

## Introduction

How do you feel when confronted with change?

- Excited by the benefits and new opportunities that will come as a result of the change?
- Energised by the process of defining the change and bringing it about?
- Unconvinced that there is a need to change, or that the proposed change will actually have the intended result?
- Cynical about the ability of the organisation to make the change?
- Anxious about your own ability to make the change or about the consequences the change may have on you?

Your response to this question will say something about your general attitude towards change, and will vary according to the details of the proposed change; however it is pretty much certain that all of these views and others are likely to exist, to a greater or lesser extent, within any group of people who are going through a change process. As someone who wants to bring about a change, whether or not it is your primary role to do so, you have to recognise and deal with all of them to bring about real and sustained change.

The responses above characterise different levels of motivation. Motivation derives from the Latin term meaning 'to move'. It is a process that influences how we behave, the strength of our desire to change behaviour and the persistence of our behaviours.

Motivation can be split into 'Drivers', which are the factors that push people to change, such as dissatisfaction with the way things are, and 'Incentives', which are the environmental stimuli that attract, or pull people towards a change, such as increased pay or increased job satisfaction. Those involved in learning and development may think of positive and negative reinforcement as an alternative to drive and incentive.

The strength of a person's motivation depends on the extent to which they believe the change will lead to a goal, and the value they place on the goal. This is known as the 'expectancy x value' theory and it varies by individual. One person may be motivated to change because they see the change as the best way to achieve a goal which they value, another will not change because they consider that the change will not help them achieve the goal, and another may not change because they do not value the goal sufficiently to go through the effort of change.

An alternative is this 'change equation':

$$\text{Dissatisfaction} \times \text{Vision} \times \text{Capacity} \times \text{First steps} > \text{Resistance}$$

(where 'x' means 'times' and '>' means 'greater than')

In this equation 'Dissatisfaction' relates to how the individual perceives the current situation, the extent and strength of their dissatisfaction being their drive to make the change.

'Vision' relates to their ability to imagine how things will be if they make the change. The strength of their vision provides the incentive to make the change and comprises their expectancy of the benefits of the change.

'Capacity' relates to their evaluation of the resources they have available to help them make the change, such as having sufficient time, confidence in their own ability to change, and access to budget, resources, support, etc.

'First steps' relates to their ability to plan how they would go about making the change and at least being able to see how to start.

The product of these factors (i.e. multiplied together) has to be greater than 'Resistance' before change will take place.

'Resistance' relates to the sum of all the real or imagined obstacles they anticipate having to overcome to make the change. These will include internal barriers, such as personal levels of anxiety and self-confidence, which we will look at shortly, as well as external obstacles, such as practical considerations and objections raised by others.

The effect of multiplying the factors on the left means that if any one of them equates to zero, the result is zero and therefore the change will not happen. If they are not dissatisfied with the current situation they will not change even if the vision is clear, they have the capacity and can see how they would go about it. They won't change if they don't have a vision, even if they are dissatisfied, and they won't change if they can't see how to change or don't think they have the capacity to change, even if they are dissatisfied and have a vision. The formula suggests there will be a 'tipping point' for each individual where the drivers and incentives for making the change start to outweigh the cost of making the change, and only when that point is reached, will the change be possible.

These motivational factors are equally present for those making a decision to implement or support an organisational change program and for each individual affected by a proposed change. For this reason it is essential when planning to introduce any change to spend sufficient time:

- finding out what people really think about the current situation, measuring the level of dissatisfaction, identifying and measuring the strength of the drivers to change - this includes identifying the differences for different groups or individuals
- creating a vision of the changed state, identifying and quantifying the benefits and 'making a compelling case' for the change from different perspectives - the case for the change has to set realistic, credible expectations of the benefits that will derive from the change and make an explicit connection between how the change will resolve the dissatisfaction with the current situation; this is often referred to as answering the question 'What's In It For Them?' (WIIFT)
- identifying the resources required to make the change and preparing a roadmap that sets out clear steps towards achieving the goal
- in particular the first steps must be clearly expressed
- proactively identifying real and perceived obstacles and sources of resistance, evaluating their impact and planning how they will be addressed/overcome.

As well as the general principles of the 'expectancy x value' theory and change equation, it is recognised that individually we are motivated to succeed for two radically different reasons. We may be positively motivated to achieve goals (motive for success) or negatively motivated to avoid failure (fear of failure). People who have strong motive for success are attracted to the thrill of victory, which can be achieved by mastering new skills and out performing others, consequently they tend to respond positively to performance goals and incentives. Those with high motive to succeed and low fear of failure tend to be ambitious and to persist longer when they encounter resistance or obstacles, than those with a low need for achievement.

They are most likely to strive for success when:

- they perceive they are personally responsible for the outcome
- there is some risk of not succeeding  
and
- there is opportunity to receive feedback relating to their high performance.

Those with a high fear of failure will often also adopt performance-approach goals, but rather than being motivated to out-perform their peers, they are more likely to be motivated by a desire not to be seen to perform worse than others.

Whilst a combination of the motivation to achieve combined with a fear of failure may lead to higher performance than someone that is only motivated by a desire for success, it has also been observed that the anxiety/worry often experienced by those with a fear of failure motivation reduces their ability to process information effectively and focus on the essential task requirements. Consequently their performance deteriorates in highly competitive, high stakes situations, however they will tend to out perform those with high achievement motivation in circumstances where the atmosphere is more relaxed and the tasks are easier.

Motivational goals sometimes conflict with each other. One of the most challenging situations to deal with is when we are attracted and repelled by the same goal. For example someone considering a career change may be attracted by higher pay or more rewarding work (approach motivation), but also have anxiety about greater responsibility or uncertainty that comes with it (avoidance motivation). It is interesting to note that in these circumstances the tendency is for both motivations to grow in strength the closer we get to the goal, but the avoidance motivation tends to grow at a faster rate than the approach motivation. We may start out feeling strongly motivated by the goal, and only mildly repelled by its drawbacks, but as we get closer to it, the negative aspects become more significant. This may cause us to stop and draw back, and can result in a period of vacillation.

With this insight into levels and strengths of motivation, can you now identify who are likely to be supporters, doubters, saboteurs, switchers or stragglers for a change you are planning to introduce?

- **Supporter** - these are people who will be positively motivated to achieve the same, or compatible goals are therefore likely to support your efforts. These are valuable allies as long as they also have power or influence.

- **Doubter/cynic** - these are people who may disagree with the need to change, be cynical about vision or question the method and are likely to see and voice objections. It is generally worth identifying these people and proactively surfacing their objections. By doing so you may resolve genuine issues or dispel misconceptions, and by respecting and addressing their concerns you may convert these doubters into supporters and advocates. Failing to do so can have significant consequences on the outcome of your initiative if these people also have power or influence.
- **Saboteur** - these people are positively motivated to do something that conflicts with your goals, have a vested interest in maintaining the current situation or have much to lose if your change goes ahead. It is important to identify these people, especially if they have significant power or influence; however, it can be harder to identify them as on the surface they can appear to behave as if they are supporters.
- **Switchers** - these are people who are inclined to change. Like supporters they are the people who will welcome it, who will run with it. They are worth identifying as they will be your early success stories that you haven't had to work for. They are people who are going to be advocates for what you're trying to push through the organisation. They are going to do the work for you, and if you recognise them and encourage them, they'll become even more enthusiastic and it will provide a momentum that will bring others on-board.
- **Stragglers** - on the other hand, are the people who are most resistant to change - possibly on principle but mostly by behaviour, and they're going to be the last people to take up change. They're going to be the last people to embrace it. They'll only take it on board when there is no other option presented to them. It is worthwhile recognising who those people are or which departments they are, because you can divert your resources elsewhere where you are going to get a better result.

If you can do this identification, you are better equipped to prepare differentiated strategies for engaging them in your change programme, based on their needs and concerns.

At Head Light Communications we apply these principles in a range of practical services and resources we offer to help you bring about real and sustained change.