

## Developing an Antidote to Change Fatigue

By April Callis Birchmeier

I remember asking my PMO director to provide a kick-off for the “Change Management for Project Managers” training we were conducting for our team. He sighed, looked at me for a minute, and asked “Why can’t we just tell people to change, and they... change. Why can’t they just do it?”

His words have come back to me recently as we continue to endure the remnants of two years of Covid-19, the war in Ukraine, and an environment of constant instability. Change fatigue is real.

Many organizations are experiencing change fatigue. How can leaders create effective, meaningful, and lasting organizational change amid unending change?

Recognition of this moment in time and of our human-ness is essential in continuing to adapt to and adopt change. Three areas where leaders can make a difference and respond to change fatigue are Communication, Trust, and Resilience.

The goal of communication is to share the idea or image I have in my mind with you. Maybe you’ve seen a funny example of this with someone describing how Martians on Mars look and watching another person trying to draw the Martian(s) being described. Communication is hard! As humans, giving grace and space when it is difficult to communicate can make a big difference for those who struggle to hear, understand, or apply the message being sent. Checking communication by asking what was heard may feel a bit forced, but it may be one of the few tools we can use to immediately and directly adjust communication. Invest in your future by developing awareness of your communication style and learning how to communicate with others more effectively. Tools such as DiSC or Myers Briggs index provide a starting point to assess and develop your communication skills.

Trust is built from communication and is the foundation of all relationships. It takes time to create trust and we cannot take risks, move forward, or succeed without trust. Earning and valuing trust are essential and trusting each other to do the right thing is necessary for real change. To learn more about the eight pillars of trust and how to build them, I recommend visiting the [Trust Institute](https://davidhorsager.com/the-8-pillars-of-trust-the-leading-indicator/). <https://davidhorsager.com/the-8-pillars-of-trust-the-leading-indicator/>

Resilience is the ability to endure, suffer setbacks and disappointments and still have a hopeful eye on the future. Becoming resilient is a bit like building muscle. You can’t build it by thinking about it, resilience is created by undergoing challenging experiences and using the lessons learned to inform future choices and actions. Resiliency may feel like a buzzword, but it is an essential component of change. Becoming more resilient can guard against burnout, stress-related illness and can improve mental health and flexibility.

Project leaders and professionals who can communicate, build trust, and encourage resilience must challenge themselves to lead the way for individuals and the organizations they serve to navigate the fatigue of change. “Just do it” may be a great slogan for the already motivated, but for most of the population, much more than that is required to move forward to the future state and realize the benefits of change.



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