Resistance to Change
by April Callis Birchmeier

Resistance to change is natural and inevitable.

Turning a blind eye to resistance is a great temptation, but recognition is the first step in addressing and defusing it. As we just witnessed in Washington D.C., ignoring a growing resistance to change has consequences.

In our personal lives, resistance may lead to overconsuming, postponing or ignoring destructive behavior. In our projects, resistance may result in delayed implementation, increased cost or scope expansion and lack of adoption.

Project leaders who are skilled in organizational change management, plan for resistance and develop strategies and tactics which are incorporated into the change management plan.

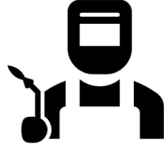How do you know when you're seeing resistance rising?

When you hear "Why are we doing this?" you're hearing resistance.

The "Why" question must be answered in multiple ways and multiple times. Addressing "why" in every communication is important. There is a deep human need to understand and if we don't respect the need to understand, people may fail to adopt change.

Change resistance can be seen as stubbornness or refusal to move forward with the change.

There are generally four types of responses that show up as resistance. While not all individuals fit neatly into a single type, much of the resistance you will encounter will show up in one of these behavior types:

	Commander / Fighter	Socializer / Saboteur
Strength:	Leader promotes and supports change.	Social Connector promotes and gains social acceptance of the change.
Resistance Mode:	Actively speaks against the change.	Subtly sabotages change through sarcasm and/or negative comments.
Make sure to…	Keep Commanders updated with information about the change and stories about progress.	Keep socializers engaged by inviting them to meetings, events and activities. Ask for their help with communication.

	Detailer / Derailer	Understander / Underminer
Strength:	Detailer uses detailed information to deeply understand the importance of the change and how it will impact stakeholders and users.	Understander provides stability and understanding for those who are struggling and unsure of change.
Resistance Mode:	Will stall or delay if they don't have enough information. May create additional requirements or have so much data they've developed analysis paralysis, and nothing moves forward.	Undermine the change by not engaging with the change or telling others that they don't plan on adopting change.
Make sure to…	Schedule time to meet and provide an agenda. Provide information as soon as possible, ask for recommendations.	Provide opportunities to try the change, provide input about the system, and request their help in planning activities such as team gatherings or events around training, testing or go-live.

Creating space, planning for, and addressing resistance throughout the change initiative supports end-users, stakeholders and sponsors with the complex and difficult task of adopting change.

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