time and money trying to drag people along with you.

Here are some tips that let you know that you've made a case. You see people:

- ask questions that show they are interested in what you are saying
- challenge what you are saying out of a real concern for what this might mean
- suggest ways to deal with the challenge
- volunteer to help
- take leadership roles
- use first person pronouns – I and we – versus saying you and they. For example, "We've got to do something about this," versus "So what are you going to do about this?"

And as Kathie Dannemiller suggested, look for "a shift," something that tells you that the group is ready to move. They see the challenge.

## Ways to Check

Let's say you work in a large organization, and it's hard to get a good read on where people stand with regard to the change. Here's what you can do.

- Send out a very short survey. Companies such as SurveyMonkey.com and Zoomerang.com allow you to create surveys and post them online for free. (I use SurveyMonkey.com.)
  - Ask three or four questions. You'll get a much higher response rate, and people will usually take time to give you thoughtful answers.
  - Be sure to ask open-ended questions. Multiple choice or 1 to 5 scales will not give you the data you need.

- You might ask, “Over the past few weeks, we have been attempting to show you that our company must make some major changes or else we risk going out of business. Do you share this concern? Please explain.”
- Convene a few focus groups and ask people if they see a need for change. The purpose of a focus group is to learn – not to preach. So go there to listen and learn.
- Ask people informally.
- Pay attention in meetings. Let’s say you thought people were on board, and you began to notice that planning teams are struggling to find members or to get moving. These could be signs that others don’t feel the same sense of urgency that you do.

## Getting Change Started on the Right Foot

### Wait, Before You Get Started

There is a step before actually getting started. I know it doesn't sound possible, but that's life.

You've got to make a case for change before you do anything else. People need to feel the urgency to change. And that should occur before you come up with a strategy to deal with whatever crisis or opportunity is facing you.

This means that you must address "why" before launching into "how" you are going to do something differently. So if you skipped right to this section, please go back and read the previous chapters.

### Now You Can Get Started

If a sufficient number of individuals and groups feel a need to change, it's time to get started. Here are the steps.

- Determine where you want to go.
- Involve people in planning and implementation.
- Communicate the vision and plan.
- Address long term issues today.
- Monitor progress.

Remember, all of these getting-started activities must address Level 1 issues (understanding), Level 2 (build excitement and commitment) and Level 3 (build trust in those leading the change).

### Determine Where You Want to Go

You know you've got a challenge facing you (e.g. increased competition, higher costs of doing business, shortage of talent) or an opportunity (e.g. a potential new market, an old competitor leaves the market, a windfall of money to invest back in the business). Now, what do you do?

Here are some things to consider.

Whatever the change, you will need to tell people where you want them to go. This is not a tactical plan (although that's important as well). I am talking about a vision – an end goal. It doesn't have to be fancy, but it does need to be clear. It needs to show where you want people to head. As my friend Max Stark says, "A vision is like the North Star; it points the way."

Call it what you will – a vision statement, goals, outcomes, whatever – this statement should include the following:

- a clear picture of what the end result should look like
- when you want to meet this target
- values that are important to uphold as you work on this change

That's it.

I have seen all types of vision statements. Some are inspiring, some are filled with financial and production numbers, and others are a combination of things. Some use graphics and pictures, some use bullet points, and some tell a story. Makes no difference what style you use as long as it gives people what they need to guide their work.

Robert Mager, an expert on writing goals and objectives, said it best: "If you meet this goal on the street, would you recognize it?" That's a great test. (Goal Analysis. The Center for Effective Performance. 1983.)

By the way, some vision statements are meaningless fluff. One of the most elaborate and inspiring vision statements I ever read was Enron's. No kidding. It made me want to work there until I stepped back and thought, "Wait a minute; this is Enron they're talking about." You can say all "the right words," but if you fail to demonstrate that you believe those words, your change will fail. And you will build cynicism inside your organization, so don't write what you don't mean.

The vision gives people something to shoot for. Period. Everyone who will work on this new initiative must be able to say, "This is where I am going. And this is how my work contributes to that goal."

## Involve People in the Planning and Implementation

If the change threatens to upset the status quo, (and what major change doesn't?) then you should seriously consider giving people a significant voice in planning and implementing the change.

Just telling people about what's going on is not involvement; nor is doing a Q&A at the end of a speech. I have seen leaders hold lengthy slide show presentations about a major change and then open the floor to questions. They assume that their willingness to take questions from the floor is all the involvement they need. And they're wrong.

I am talking about getting people engaged in the planning – and compelling them to roll up their sleeves and help come up with implementation plans for their own units.

Anything short of that is just lip service.

Involvement doesn't have to include everyone, but it should include all parts of the organization that are affected by the changes – and that list may include customers and suppliers.

The more that people are actively engaged:

- gets people thinking about solutions
- reduces confusion
- increases commitment and ownership

Those are all very good things.

But if the change doesn't *actively* involve every person in the organization in planning meetings and so forth, then at least find ways that people can:

- ask questions and get timely and honest (no spin) answers
- provide ways for people to offer their concerns and provide input (Perhaps they can do this through a liaison in their own work unit or by frequent informal surveys.)
- communicate what's going on at every step of the way

## **Communicate the Vision and the Plan**

Communication is an on-going process. One big meeting with banners, motivational slogans printed on knick-knacks and t-shirts won't cut it. You need to make a commitment to communicate at every step of the way.

Variety helps: face-to-face meetings, informal chats, e-mails, newsletters, videos, special events, voice mail, focus groups, and etcetera.

Think about what works in your organization. If people dread e-mail, then don't use it to communicate vision and plans. But if people love hearing things from their own supervisors, find ways to make sure those natural leaders are given responsibility for getting the word out.

Build in a feedback loop. All of us think we are pretty good communicators. As I write this report, I am thinking, "Maurer, you've outdone yourself again. This report is so clear that people will be able to apply these ideas immediately." But when I get done writing the first draft, I'll send it to my editor, and she'll undoubtedly give me another, more sober opinion. We all need that feedback.

Let's say you put together a big event to communicate the vision and plans. Make sure you also build in a way to find out if the message got across.

Of course, the more people who are actively involved in the planning, the less need there is for big communication plans since everyone was involved in shaping the direction. (Can you tell that I am a big advocate for a high degree of involvement?)

## **Plan for the Long Term**

Some big changes start with a bang and end with barely a whimper. They just fade away without ever achieving anything significant. Think of quality improvement programs. In so many cases, organizations spent many thousands of dollars, gave people training, set up meetings to address quality issues, and then nothing much happened. They never saw

improvements that justified that huge investment of time and other resources.

You need to look ahead at what could divert people's commitment to this change six months or a year from now and put strategies in place today that help ward against those problems occurring.

Here is a short list of some of the things that kill a change even though you made a compelling case and got started on the right foot.

- Strong, committed leadership. The leaders of the organization must – I repeat, they must – demonstrate their commitment to this change all through the process. They must be there at the beginning, and they must show their support at every step of the way until the change becomes embedded into the organization and is no longer looked at as “the change.”
- Make a case continually. Players come and go. They need to be brought up to speed. They need to feel the urgency.
- Commitment to Education. People often need training and on-the-job support as they begin to apply new skills.
- Provide needed resources. Too often a change is funded at the beginning, and over time the budget decreases as other things take on high priority. If the change is still a high priority, then leaders must protect it by ensuring the money is there from start to finish.
- Avoid scope creep. Too often otherwise great projects die because the project team is asked to take on one more task, and then another, until there is so much work to do – and competing demands – that the ship sinks.

## **Monitor Progress**

You need to monitor progress at every step of the way. Too many things can go wrong. Make sure you monitor in all the following areas:

- financial targets
- deadlines
- technical accomplishments
- clarity and motivation (Are people still clear about the goals, and are they still committed to this process?)

- early implementation. Some changes have quick wins built in so that you can see tangible proof that things are working early on. If your project fits that bill, take advantage of that and monitor.

## **A Final Word**

Each type of change has its own demands. Reengineering is not the same as Enterprise Resource Planning or quality improvement. As you get started, you need to get savvy about the “rules” for making the particular type of change work. What I offer in this report are a few things that should go hand-in-glove with any major change.

## Keeping the Change Alive So You Achieve Real Results

I am going to tell you about the most neglected phase in the life of a change. It's hard to find books, articles or just good advice on how to handle this phase. I call it the Keeping Change Alive phase.

It comes after you've made a case that something needs to change, and it comes well after you've done all the things you need to do to get started – like put together project teams, create a vision, identify measures of success, and so forth.

Keeping Change Alive often occurs months – maybe even a year or more – into the project

The banner announcing a change such as “New Technology 2009” or “21<sup>st</sup> Century Productivity” has long since faded and been tossed away. Those initial meetings to get things started are a distant memory. The change is no longer the number one top priority.

Over the months the change keeps falling further down the list of priorities and is at risk of falling off that “to do” list altogether.

That's the phase I am talking about.

I got interested in the difference between those changes that made it from start to finish and those that just sort of died along the way.

I found that a few things set these changes apart:

- strong leadership
- communication
- lock in the new structures
- resources
- supporting the people

And remember that all of these need to take the three levels into account. At the very least, make sure that you use the three levels as a lens as you look at strong leadership, communication, and supporting the people.

You can use these categories to assess how well your organization is doing with a major change. If you find that if some of these items are missing, you may be at serious risk of failing.

### **Strong Leadership**

Of course leadership must occur at all levels of the organization.

By strong leadership I am referring to the men and women who actually run the place – the people who set budgets and priorities. These people need to be:

#### ***Champions for the Change***

It is very easy for senior leadership to move on to other pressing needs after they've rolled out some major new initiative. That is a mistake.

Everyone in the organization must know that the most senior people fully support this change. They don't need to spend lots of time working on it, but when it counts, everyone knows that these leaders back the project.

They talk about it. They ask the people who report to them about it. They ensure that money is there to cover costs of implementing this change.

#### ***Symbolic Acts***

They do things that demonstrate that this change is critically important. For example, a CEO flew across the U.S. just to kick off a meeting that was focused on a change that he believed in. He could have sent an assistant, sent a memo, appeared on video – but he chose to be there in person.

The fact that he was in the room meant far more than any words he actually said.

### ***Find Places to Embed This Change in the Business Plan***

They look for ways to make sure this change becomes part of the daily life of the organization, that it begins to move from change – something new and different – to something that is a part of how we do business.

### ***Protect the Process***

They fight for the people to make sure they have the time to work on this project, and that working on this change doesn't harm them come performance appraisal time, or be seen as a cul-de-sac in their career path.

### ***Protect People from Scope Creep***

When a project is going well, there is a tendency to add on new assignments to these highly effective teams. This often puts too great a burden on these talented and committed people, and progress slows and then stops.

### ***Make Clear Contracts - and Keep Them***

They make sure that the people who are doing the work – VPs, project managers, professional staff, and other employees – have a clear contract for what is expected.

And a contract implies that both parties have responsibilities, so a leader who says, “My door is always open,” but is usually not available when problems come up, is not keeping his or her end of the contract.

### ***Communication***

These leaders make sure they talk about the change. Maybe it's only for a few minutes, but no one ever wonders what the top people think of the change. It lets everyone know that this is still critically important.

### ***Remind People of the Vision***

Someone (or some group) has to keep the vision alive. People forget. Just think of the New Year's resolutions you made a year ago. If you're like most of us, this year's list looks pretty much the same as last year's. We need to be reminded of where we want to go. Sounds odd, but it's true.

### ***Frequent and Digestible Information***

People need information in ways that they can understand and digest. Bombarding people with 150 mind-numbing PowerPoint slides doesn't count as digestible.

### ***Allow Yourself to Take in Information***

As the change moves through the organization, people start to see what it really means. I am often astounded by the creativity and insight of people on the third shift. "If we could just arrange this machine to do X, then we could save lots of time and improve quality." Problem is no one ever talks to the third shift.

Be open to learning from the people who have to implement this change. You'll get great ideas – and you'll find that people are more committed to things that they have some control over.

### ***Find Ways to Celebrate Wins along the Way***

This one often gets forgotten. Find ways to celebrate as you reach milestones along the way.

How do you celebrate? Look at the unique culture of your organization. What turns people on? Pizza parties? Awards dinners? (Probably not.) An afternoon off work? Personal thanks from the most senior person? Show and tell events where people get to brag about their accomplishments? The list goes on. Celebrate in ways that will mean something to the folks involved. And mix it up. This time it's pizza; the next milestone is an afternoon off. The next milestone is show and tell.

## **Lock in the New Structures**

### ***Encourage a New Culture***

Find ways to create an environment that will encourage people to work in the new ways. For example, let's say that this change encourages people to work in self-directed teams. Traditional performance appraisals that focus on individuals will actually work against the goals of teamwork, so that would need to be changed.

### ***Power and Politics***

Just about every major change threatens the existing power structure. Ignoring this common reaction to change could kill an otherwise great idea. Strategies for this change must take your organization's approach to power and politics into account and create ways to either shift the need for these struggles or at least minimize them.

### ***Project Management Office***

This one isn't essential, but it can be quite helpful. Assign people whose fulltime job is to support implementation of the change.

### ***Reward Things That Move the Change Forward***

Make sure that activities that further the goals of the change are rewarded publicly. Give attention to actions that move things forward.

## **Resources**

### ***Money***

I know I covered this under "Strong Leadership," but it is too important to overlook. Money must be allocated for this phase in the life of a big project.

## **Access**

People need to see people who can open doors and get things approved without delays. If people have to run a bureaucratic maze every time they make a request, you will slow down the process – and sap their motivation.

## **Education**

Provide whatever training and education people need in order to work in this new environment. Don't skimp.

## **Support the People**

Some of these items are listed above, but it may help to look at them again when you consider if you are supporting the people who need to get things done.

- They are recognized for things that further the project.
- They are rewarded for accomplishments. And rewards don't always have to be cash.
- Give them sufficient time to dedicate to this project.
- Provide access to key people and other resources.
- Do everything you can to make them know that they are part owners in this process.

## **How to Use This List**

This is a long list, but it is an important one. It has three possible uses:

- Use it as a guide for you during the early stage of change so that thinking and systems are in place when the newness and excitement wears off.
- Use it to diagnose why things are slowing down.
- Monitor implementation just to make sure you are still on track.

## Getting Back on Track if You Start to Derail

Did you ever find yourself in the midst of a major change only to see it start to fail badly? You begin to see all that time and money and hope, (not to mention your reputation), go down the tubes. If so, you're not alone. It happens a lot.

When things do derail – in fact, even when there is only a hint that things may go wrong – it's time to do something. You need to get back on track before it's too late.

There are three things to pay attention to:

- Know the early warning signs.
- Find out why things are derailing.
- Take immediate action to get back on track.

### The Early Warning Signs

Almost every failure gives warning signs way before things get really bad. These signs are relatively easy to spot, but too often we are so immersed in the planning or so confident in our ability to make this change work that we fail to look up and see what's really going on.

Here are some early warning signs:

- You can't get people to volunteer to take part anymore.
- Project teams (and individuals) just go through the motions but don't really accomplish anything valuable.
- Hallway talk is negative (or those dreaded blog postings are cynical and pessimistic).
- You are missing many deadlines along the way.
- You are way over budget because this change is taking far longer than you expended.
- People are resisting vocally.

And this list could go on and on.

## **Find Out Why Things Are about to Derail**

While it is tempting to see the warning signs and act quickly to correct problems, this can be a huge mistake. You need data to know what's causing the problems so that you know what to correct.

Here's a very sophisticated way to find out why things are getting off track: ask people.

OK, I know that seems obvious, but when you're in the middle of a change that's failing, it is tempting to stop listening to people outside of your own small circle. But the best thing you can do is get out there and find out why things are going poorly.

Here are some simple ways to do that.

### ***Use a Survey***

As I mentioned in an earlier chapter, I like to use simple surveys. I use [www.SurveyMonkey.com](http://www.SurveyMonkey.com) to create, send, and collect the answers. And it's a free service.

Make the survey short: three to five questions. You'll get a much higher response rate, and people will take time to answer the questions thoughtfully.

Ask open-ended questions. Don't use multiple choice, true/ false, or 1 to 5 rankings. You need to hear what people are thinking and feeling. Only their written comments will give you that information.

### ***Convene Focus Groups***

Invite people to attend a focus group. Make sure you talk to stakeholders at various levels and locations. Each group should be made up of ten or fewer people so that they have time to talk.

Your job during the focus groups is to ask questions – and then listen. You are there to learn – not to convert.

## ***Ask Joe***

Every organization has a Joe (or a Jo) around. These people will tell it like it is with no fear of consequences. They are golden. They will tell you things that others fear to say.

The Joes in your organization can be a great source of helpful information, but be sure to verify what they tell you. You've got to make sure that Jo's reaction really touches on concerns that others share.

## ***Management by Wandering Around***

Tom Peters and Robert Waterman coined the term in their classic book, *In Search of Excellence*. They reported that many effective leaders just wandered around with no agenda. You can't do that all day, every day, but it can be a valuable tool. The informality of these walks around the organization gives people a chance to talk to you. And the relaxed atmosphere makes it a bit easier for people to talk openly.

Of course you've got to approach the wandering correctly. You are there to learn, chat, and listen – but not to preach or tell people why they are wrong. And you certainly aren't there to gather information to use against them.

## **Figure Out What All This Information Means**

So you've gathered lots of good information; now what do you do?

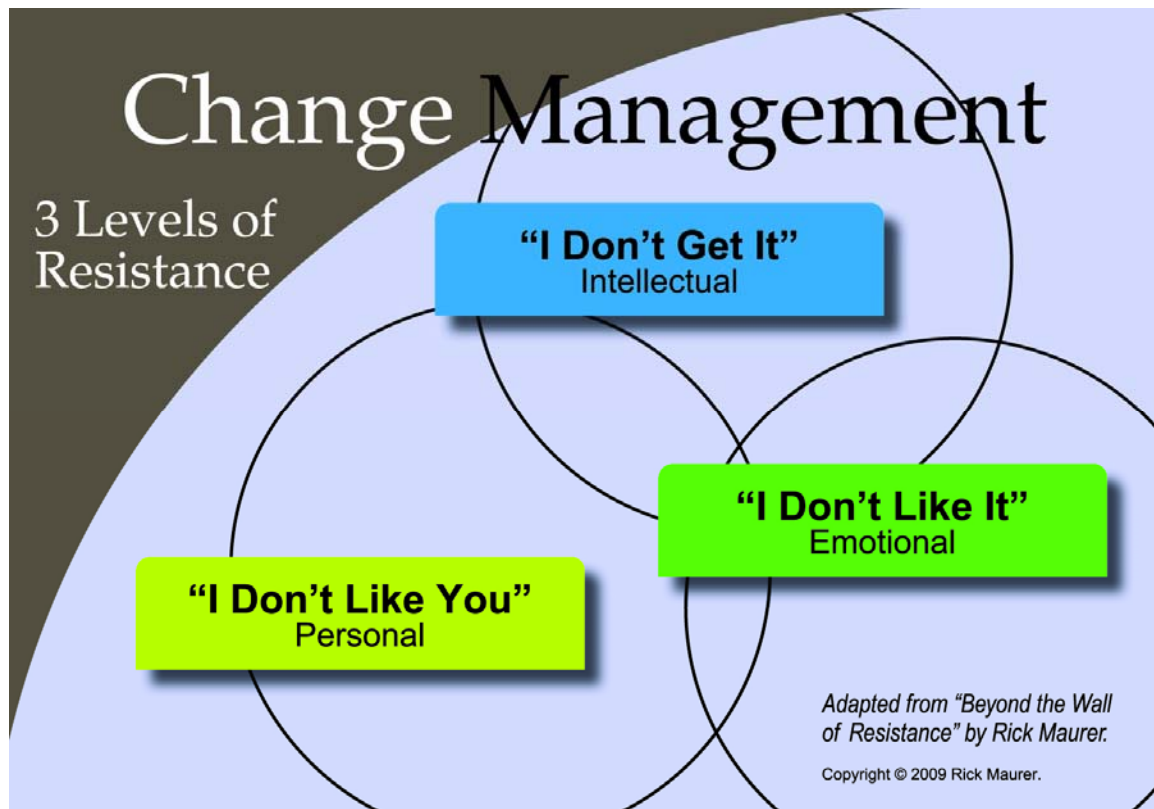
You need a way to interpret what you just learned. I use my own three levels of resistance as a guide when I interpret the results of surveys, focus groups, and informal conversations.

### **Three Levels of Resistance**

People don't get it. (Level 1)

They don't like it. (Level 2)

They don't like you. (Level 3)



**And one more lens.** In my report, *Keeping Change Alive*, I list a number of things that are important to the success of a change. The absence of any of these can cause things to go off track. Please read the full report, but here are three of those items:

- lack of leadership commitment
- lack of resources (which includes making sure people have the time to work on planning and implementation of the change)
- no rewards or recognition along the way

As you sift through the data, see if any of these items are alive.

As you sift through your notes, use the levels as lenses looking for Level 1, 2, and 3 issues that might be working against the change. For example:

**Level 1:** Are you learning that people are confused or in the dark about this change? They don't see a need for the change. Maybe they are unclear about the direction you are taking.

If so, part of your strategy to get back on track must be to make sure people understand what's going on.

But beware. Too often, leaders limit their tactics to giving people more information when the problems lie elsewhere. It is easy to prepare e-mails, newsletters, PowerPoint shows (all Level 1 tools) and miss the Level 2 and Level 3 issues.

**Level 2:** Are you learning that people are afraid of this change? (Fear is an extremely powerful motivator.) Maybe they are afraid that they'll lose their jobs, status, control, self-respect, or something else.

If so, you've got to address these fears head-on. If their fears are unfounded, you must find ways to assure them that their jobs are secure.

If there is some basis for their fears, then get them involved in developing strategies that increase the chances that these bad things won't come to pass. For instance, let's say downsizing could happen. Invite them to help you develop strategies that would make the change successful in ways that would protect jobs. With this approach, you are combining the goal of the change with a positive response to their deep concerns and showing respect by asking for their input on such a critical issue.

If the fears are correct – say, for instance, there will be downsizing, then tell people. I know it's hard to do, but the undercurrent of fear is already killing your chances of success, so you may have little to lose.

**Level 3:** Are you learning that people don't have trust and confidence in you and the leadership group? If so, you've got serious problems. If they

don't trust you, they are not likely to listen to your Level 1 presentations openly or have confidence that you will address their Level 2 fears.

*You've got to rebuild bridges.* And bridges aren't built in a day. There is no one thing you can do to turn things around. You must approach Level 3 seriously so that people can begin to see that you are different than their perception of you. Here are some ideas:

- Find out why they don't trust you or your team.
- Acknowledge those areas where you think they are right on target. I know that's hard to do, but it can be a major step in turning things around.
- Create ways to demonstrate that their lack of trust or confidence in you is unfounded. Ask them to watch you over the coming weeks to see if you are living up to your promises.
- Make yourself available. Try management by wandering around, informal chats, traveling to other locations and making sure to give ample time for informal conversation on those trips, and respond to e-mails from stakeholders.
- Find easy places where you can work together with people who don't trust you. By easy, I mean find issues where both sides are likely to agree on importance and overall strategy. This gives people face-to-face assurance that you are worthy of their trust.
- Pay attention to the Level 3 mood so you can adjust your strategies as needed.

**One overall strategy.** Let's say you've learned why the change is bogged down. And your list has some Level 1 "I don't get it" issues, some Level 2 "I don't like it" concerns, and some Level 3 "I don't like you" skepticism. In my experience, it's pretty common to see problems at all three levels. So what do you do with that information?

You invite a cross-section of people to join you to discuss these issues. You say,

"Thanks for coming. Here's what we learned in the survey." (Don't hold back. Don't sugarcoat. Let people know that you heard what they had to say.)

Then ask for their help. “This change is critically important to the success of our organization, and we’d like your help getting things back on track. (Your invitation should have told them that you were going to ask for the ideas, so this won’t be a surprise.)

Roll up your sleeves and get to work. Make sure that this meeting results in strategies to get back on a track that addresses Levels 1, 2, and 3.

### **And Finally. . .**

Remember, even the best-laid plans can derail. You’ll need to pay attention to the warning signs and have possible contingency plans ready to use when you see problems begin to develop.

The good news is that it is usually possible to turn things around with commitment and attention.

## RESOURCES

### The Open Source Project

If you're really interested in leading change (or consulting to those who do), then I urge you to consider looking at the Change without Migraines Open Source Project. It's free.

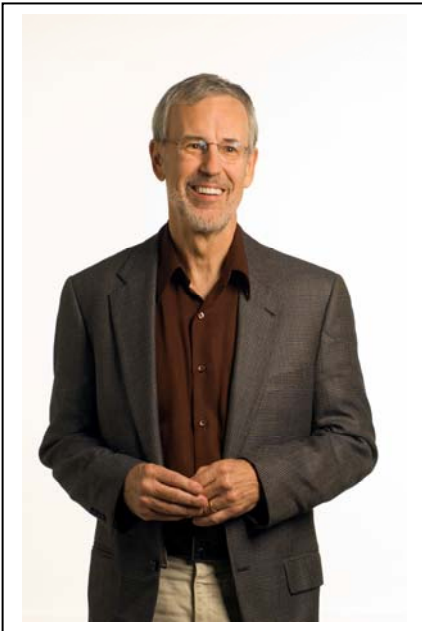
This open source project gives you the thinking and assumptions behind my approach to change management. I expect that consultants and trainers will be most interested in this “underneath the hood” material. (But, I do know leaders who love this stuff too.)

You'll get a few short videos, an outline for a change management training design, and a few PowerPoint slides that you can use in your own presentations. And I plan to keep adding to this free site.

My hope is that as you study the Change without Migraines™ approach more deeply, you'll make it even stronger -- and find new places to apply this approach. A big part of my excitement in providing this “open source code” is to learn and share with others what you are doing with the material.

Here's how to learn more about this: [www.changeOSP.com](http://www.changeOSP.com)

## ABOUT RICK MAURER



Rick helps people lead change with the migraines! He works with leaders of organizations who want to accelerate change in ways that build commitment -- and with people who need to get stalled initiatives back on track.

His opinion has been sought by NBC Nightly News, CNBC, BBC, *Fortune*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *Industry Week*, *The Economist*, *Nation's Business*, *Fast Company*, *The Washington Post*, *Investor's Business Daily*, trade and business publications, and many radio and television programs throughout North America.

His clients include leaders in aerospace, healthcare, chemicals, non-profits, government, professional associations, telecommunications, and finance.

*Beyond the Wall of Resistance* (Bard Press. 1996) started all this Change without Migraines™ stuff. People started calling asking for help avoiding resistance or getting back on track before a major change started to derail. In the follow-up book, *Why Don't You Want What I Want?* (Bard Press 2002), Rick focuses on the individual who wants to get his or her idea across.

**Change without Migraines™ Open Source Project**

[www.changeOSP.com](http://www.changeOSP.com)

For other free resources visit Rick Maurer's web site:

[www.beyondresistance.com](http://www.beyondresistance.com)

