

# Managing Change Related Behaviour within Business Transformation Projects

By far the most difficult aspect of any business transformation project is the management of the impact of change on individuals within the organisation.

Many Project Managers face an array of emotions from those whose roles face the biggest changes, including redundancy, and are ill equipped to deal with such a situation.

Dealing with the redundancy of resources within an organisation is typically the role of the Human Resources section that will liaise with the Legal Department to ensure all relevant protocols are followed as well as offering job counselling to assist in their transition.

For the Project Manager involved in a business transformation project, it is the ones left behind who will prove the hardest to deal with, as they take a journey through mixed emotions, confused and afraid of what the future holds for them.

People are fundamentally wary of change, and as such, are likely to react against it where possible. Their reactions are based on values, beliefs and attitudes but these can be influenced by the values, beliefs and attitudes of Leaders around them.

Consistent, positive behaviour from Leaders and a commitment to change is a prerequisite for driving home a successful change programme.

What is important in any change programme is the involvement in the

planning and solution discovery of those to be affected by it, thereby eliciting support from those that may otherwise cause disruption.

The following are typical reactions to a change programme that has not successfully involved those affected by it. They will:

- Will feel awkward, ill at ease and self conscious
- Will think first about what they must give up
- Will feel alone and isolated - even if everyone else is going through the same change
- Can only handle so much change
- Are at different levels of readiness for change
- Will be concerned that they don't have enough resources
- Will revert to old behaviours if you take the pressure off

These reactions need to be addressed but prevention is easier than a cure, and involvement and collaboration is key to prevention.

The following ten critical success factors of any change project will help to ensure the risk of emotive reactions is mitigated:

- Create a shared image of the future
- Develop a current diagnosis of the gaps between the As-Is and To-Be organisation
- Focus on one or two major change themes representing the essence of the change
- Ensure strong leadership provides high profile advocacy of the changes
- Create involvement down the line (especially middle managers)
- Assure the Organisational Structure is not an impediment to the new culture
- Align systems of organisation and individual performance, measurement, reward and recognition

to ensure they are consistent with the new processes

- Proactive use of education, training and communication to ensure that knowledge, orientation and skills of employees are consistent with new requirements
- Ensure technologies support the new ways of working
- Develop a change plan to ensure common understanding of the change process

It is not unusual for individuals to follow a pattern of behaviour during business transformation projects, each distinct type of behaviour requiring different approaches to overcome.

The following diagram shows what I call the ADUC Cycle Of Behaviour:

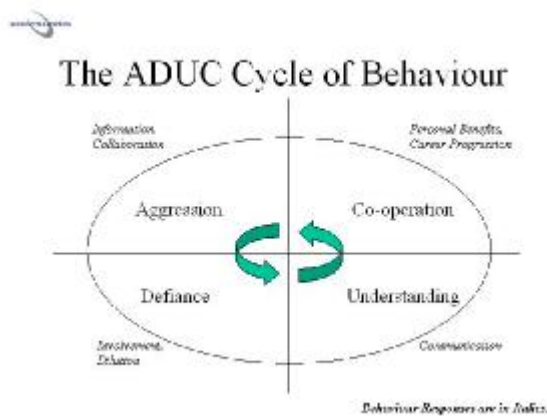


Figure 1 – The ADUC Cycle

Typically, the initial response to changes being made to someone's role within a business is aggression. During this stage, individuals will attack the validity of the project and need for change as well as run interference against the progress of the project.

It is important that during the initial stages of any change programme that *Information* and *Collaboration* are key objectives of the change team. This reduces the aggression caused through fear and trepidation by ensuring everyone knows how their roles will

change and how much support will be given during the transition.

The second stage, if the initial one is left unchecked, is one of Defiance, the "Hell No, I Won't Go" stage. This can be coupled with the aggression or be a replacement for it accompanied by a calm but determined attitude. It is only through *Involvement* that the stoic resolve can be *Diluted* to a more receptive and constructive questioning attitude.

The third stage of the Cycle is when understanding dawns on people that change needs to happen and that embracing the change and supporting the initiative is both important and potentially beneficial. Through *Communication*, the situation can be explained and the 'new way of working' can be shown as less frightening.

The final stage is one of co-operation. This can be brought about through the emphasis during the **Understanding** stage on the *Personal Benefits* the changes can bring as well as the opportunity of *Career Progression* through the learning of new skills and abilities.

So, *Communication* is the key, with information and involvement being critical to any change programme. Next time you are involved in a business transformation project, keep a look out for the sign of these patterns of behaviour and you will be well armed to address them early on.

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