

Stanford Help Center

Leadership Challenges During Change

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- Emotional stress and guilt related to making decisions that have powerful consequences on employee's lives.
- Implementing changes which were decided from above; that you may not agree with.
- Being a focal point of employee anger, fear and mistrust as they go through the change process. Fear of violence or other acting out behavior.
- More personal and emotional problems brought to your desk; many you cannot solve.
- Feeling responsible for a department's productivity and reputation as resources, staff and other support is reduced. Loss of self esteem if quality of departmental performance declines.
- Job insecurity.
- Burning out by taking too much work on, long hours, not taking breaks or vacations, worrying about work at home, insomnia, unrealistic expectations, perfectionism.
- Difficulty delegating tasks because everyone else is already overloaded with work.
- Being misunderstood, misinterpreted, not listened to. Need to communicate more carefully and repeatedly.
- Increased need to address issues of staff morale, discipline, motivation, complaints and interpersonal conflicts, though there is less time available for resolving these problems.
- Sense of loneliness and isolation, hard to find personal support within the organization.
- Less support from above: management overwhelmed or unavailable.

Launching a New Beginning

(Adapted from "Managing Transitions" by William Bridges)

- Clarify and communicate the purpose behind the outcome you seek.
- Paint a picture of how the outcome will look and feel.
- Create a step-by-step plan.
- Give each person a part to play in the plan AND the outcome.
- Be consistent with the message.
- Ensure quick successes.
- Symbolize the new identity.
- Celebrate the success.

Managing People During Organizational Transitions

(Adapted from "Managing Transitions" by William Bridges)

"The single biggest reason organizational changes fail is that no one thought about endings or planned to manage their impact on people."

- Identify who's losing what.
- Accept the reality and importance of the subjective losses.
- Don't be surprised at "overreaction".
- Acknowledge the losses openly and sympathetically.
- Expect and accept the signs of grieving.
- Compensate for the losses.
- Give people information, and do it often.
- Define what's over and what isn't.
- Mark the endings.
- Treat the past with respect.
- Let people take a piece of the old way with them.
- Show how endings ensure continuity of what really matters.

Rebuilding Trust

(Adapted from "Managing Transitions" by William Bridges)

- Do what you say you will. Don't make promises you can't or won't keep.
- Listen to people carefully and tell them what you think they are saying.

- Understand what matters to people and work hard to protect whatever is related to that.
- Share yourself honestly.
- Ask for feedback and acknowledge unasked-for feedback on the subject or your own trustworthiness. It may be biased and you don't have to swallow it whole. But check it for important half-truths.
- Don't push others to trust you further than you trust them.
- Don't confuse being trustworthy with "being a buddy." Being a buddy for a purpose is an untrustworthy act.
- Don't be surprised if your trust-building project is viewed a bit suspiciously. Such mistrust is a form of self-protection, and no one readily gives that up.
- If all of this is too complicated to remember just remind ourselves. "Tell the truth".

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