

Handling Change: 7 Win-Win Conversations Which Can Radically Mobilize Your Team

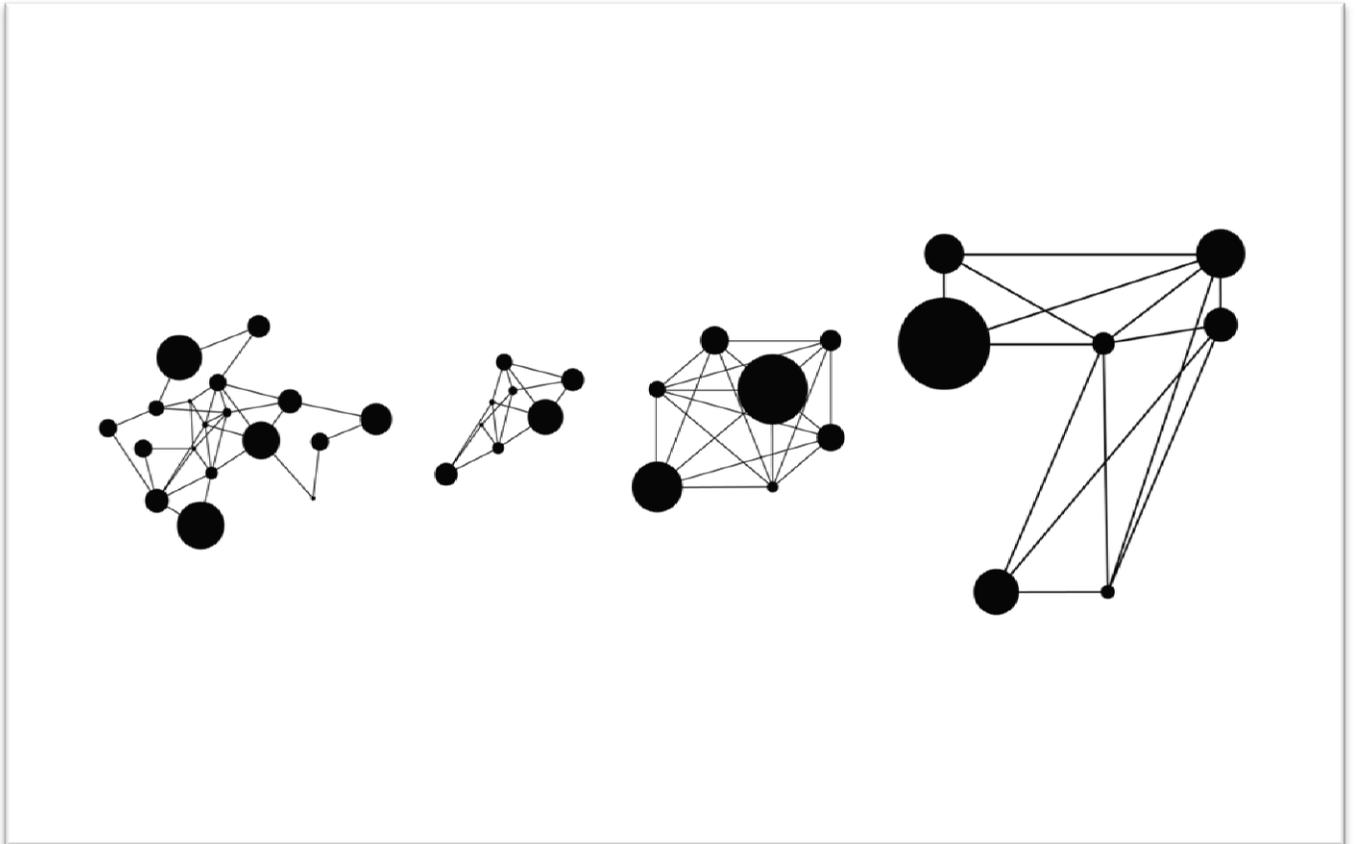
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FEAL 

Change is constant

In business, there are two inescapable realities when it comes to change: It's a constant, and it can either make or break your team. Change can be transformative—revealing each team member's strengths and solidifying the unity of the whole—or it can be divisive, a source of conflict which fractures teams to the point where they are barely recognizable as cohesive groups.



The difference between these two situations, the quintessential fork in the road, is conversation: To be prepared to handle each new change as it arises, we need to be well-versed in the art of having effective, efficient, and empowering team conversations. We must develop a conversation strategy which keeps us perennially “change fit”, which proactively addresses the concerns of team members and which acknowledges the fact that connectedness is paramount to both morale and productivity.

The 7 Major Pitfalls of Change, And How To Avoid Them



Based on our 14 years of research, there are 7 major pitfalls that plague teams during times of change. Knowing how to not only anticipate these pitfalls but also how to transform them from potential problems into win-win conversations is paramount to the success of any organisation.

1. A lack of competency.

While we do our best to hire the right people for the job, due to the dynamic nature of most industries, skills often become outdated over time. Team members, comfortable within their familiar ways of working, often grow complacent and their competencies fail to reflect the pace of change within their industry.

The solution to this issue is to have what is known as a “Capabilities Conversation.” This conversation should address the potential skills gaps of both individuals within the team and the team as a whole, then motivate team members to take the time to update their skills. Make this a win-win conversation by showing the team not only the potential future cost of lacking updated capabilities, but also the many ways in which changing the way they work will make their lives better today—after all, new technologies often lead to easier, more efficient ways of doing things.

2. A lack of candid vulnerability.

As is the case within any relationship, in order to build trust with one another, team members need to be open. Unfortunately, the competitive attitude that permeates the corporate world often shuts down expressions of vulnerability. In such an environment, problems remain unsolved and people become defensive during times of stress.

While it can be difficult to get team members to openly discuss weaknesses, it's essential for your team to have the "Weakness Conversation," wherein known weaknesses (individual and collective) are discussed. Encourage each team member to suggest strategies for working around these weaknesses and talk about how these strategies could be used to build cooperative links between team members.

3. A lack of appreciation.

During times of change, conversations often become predominantly critical, centring around how to avoid threats. This negatively impacts morale and, ironically, makes team members more likely to "play it safe" and avoid taking the risks they need to grow and adapt.

Balance criticism with the "Gratitude Conversation"; have team members affirm what they appreciate about each other and be sure to point it out whenever a person on the team achieves something productive and valuable. A team which feels secure is a team which has the energy and freedom to remain creative, resilient, and ultimately adaptable.

4. A lack of constructive confrontation.

When attempting to work within a team, it's important to understand that confrontation itself is not the enemy of harmony or productivity—reactive confrontation is. When confrontation is discussed constructively, it helps the team to resolve insidious issues, build trust, establish goals, and get to really *know* one another.

To have constructive confrontations, get each team member to discuss his or her expectations: Which ones have not been met? Which have not been voiced? Does each team member even *have* clear expectations, or do they need to be defined? Once you know the answers to these questions, you can help to refine each team member's expectations and from there create realistic shared goals.

5. A lack of "buy-in".

The fact that an idea or course of action inspires a team leader is no guarantee that it will automatically inspire each team member; individuals need to know *why* they should take action or, more often than not, their enthusiasm wanes and little gets accomplished.

Before striving toward a given goal or milestone, be sure to have the “Why Conversation,” detailing to each team member why the desired course of action makes sense in the short term and over the long term (for both emotional and logical reasons). The “Why Conversation” should highlight benefits to the individual and to the organisation.

6. A lack of accountability.

For teams to function optimally, individual duties must be clearly defined and each team member must feel that it's acceptable (and encouraged) to both be held accountable and to hold others on the team accountable. Team members must also be able to distinguish between who is accountable for various duties and who is responsible for outcomes; responsibility is shared and continuous, whereas accountability is personal and task-specific.

7. A lack of congruency.

Teams that try to meet too many goals at once usually wind up meeting none of them efficiently as the efforts of individual team members become scattered and incongruous. To avoid this pitfall, have the “Where Conversation”: Give each team member a map of where they are headed and demonstrate how this direction aligns with the organisation’s vision, mission, goals, and overall strategy. This map-making session should also include a discussion of potential “wrong turns”; team members need to know which directions to avoid in order to keep their efforts realistic and measurable.

As a final note, keep in mind that each of the seven win-win conversations above are most effective when the team is still operating with goodwill and positive intention, so don't wait for tensions to escalate before having these discussions. If you treat conversing as a team like a pleasure rather than a duty or last resort, before you know it, your group will be flourishing both personally and professionally.