

PAYING IT FORWARD

Leading With Purpose

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After 40 years in the fire service, Chief Randy Bruegman founded The Leadership Crucible Foundation to reshape future leadership with a focus on fostering courage, empathy, and humility in leadership positions.

A crucial lesson that every leader should embrace is that leadership is not about oneself, but about making a difference in the lives of others. The greatest reward a leader can receive is to positively impact the people they lead, regardless of their profession. So, if you aspire to become a great leader, remember that your focus should always be on serving others and making a positive difference in their lives.

Resistance To Change Can be a Killer

Resistance to change can be a killer, in business, in your organization, and in one's personal life. Resistance to change can be a significant obstacle to progress and growth for both individuals and organizations. It can prevent people from adapting to new technologies, processes, and ways of thinking, which can eventually lead to stagnation.

In any organization, resistance to change can lead to missed opportunities, decreased competitiveness, and eventual failure. Organizations unable to adapt to changing environmental conditions occurring around them risk becoming irrelevant and losing their competitive edge, as we have seen with such companies as Blockbuster, and Kodak. Blockbuster was a video rental company that was once a household name.

Blockbuster failed to recognize the shift towards streaming services and the decline of physical media, and as a result, they were unable to adapt to the changing market conditions. This ultimately led to their bankruptcy in 2010. Another example is Kodak, a company that was once a leader in the photography industry. Kodak failed to recognize the shift towards digital photography and the decline of film, and as a result, they were unable to adapt to the changing market conditions. This ultimately led to their bankruptcy in 2012. There are many more that could be added to that list, both large and small, and the one thing they have in common is their resistance to change.

Companies that are unable to change risk becoming irrelevant to their customer base, or in government, those for whom they are providing services. The same is true for each of us. In our personal life, resistance to change can lead to missed opportunities for personal growth and development. People who are resistant to change may hold themselves back from achieving their goals and realizing their full potential.

I have worked in six fire and emergency service organizations, the first, when I was hired as a firefighter, the other five I led as the Fire Chief. Each had a different culture and mindset toward change.

My first organization was built on innovation, engagement of all employees no matter what level you were at in the organization, and failing forward, as new concepts were attempted and failed. That was just part of the DNA of the culture of the organization. The organization's acceptance and expectation of change was not only embraced, but it was also expected. When there was a temporary interval for the introduction of new ideas, the employees became

restless. As I moved on to lead other organization, I noticed a significant disparity in their inclination towards change and their willingness to accept it.

There are several factors that play into this.



- Resistance to change is a natural human reaction. It is often easier to stick with what we know than to venture into the unknown.
- Changing the status quo can take people out of their comfort zone.
- Uncertainty feeds into the fears that people may have regarding the proposed changes.
- We are creatures of habit, if you change one's paradigm, it can create apprehension and ambiguity which elevate anxiety and fear.
- People may be afraid that they will lose their position or lose the power they currently hold.
- Negative experiences with previous change processes often dictate how a person will react to a new one.
- The perception that the changes are being imposed upon them without their input or buy-in.
- When there is an existing level of organizational mistrust, any change will be seen in a negative light.



“It’s essential to be aware of the different reactions people may have to the changes proposed.”

The Innovation Adoption Model

As I was trying to understand the psyche involved with change in leading my own organizations, I came across a model that helped to explain it, called the Innovation Adoption Model. The Innovation Adoption Model, also known as the Diffusion of Innovations theory, was first introduced by Everett Rogers in 1962.

The model explains how innovations are adopted and spread through a social system over a specific period of time. According to Everett Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovation theory, the adoption process of a new idea or product involves five stages. **The first stage is knowledge**, where individuals become aware of

the new idea or product and its potential benefits. **The second stage is persuasion**, where individuals evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of adopting the new idea or product. **The third stage is decision**, where individuals make a decision to adopt or reject the new idea or product. **The fourth stage is implementation**, where individuals actually begin using the new idea or product. Finally, **the fifth stage is confirmation**, where individuals evaluate the results of their decision to adopt the new idea or product and decide whether to continue using it or not.

In observing how people processed change in the organization that I

have led, I have found these steps in the process to be true as individuals go through a change process, and for the organization as well. As a leader guiding an organizational change process, it’s essential to be aware of the different reactions people may have to the changes proposed. Some may be resistant, others may be hesitant, and some may be eager to embrace the changes. It’s crucial to understand where each person falls on this spectrum and tailor your approach to address their concerns and needs as much as possible.

With effective communication and empathy, you can help your team navigate the change process successfully.

The model suggests that there are different types of individuals who are willing to adopt an innovation at different stages of the process. The curve is typically divided into five categories: **innovators**, **early adopters**, **early majority**, **late majority**, and **laggards**.

Innovators are the first individuals to adopt a new idea or technology. They are risk-takers who are willing to try new things and are often highly knowledgeable about the subject. Innovators make up about 2.5% of the population.

Early adopters are the next group to adopt new ideas or technologies. They are also willing to take risks but are more likely to be influenced by opinions and recommendations of others. Early adopters make up about 13.5% of the population.

The early majority makes up about 34% of the population and tends to adopt new ideas or technologies after they have been proven to work by the early adopters. They are typically more cautious and take a bit longer to make decisions.

The late majority makes up about 34% of the population and tends to adopt new ideas or technologies after they have become mainstream. They are often skeptical and may need more convincing before they are willing to try something new.

Laggards make up about 16% of the population and are the last group to adopt new ideas or technologies. They are often resistant to change and may only adopt something new when it becomes absolutely necessary. In fact, I have experienced several people leaving their employment as they just refused to accept the changes that were occurring in the organization.

Understanding the innovation adoption curve can be useful for businesses and organizations that are introducing new products or services. By identifying the different types of adopters, one can tailor the organizational implementation and communication strategies to better reach each group and increase the likelihood of adoption and success.



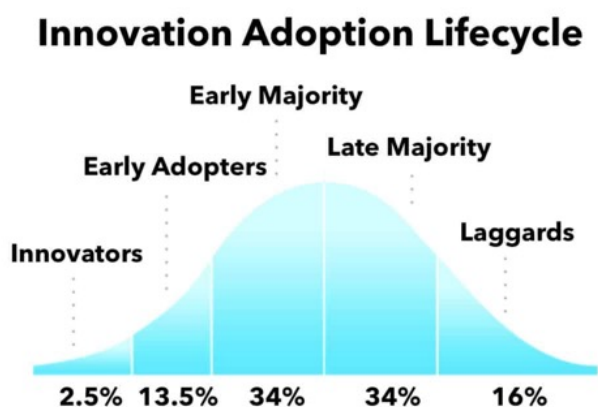
The innovation adoption curve can also apply to individuals, as it provides a framework for understanding how people adopt new ideas or behaviors. Everyone has a different level of willingness to try new things, and the curve illustrates this by showing that people fall into different categories of adopters.

For example, if you are an early adopter, you may be the first among your friends to try new technologies or products. You might enjoy being an early adopter because it gives you a sense of excitement and novelty.

On the other hand, if you are a laggard, you may be more resistant to change and prefer to stick with what you know. Understanding where you fall on the innovation adoption curve can be helpful in a number of ways.

For instance, if you are an innovator or early adopter, you may be more open to trying new things and taking risks. This can be an advantage in some situations such as when it comes to career advancement or personal growth. By contrast, if you are a late majority or laggard, you may be more hesitant to try new things, but you may also be more cautious and thoughtful in your decision-making. This can be an advantage in situations, such as when it comes to financial planning or major life decisions.

Understanding where you fall on the innovation adoption curve can help you better understand your own behavior when it comes to adopting new technologies or ideas, and in the acceptance of change. It can also help you anticipate the behavior of others and help you to tailor your approach when introducing new innovations or changes to your team or organization.



Reducing the Anxiety of Change



Change can be very unsettling prospect for many people, and it's common to experience feelings of anxiety or uncertainty when faced with the unknown. Overcoming anxiety about change in an organization can be challenging, but it's possible.

I have led many significant organizational shifts, and with each came a certain degree of consternation and pushback from within the organization. I have learned that by focusing on these key strategies, you can make the process more effective and at the same time reduce the anxiety that is always present during a change initiative.

1. **Be Transparent.** People are more likely to be anxious about change when they don't know what to expect. Communicate early and often about what the change will entail, why it's necessary, and how it will benefit the organization. If you don't share information, they will fill the void with what they think might happen, which creates a rumor mill that you will never outrun.

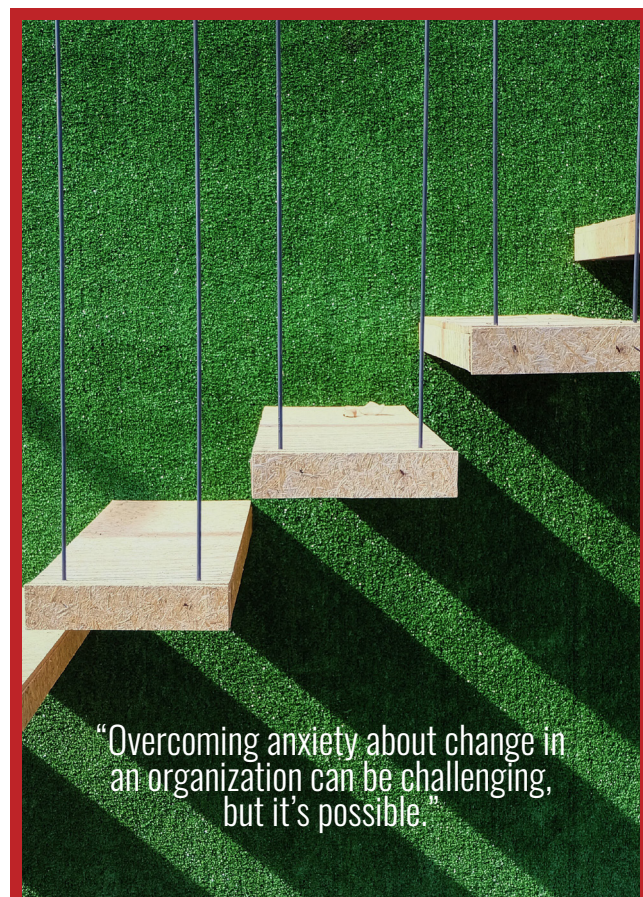
2. **What is the Gameplan.** Employees need to know what steps will be taken during the change process and what their role will be. Provide a clear roadmap that outlines the process and what's expected of employees. William Bridges in his book *Managing Transitions* wrote about the "Four Ps" leaders need to communicate for success.

Purpose: Describe why you are making the change

Picture: Describe what the future will look like

Plan: Describe the steps you need to take to get there

Part: Describe the part you need the employees to play in making the change occur.



3. Engage Your Stakeholders. It is crucial to involve and engage all the key stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, and governing bodies in the change process. This helps in addressing their concerns and needs, which ultimately builds support for the change and ensures its sustainability. By actively seeking their input and incorporating their feedback, you can create a sense of ownership and commitment towards the change, leading to a more successful outcome.

4. Focus your time on the sixty eight percent. In my experience of leading change, I have come to learn the importance of where one focuses their time. It is natural for us to focus on areas where the most resistance lies, particularly with people who fall into the Laggard category. However, I have found that in most cases, it is a wasted effort as they

are highly unlikely to support or accept the change. This has been true in every organization that I have led.

Instead, I believe it is crucial to focus on the sixty-eight percent of the early and late majority, as this is where the majority of your employees align, and it is the group that is open to change, they just need to be sold on it. Generally, innovators and early adopters take little effort to get their buy-in, and all they need is good information to be convinced.

5. Establish Clear Goals and Timelines. Setting clear goals and timelines is crucial to the success of any organizational change. Without clear objectives and a timeline for achieving them, it can be difficult to measure progress, stay on track, and motivate employees.

6. Track and Evaluate Your Progress. Monitoring and evaluating the progress of organizational change is crucial for its success. It enables you to track your progress towards the set goals, anticipate potential obstacles, and make necessary adaptations as the change unfolds. This approach also helps you gain a deeper understanding of how the change is impacting employees and stakeholders, and provides valuable insights into the areas where additional support or resources may be required to ensure their smooth transition.

7. Celebrate Successes During the Journey. Celebrating successes during the journey is a crucial element of any successful organizational change. By acknowledging progress and celebrating achievements, you can help maintain momentum and build a positive culture around the change initiative.



Leaders Are Readers

I believe that to be a good leader, one must be on a continuous quest to gain more knowledge. The leadership benefits of reading are wide-ranging. Evidence suggests that reading can improve intelligence and lead to innovation and insight. To that end, we provide a few suggested titles below for you to consider:

Managing Transitions

William Bridges

Our Iceberg is Melting: Changing and Succeeding Under Any Conditions

John Kotter and Holger Rathgeber

HBR's 10 Must Reads on Change Management

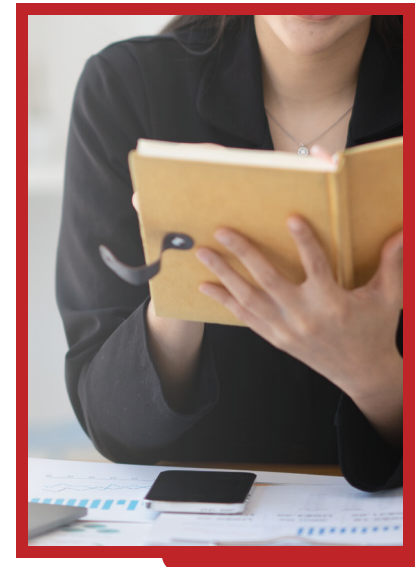
John Kotter

Who Moved My Cheese

Spencer Johnson

Leader Shift

John Maxwell



Chief B's Key Leadership Takeaways



Having the honor of speaking to great leaders in their profession in **The Leadership Crucible Podcast**, we take notes on the key leadership takeaways we discussed.

We would like to share some personal and leadership takeaways that we hope you will find constructive and helpful. These insights can be used for personal reflection, or from a professional perspective. You can also share them with your team or colleagues, which can lead to constructive conversations and positive outcomes. Our aim is to provide valuable insights you can apply to your life and work.

Understanding the concerns and fears of those who are resistant to change is essential for leaders, and so is developing a plan to help them through the journey.

- Resistance to change leads to stagnation and irrelevance for individuals and organizations. It can prevent both from adapting to new technologies, processes, and ways of thinking, impeding their potential growth and development.
- Organizations that fail to recognize and adapt to shifting market conditions are at risk of becoming obsolete, as seen in Kodak and Blockbuster and so

many others.

- The Four P's of change - Purpose, Picture, Plan, and Part should be communicated early and often to reduce anxiety and help navigate the change process.
- Remaining flexible and open to feedback is essential, as your plan is likely to need adjustment along the way.
- Today, survival and success in organizations and personal life require more than just strength and intelligence. It's about our ability to connect with the world, adapt to changes, and seize the opportunities that come our way.