# The Change Transition

Change often involves elements of both danger and opportunity. When people approach a change, their first response might be to see it as a threat or a danger. When this happens, they fear and resist the change. Once the change has taken place, it is not unusual for those affected to begin to get used to it. During this period, people often begin to see that the change may lead to new opportunities. Some see that the new way may indeed be more effective and offer potential for new freedom and power. Once people accept that a change can provide new opportunities and possibilities, the change is well in the way to successful implementation.

**The Change Curve**

**Transition Phases**

**During Denial**

You are likely to see: withdrawal, 'business as usual', attention turned to the past. There is activity, but not much is accomplished.

**Actions:**

Confront individuals with information. Let them know that the change will happen. Explain what to expect and suggest actions they can take to adjust to the change. Give them time to let things sink in and then arrange a planning session to talk things over.

**During Resistance**

You will see: anger, blame, anxiety, depression and even a downing of tools. "What's the difference, this organisation doesn’t care any more"

**Actions:**

Listen, acknowledge feelings, respond empathetically, and encourage support. Don’t try to talk people out of their feelings, or tell them to change or pull themselves together. If you accept their response, they will continue to tell you how they are feeling. This will help you to respond to some of their concerns.

**During Exploration**

You will recognise: over preparation, confusion, chaos, energy, "lets try this and this and what about this….?" Lots of energy and new ideas but a lack of coherence.

**Actions:**

Concentrate on priorities and provide any necessary training. Follow-up projects under way. Set short-term goals. Conduct brainstorming and planning sessions.

**During Commitment**

This occurs when employees begin working together. There is co-operation and better co-ordination. "How can we work on this?" Those who are committed are looking for the next challenge.

**Actions:**

Set long-term goals. Concentrate on team building. Create a mission statement. Acknowledge and reward those responding to the change. Look ahead.

**Traps!**

During change a manager may fall into one of the following traps:

* **Ignoring or resisting resistance**

Resistance is not pleasant to experience. It can feel as though everyone is angry with you and you are to blame.

* **Forging ahead with team building**

When faced with change, many managers think hat what they need most is to get people working together again. When a group is in denial, resistance or the early stages of exploration it is a waste of time to put too much effort into team building. The group needs a chance to complain and assess their loss before trust and co-operation can be rebuilt.

* **Pushing productivity too soon**

Some managers believe that if you demand performance you will get it. Employees may respond in the short term but tend to level out and there may actually be a decrease in productivity of their feelings don’t match their actions. The danger is that you will end with a 'clogged' organisation where everything breaks down.

**Action steps**

1. In relation to Joint Working, currently where are **you** on the Transition curve and why would you say that?
2. What do you need to do and/or help you require to bring **yourself** to the next level?
3. Think of your team. Think of the observed signs and make a guess as to where the individuals are on the Change Curve.
4. What approaches do you as a manager need to use to bring individuals and your team to the next level?
5. Who are the people (change 'champions') who can be relied on to influence and help others to move through change?
6. Are there any individuals in the team who may need special help?