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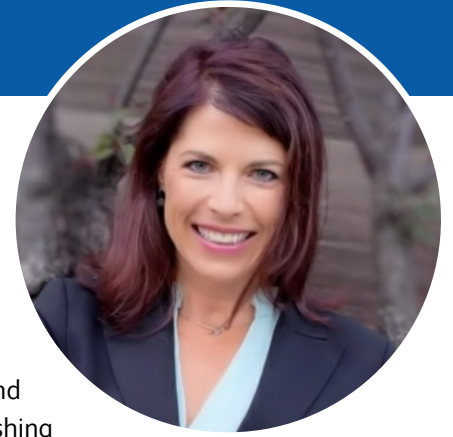


Workplace Change Made More Easy
Facing Employee Resistance Head On

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executives and
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achieve results
through a
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approach*

Who Am I and Why Can You Trust Me?

I am Sara LaForest, an entrepreneur, consultant, coach, instructor, and author with comprehensive experience in the private, nonprofit, education, and government sectors.

I am on a mission to empower entrepreneurs, executives and leaders to grow their businesses and help them create flourishing workplace environments. If you share this mission, these articles will introduce my approach. I believe you will find them helpful and pragmatic.

For more than a decade, I have grown, managed, and nurtured my own companies specializing in leadership consulting, organizational development, and executive and performance coaching. My focus is on the critical—yet often overlooked—interdependencies of strategy, branding, culture, and talent necessary to foster and propel growth. My high-touch, personalized approach helps leaders improve company performance and team functioning at all levels, while facilitating a positive and productive workplace culture.

How am I different? What new perspective do I bring? My strength is combining company growth with an emphasis on the personal growth and well-being of the people with whom I work and serve. My deep-rooted commitment to human advancement is my advantage.

This article, along with many other national and international published works, was co-written with my retired partner, Tony Kubica. Our book, *Organizational Gravity: A Guide to Strategically Growing Your Company's Brand, Culture, and Talent*, is available on [Amazon](#).

To learn more about my services, publications, and speaking engagements, please visit [LaForestConsulting.com](#). You can contact me directly at Sara@LaForestConsulting.com or via [LinkedIn](#).

Change is a constant in the workplace today. To survive a devastating recession companies have restructured how work is done, working with fewer employees due to shifts in demand and globalization. This is a dramatic change in the way companies compete in the digital age. Change is so pervasive that managers and supervisors need help and support to navigate this change positively. As we all know, those communicating change are going through change themselves.

A preponderance of managers and supervisors are overly familiar with long sighs and disheartened groans from their employees when they introduce *yet another* organizational change or new initiative. And in the current economy, the sighs and groans are turning into fear. While supervisors do not have the authority to reject or the power to deflect organizational change, they do have the opportunity and the specific responsibility to clearly and truthfully communicate the reasons for change; consequently, you can ease the tendencies employees have to resist it. To strive for no resistance to change is a fool's quest; most people do not like change, even good change.

Similar to a stool with three legs, three easy steps can greatly assist managers in creating a sound platform for transition during periods of change:

1. Managers need to be convinced that the change *is indeed* needed. For example, the change is either opportunistic or required to ensure ongoing business viability and success. By focusing on what is needed, the options to create it (including an examination of risks or exposure) and the intended results from it, you will determine what change needs to happen, why, how it will occur (strategically, not tactical details yet) and the value.
2. Next, managers need to understand the change experience through the lens of their employees. Employees will be more open and willing to support change when they are given information that clearly addresses their fundamental questions. Honest, open, timely and truthful communication is absolutely essential. To help you do so, your management team must agree on an accurate, forthright and unified response to the following five questions.
 - a. What specifically is the change?
 - b. How was the decision made, including who made it?
 - c. Who does it impact, and what does it mean to them?
 - d. What is the value (benefits or effects) of the change to the organization and the employees?
 - e. What are the next steps (roles and actions)?
3. Lastly, management needs to establish effective ways for sharing and communicating this information with employees through multiple channels. For example, if there are individual employees who will be impacted more than others (particularly if there are perceived negative implications), general courtesy and good ethic implies you meet first with these employees, sharing the same information but specifically how it affects them and their

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position. This should be done immediately before the departmental meetings, which should be a single topic meeting to reinforce the importance of the message. Smaller, team-style meetings provide a more open and comfortable environment for questions and discussion. All-staff meetings are also an option, (1) if the organization is smaller than 50 employees and (2) if your message is not laden with “bad-news” to specific employees or groups who have not yet heard the message, in which case a meeting will quickly sour. It is also helpful to consistently communicate the message of *change as critical for the company*, through written format. Use a format of a company memo and keep and keep the message clear, straight-forward, and focused on either the value and benefits of the change or the sincere effort to prevail in times of challenge (*i.e.*, a legitimate downsizing or layoff).

Managing and implementing change is critical for organizations. Poor behavior, poor communications and poor execution will have long-term negative consequences for the organization. In some cases, those charged with communicating the change may not be skilled in this task and may be personally uncomfortable with their role. These new managers require training and support and to ignore their need is simply unconscionable.

Change provides opportunity—whether the value is apparent or you are required to look deeper for it. Help your employees embrace a new paradigm of change as an opportunity versus the widely held and limiting perspective of change as an unsolicited and undesirable mandate.

How you behave during the change process will be remembered by the employees. Good behavior will clearly have positive long-term effects. Poor behavior will lead to contention, lack of trust, lack of productivity and turnover. So unless your goal is to close the business, poor change behavior is not a long-term success strategy. Actions have consequences, make yours positive.

Through keeping employees well-informed and (here’s the key) by engaging them in step one and by including them in critical decisions. You will foster a climate of resiliency and build momentum to advance your organization. This level of employee engagement is reinforced by what Geoff Colvin wrote in his March 9, 2010 article, “What Makes Most Admired Companies Different?” Colvin references research done by the Hay Group, which indicates that champion companies “ensure they understand what employee engagement means, measure it and hold managers (not just HR staffers) accountable for it, and connect it to business objectives.” We strongly believe that change, whether for growth, improvement, survival or reinvention is key to business productivity, efficiency and profitability.