

# YOUR GUIDE TO EMBRACING CHANGE, QUICKLY & SUCCESSFULLY

We have all found ourselves having to adapt quickly, both in our personal and professional lives. In this way, the Covid-19 pandemic has served to highlight a key skillset which we all need to continually develop and nurture, in order to operate successfully in our role, no matter what that role may be. Change agility, the ability to quickly and successfully embrace and adopt change, will undoubtedly be a key skillset that all employers look for as a core capability in the workforce of the future.

The prospect of change may understandably cause some fear and anxiety. But by understanding how we respond to change, what influences this, and how we can take control of the situation, we can instead learn how to embrace it – and in so doing, develop an important, transferable skillset.

Here are ten top tips on how to do just that:

## 1. ACKNOWLEDGE THAT CHANGE IS HAPPENING, AND CHALLENGE YOUR INTERPRETATION OF THE FACTS

The coronavirus may have resulted in some considerable changes to your professional life – you may have been put on furlough leave or had to change your working pattern or location. When first faced with challenges like these, their unfamiliar nature may make you feel apprehensive or anxious, but it is important to recognise that you need to challenge your interpretation of events with the following questions:

- **Is your interpretation rational, objective and based purely on the facts?**
- **Can you challenge your interpretation with an opposing argument?**
- **What's the alternative perspective on the situation?**

The way you interpret facts and information, and the meaning you give to them, is what will determine the course you take, the way you approach change and ultimately how successful you will be in adopting the change. By objectively examining a challenging situation and doing our best to remove existing negative and potentially unfounded assumptions, we can work towards channelling our emotional reaction positively and subsequently, settle on a productive outcome with practical steps for getting there.

## 2. ASK ALL THE QUESTIONS YOU NEED TO

When receiving news of an impending change your immediate reaction will most likely be emotional, and you may experience feelings of shock and potentially worry. This is all completely normal. Much of the anxiety you feel will be rooted in the unknown, and the “what if’s”, and the only way to alleviate the ambiguity is to get the information you need. Don't wait for people to provide it to you, ask! Your manager may not know that you want or need the information. Understand what the real story is rather than relying on rumours. The sooner you have all the facts the sooner you will be able to process them and interpret what they mean for you.

### 3. RECOGNISE AND RATIONALISE THE VOICE OF CAUTION

When confronted with a situation that's unfamiliar, there's often a voice of caution at the back of our head telling us to back off, be careful, go slow. During times of change, this area of the brain likes to take charge and urges us to resist and be cautious. By recognising that this is what is happening and reminding ourselves that all will be ok, we can stay open minded and prepare to take on the change in careful, measured steps.

### 4. REFRAME THE CHALLENGE AS AN OPPORTUNITY

Fear about change often comes from negative thoughts in your head about what the future could hold. When you become fearful or have negative thoughts, consciously look to turn them into something positive.

The key to reframing your response to change as a positive one comes from understanding exactly where your worries are coming from and how you can challenge this.

Begin by exploring what it is about the change that you see as being negative or that is causing you worry – are you worried about a lack of support, an increased workload?

Now consider whether your interpretation of these aspects could actually be reframed as positive ones, for example, being given additional responsibility and managing your workload more independently could help to advance your career.

Ask yourself the following questions:

#### **How would you describe the change to yourself? What could be a different way of putting it?**

Forget what you've been told and the way it was worded, make it personal to you. If you were framing it to yourself, how would you word it? This may help you understand what it is about the change that's troubling you. Write it down if easier.

#### **What are the real implications and opportunities for me?**

It's really important to ensure you try to keep things in perspective and aligned with what really matters to you and your values. How will the change actually affect your life in a practical sense? Will you have to work longer hours or tackle some difficult decisions without as much guidance from your manager? Will you be able to take on additional responsibility that will help your career progress longer term? Will it give you the opportunity to try some new areas or build new skills?

#### **In the past when I handled change really well, what did I do and what actions, in particular, really worked?**

Change is the one constant in life and there will have been lots of examples of where you have experienced change and been really successful. Take time to reflect on these moments of success and explore why you were successful. What made the difference? Think about how you replicate what you did then in the current situation.

### 3 QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU FRAME CHANGE AS AN OPPORTUNITY

1. How can I describe the change in a way that is meaningful for me?
2. What could I learn or gain from this change?
3. When and how I have handled change really well before?

### 5. BREAK DOWN THE INFORMATION

Take some time to work out exactly what the change means you will have to do differently day to day. Breaking down the big picture into chunks that you can then control makes the change feel more manageable. Transitioning to a new way of working, for example, may seem daunting and unfamiliar, especially in a tight timeframe, but segmenting it into individual, practical steps like the following will make it seem less intimidating:

- Consider the key tasks that you normally complete day-to-day and identify which will change and which will stay the same
- Highlight any new responsibilities you will have, what they entail and when key actions will be required
- Find out if who you report to or how and when you do this will need to change
- Find out what the new priorities will be, what the expectations will be for you individually going forward and how this will be monitored
- Find out how you will need to work with your team going forward e.g. team meetings, key handover points
- Think about how you will need to use systems differently or what new software you will need to become familiar with
- Identify any areas where you feel you may need more knowledge or skills to carry out your role successfully
- Make sure you are checking in regularly with your colleagues and manager to run through any decisions or processes you are unsure of.

“ It's important not to just sit there and let change happen to you. Although people cannot always choose when change impacts them, they can always control how they respond. Those who are truly successful in their careers tend to be those who are able to adopt a positive and proactive mindset when facing change, exploring the personal opportunity in any change to learn and grow. Take control of your own personal change journey. ”

## 6. DIP YOUR TOE IN THE WATER

The first step is always the hardest and therefore the first step towards embracing change is dipping your toe in the water. Give it a try.

Identify a simpler task to start with before working your way up to some of the more complex activities you may need to tackle. Achieving these quick wins will remind you that the reality is often not as frightening as the prospect and knowing what is to come should help subdue some of the anxiety you are experiencing.

## 7. BE PATIENT WITH YOURSELF, PERSEVERE AND ASK FOR HELP IF YOU NEED IT

Be patient. It can take time to adapt to change and you may not see differences overnight. Remember that the best things worth achieving often take time and perseverance. Asking for help is a sign of strength, not a sign of weakness so make sure you are talking to people who can help keep you on track. If you are struggling, then ask to be directed to any relevant employee assistance programmes or training resources that could help you. Talk to your manager about signing up to [Hays Learning](#), which provides a full library of training courses designed to help you personally and professionally during this time.

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## 8. FIND YOUR GROOVE AND BROADEN YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Your comfort zone is the set of behaviours and actions that together create the drumbeat of your day to day life, reducing risk and stress and providing us with a sense of security. It is this comfort zone that is often threatened by change, so the challenge is to identify how to quickly establish a new routine, and thus a new drumbeat so that you can rebuild self-confidence and a sense of security.

Think about how to map out your day or week taking into account the change. What are the key regular activities you will need to do? How long will they take? When will you do them? Making time for yourself is also key during these times so also take care to work free time in your schedule that could be used for some gentle exercise or a reenergising activity such as reading a book or listening to a podcast.

## 9. CELEBRATE DAILY WINS

With time, what might once have seemed a significant change to a way of doing things will start to gradually integrate into your day-to-day and feel much more natural to you. This is an ongoing process and one that could undergo the odd setback, but continue steadily nonetheless. Take each step at a time, set yourself daily goals and then make sure you take time to reflect on what went well. During times of change, it is very easy to focus on what you couldn't do or what went wrong, rather than what went well. Focusing on your wins every day, no matter how small, will help you to see that you are moving forward and you will get there. These should be celebrated with your team too!

## 10. REMEMBER IT'S A LIFELONG SKILL

Finally, it is important to remember that despite the ongoing uncertainty, the way that we are even now collectively adapting to this new 'normal' as a way of life is proof of how resilient we are. Embracing change successfully is not just a skill for now or for tomorrow, but throughout the whole of your personal and professional life.

So, in summary, don't just sit there and let change happen to you. Start applying these tips today and every day. Remember, you may not always get to choose when change impacts you, but you can always choose how you respond!

**If you're considering your next steps, get in contact with one of our expert recruitment consultants for a confidential chat about the career options available to you, or to access a host of resources for helping you adapt to the new way of working, visit our remote resource hubs. As your lifelong career partner, we are with you every step of the way and will be updating this site regularly with new guides, blogs and information to support you.**