

the ADVISOR

RESOURCES FOR SUPERVISORS, MANAGERS, AND HUMAN RESOURCES PERSONNEL

Change: A Workplace Challenge

Change is a constant, especially in the workplace. Odds are your team looks far different than it did even a few years ago due to a variety of factors, such as:

- ▶ Promotions
- ▶ Turnover
- ▶ Department reorganization
- ▶ Team structural changes
- ▶ New or lost positions due to technology or business demands
- ▶ New or upgraded products or services

Change may be difficult for your team to absorb, especially if multiple disruptions are happening at once. Uncertainty regarding responsibilities, increased stress, and interpersonal conflicts are just some of the behaviors you may notice while your team is settling into its “new normal.”

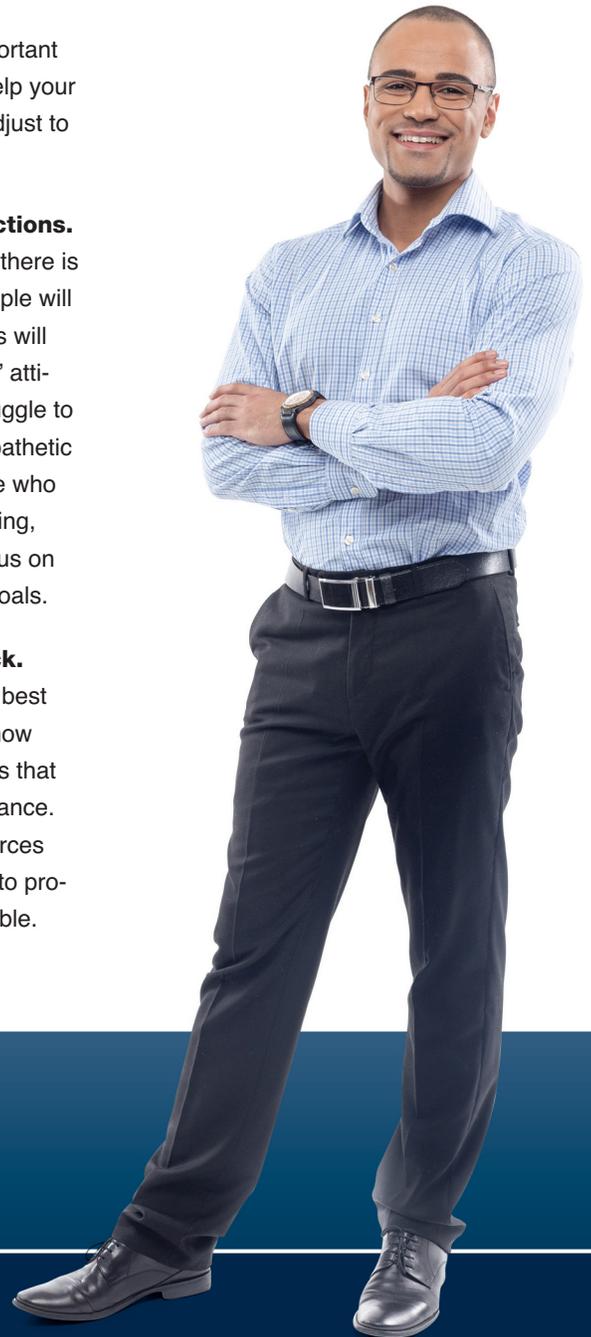
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- ▶ When Change is Stressful
- ▶ Communicating a Change

During a time of change, it's important to focus on ways that you can help your team manage uncertainty and adjust to the new reality. These include:

- ▶ **Expect a variety of reactions.**
Change is a process, and there is no way to predict how people will respond. Some employees will project a positive, “can do” attitude while others may struggle to find a silver lining. Be empathetic and sensitive toward those who are having difficulty adjusting, while also keeping the focus on team and organizational goals.
- ▶ **Ask for honest feedback.**
Employees are often your best resource for determining how to make structural changes that will improve team performance. Ask your team what resources it needs and do your best to provide them whenever possible.

- ▶ **Streamline.** Change is an opportunity to cut through red tape and simplify processes. Consider why each step in a task is necessary and determine if it could be accomplished in less time or with fewer resources. Keep the focus on team priorities.





- ▶ **Provide assistance through position transitions.** Turnover and promotions may result in new, less experienced employees moving into key roles. It's important to provide guidance as these individuals "learn the ropes." Offer resources and support, particularly if the previous holder of the position is no longer available to mentor or ease the employee into her or his new responsibilities. Be clear about expectations and priorities, while also leaving space for the employee to bring his or her own personal "style" to the role.
- ▶ **Rebalance your team.** Create opportunities for new members to become integrated into the team through occasional lunches, teambuilding exercises, or other informal opportunities to chat and connect. In addition, be respectful to longtime members who may miss "the old group." Remind them that their experience will be needed in a time of transition.

- ▶ **Encourage wellness.** Emphasize the importance of good self-care, such as taking scheduled breaks. Remind your team that LifeMatters and other company resources are available to help cope with stress and balance work and personal needs. Set a good example by eating healthy, exercising, and getting enough rest.
- ▶ **Focus on performance.** When change is stressful, it's important to remind employees about team goals and expectations. Find a simple, catchy slogan or mantra that your team can fall back on when they're feeling uncertain or overwhelmed. Emphasize priorities and set reasonable goals for completion of projects.

The LifeMatters Management Consultation Service can provide ideas on how to help employees adjust to workplace change. LifeMatters is also available to help you cope with change on a personal level. Call 24/7/365.

When Change is Stressful

- ▶ Stay connected. Seek out employees, touch base, and acknowledge their efforts.
- ▶ Encourage and thank people who exhibit positive attitudes and help others.
- ▶ Validate employees' feelings and perceptions and let them know that you have heard their concerns.
- ▶ Show enthusiasm for new goals and procedures. Focus on the future, while respecting the past.
- ▶ Be visible and available. Do not hide in your office. Manage by "walking around."
- ▶ Listen to and empathize with employees who may need to vent and repeatedly seek reassurance.
- ▶ Set up group or individual question and answer sessions.
- ▶ Utilize resources that will provide training, support, education, skill building, and career development opportunities.
- ▶ Project realistic optimism. If you're on board with a change, it increases the chances that your employees will be also.

How Do I Say That? Communicating a Change

Notifying employees about a workplace change is a common occurrence when you're a manager. Sometimes, this is as simple as announcing a retirement or staff departure, while at other times, you may have to deliver a more difficult or complicated message.

If you need to notify your team of a workplace change, keep these steps in mind:

1. Gather information. Ascertain as many relevant details as possible, such as what the change will be, when it will occur, and how it will impact both individual employees and your team as a whole. Ask if there is a target date for any missing information.

2. Consult with Human Resources. HR can help you determine the best way to communicate the change. In addition, the LifeMatters Management Consultation Service can help you plan both the conversation and how to respond to any concerns you may have about team or individual employee reactions.

3. If specific employees are impacted, schedule separate, private meetings to notify each of them. Clearly outline the employee's new duties, schedule, and any other relevant details. If the change involves an



adjustment in hours or compensation, consult with HR before scheduling the meeting. It is best to have these private meetings before you inform the entire team about the change.

Sample language: "I have some news regarding your position. Here are the changes you can expect to see in the future."

4. Listen. Give the employee time to absorb what you are saying and ask any questions. If some details are still uncertain, tell the employee you will follow up as soon as you have more information. Concerns about any impact the change may have on benefits or compensation should be directed to HR.

Sample language: "I am happy to answer any questions you may have as best I can. What do you want to know?"





5. Notify your team about the change. In some instances, it may be appropriate to do this by email. For more sensitive changes that impact the overall group, a meeting that allows time for a question and answer session may be best.

Sample language: “I wanted to discuss a change that will impact our team. Here is the information I can share with you.”

6. Follow up. It may take time for a change to settle in. Check in with

employees on a frequent basis and ask if they have further questions. If team members have new duties, follow up with them regularly. Make every effort to ensure they have the resources and training they need to succeed in their new roles.

Helping your team absorb a change may be stressful. LifeMatters can help you manage your own reaction to change, as well as assist your team with adjusting to the new reality. Professional consultation is available 24/7/365.

Management Consultation

LifeMatters is available to help with:

- ▶ Confronting an employee about performance issues
- ▶ An employee’s personal problem
- ▶ Suspected drug or alcohol use on the job
- ▶ Interpersonal conflicts between team members
- ▶ Establishing clear, attainable expectations for performance
- ▶ Addressing crisis situations, such as a violent incident, the death of an employee, or a natural disaster
- ▶ Your own personal concerns
- ▶ Any other work-related issue

LifeMatters offers professional management consultation when you need it, as often as you need it. Call anytime.

Call the **LifeMatters®** by Empathia Management Consultation Service toll-free anytime. **1-800-367-7474**

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