



## TenStep Supplemental Paper

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### **Winds of Change**

The world is constantly changing, and the only way to cope is to adapt. Likewise, change is also an integral part of organizational growth and essential for its survival. The question here, however, is not whether to change but when and how it can be brought about successfully. This can be difficult because people tend to resist changes in the work environment. Therefore, successfully managing and implementing change requires a lot of work. Managers need to be ready to use their most logical arguments and persuasive skills to gain support for the change. It helps for them to be aware of the nature of and responses to work changes.

#### **Nature of work change**

A work change can be defined as any alteration that occurs in the work environment. Change, no matter where in the organization it is occurring, affects the whole organization. It demands that employees make dramatic adjustments, either directly or indirectly. Thus, it is a human as well as a technical problem. However, staunch advocates of change should be aware that repeated changes might lead to pressures that cause a breakdown in the organization.

Organizations work in a state of equilibrium, i.e., a balance between opposing forces. In such a state, people coexist, perform their jobs and know what to expect next. When changes are introduced, employees are required to readjust. If they fail to do so, the organization becomes unbalanced and attains disequilibrium. This leads to chaos in the system, and managers are faced with the daunting task of handling the situation. The manager dons two roles in such situations- proactive and reactive. He or she introduces changes, anticipates events, initiates change and takes control of the organization's destiny. This is a proactive role. Apart from this, he/she has to restore and maintain the equilibrium that the change upsets. Here the manager assumes a reactive role wherein he/she responds to events, adapts to change and deals with the consequences of change.

There are two categories of change - minor and major. Daily changes that are fairly predictable and do not require employees to make dramatic adjustments are minor changes. In such situations, equilibrium is reached quickly. Major changes like hostile takeovers, buyouts and subsequent organizational restructuring, reengineering, and natural disasters like oil spills and gas leaks take a longer time to reach a new equilibrium. Managers must guide employees through the emotional shock that usually accompanies such changes.

#### **Responses to change**

A fact evident in any organization that has introduced changes time and again is that there can never be a direct adjustment to change. Each employee responds to change differently. The way a person feels about change determines how he/she responds to it. These feelings are a result of personal history and the work environment. Personal history



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includes biological processes, background and social experiences away from home. Work environment reflects how a group reacts to codes, patterns and norms.

Another kind of response that is observed in matters of change is the group response. People belonging to a group show their attachment by joining in a uniformed response to change. This response may sometimes result in walkouts, strikes and demands. The group also tries to maintain equilibrium in an attempt to return to its comfort zone. This results in a counter-pressure within the group. Such self-correcting measures to restore balance whenever change is introduced are called homeostasis.