A SIMPLE GUIDE

Help Your Team Embrace New Health IT

How to make change a positive experience

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Why are staff resistant to new technology and process improvement?

It's human nature to resist change—especially when there's a lack of awareness of why change is needed. When healthcare organizations switch to new technology, providers and staff often don't look forward to it. Even if their existing system is inefficient, they're comfortable with it, and the idea of changing how they do things is daunting.

In order to stay competitive in a post-COVID healthcare marketplace, providers and staff must adapt to new technologies. What compounds this resistance to organizational change is often a lack of communication and support from upper management.

This E-book will help you mitigate your team's resistance to new health IT platforms. Empower your team to *own the process of change*.

CHANGE IS A BIG DEAL

The transition to a new health IT system can significantly affect an organization's culture and requires a carefully crafted plan. People need clear answers to questions such as "Why are we changing?" Since everyone in the organization will experience the change process individually, a plan that addresses personal fears, concerns, hopes, and needs will help ease employees' minds.

When leadership dismisses the scope of change and its potential impact on employees, it can inadvertently cause resistance. Even a good communication plan can deepen the roots of resentment if it's not followed through correctly.

Examples of organizational change:

- New technology

- Process improvements

- Mergers and acquisitions

- Reimbursement changes

- Increased collaboration and communication with external providers and patients

RESISTANCE IS PERSONAL

When adoption of a new EHR is on the horizon, providers and staff take this change personally. People fear the unknown. Being unfamiliar with something fosters insecurity and weakens confidence. Staff may feel threatened that the new platform might eliminate tasks and put their jobs at risk.

**Common thoughts staff may have:**

"Why change?"

"This is more difficult than the old way."

"How does this affect me?"

These fears can be attributed to experiences from previous employers, relationships with managers, perceptions of the organization, and even situations at home. Individuals are also less likely to hop on the bus of significant change if the organization has a history of poorly managed change processes.

70%
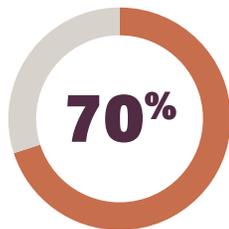
70% of change programs fail to achieve their goals, significantly due to employee resistance and poor management support[1]

73%
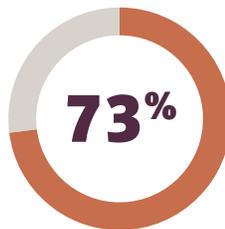
73% of change-affected employees report moderate to high stress levels[2]

What is change management?

Change management is the application of a structured process and set of tools for leading the "people-side" of change to achieve a desired outcome. It is a structured way of driving people away from the old way of doing things to the new way, so your organization can reach project goals.

SET THE STAGE FOR SUCCESS BEFORE YOU COMMUNICATE

Even before the contract is signed to implement new technology, it's imperative to develop a plan. A plan for change management includes strategies that address communication, resistance management, coaching, sponsorship, and training. To ensure success, you may need additional communication for different phases of a project, such as the implementation of a new EHR.

Consider how this change will affect people. What's the best approach to communicate individually and across the organization? Ask yourself, "How will I nurture a group of champions to widen the margin of success?" These components are especially crucial if your organization tends to be inflexible to change.

Track the effectiveness of your communications, resistance management, training, and other activities throughout the change process. This will provide valuable insight for future changes in the organization. True transparency includes admitting failure as well as successes. The process of change will not be linear and should be considered a learning experience for everyone.

> Be open about mistakes instead of sweeping them under the rug. **Focus on "what" and "why" something went wrong, not on "who" did it.** Blame is a killer of emotional safety—avoid it to ensure a positive learning environment.

THE VALUE OF A ONE-ON-ONE

Successful change management begins early on with one-on-one conversations with care team members—from the top down. From senior leaders to mid-management and throughout the organization, one-on-one conversations help improve understanding and facilitate acceptance.

When you empower the confidence of managers to do what you need them to do, there will be a better response to change. The more leaders communicate during technical implementation, the less anxiety employees will feel.

40%
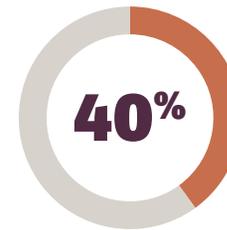
Only 40% of front-line managers understand the reasons behind the organizational change [3]

Root out resistance to new technology with clear, consistent communication.

A SIMPLE COMMUNICATION FORMULA

Base your communication strategy on What, Why, Where, When, and Who, along with How Much and How Often.

This simple formula will help advance buy-in from your team.

Go beyond the basic facts involved in the change and explain why it's essential. Give them evidence as to how the new technology will reduce burdensome tasks, save time—and most of all—enable the clinical team to focus more attention on patient care. Open-ended, Socratic questioning allows you to know what the employee is thinking and helps fill in any information gaps.

In addition to a personal conversation, initiate communication outreach via email, video, town halls, and an internal portal. The more communication that spreads across multiple channels, the better. It's helpful to have the message, timeline, and communication method outlined in your plan to stay consistent throughout the change process.

38%
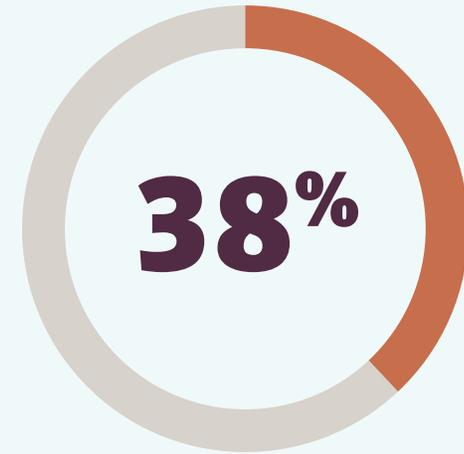
DID YOU KNOW?

Only 38% of employees who have experienced organizational change report their employer communicated effectively about the changes[4]

THE ROLE OF MANAGERS IN THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

What's the best tactic to ensure consistency?

The best way to ensure consistency is to have one-on-one conversations with each person. The questions can vary as well as the need to change how it is presented from person to person. You'll never know everything an employee is thinking or feeling during a change, but having open, honest, two-way conversations is critical. Answer all of their questions individually.

A manager handbook that includes new technology timelines, frequently asked questions, message points, and other details helps keep management across the organization on the same page. They can use the handbook as a guide to communicate individually and across the entire team.
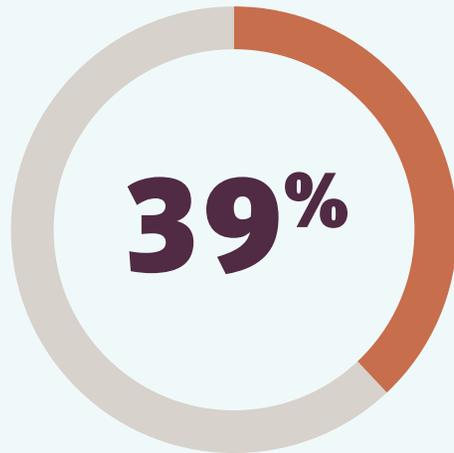
PICK YOUR CHAMPIONS

Successful adoption of change depends on charismatic managers, providers, and staff. You cannot carry the banner of change enthusiastically alone. It takes a team of cheerleaders who represent different roles and departments—tech geeks, introverts, and quiet influencers who understand that the change is necessary.

These individuals can be former skeptics who have asked all the questions that have been on their peers' minds. They may not initially support the change but become champions because they finally get it when they experience the value firsthand. For example, a nurse who first admits that they are resistant to the change and then becomes an effective cheerleader because they see how the change will help them succeed in their work.

HAVE SOME FUN AND GET PEOPLE ENGAGED

The change process doesn't have to be all business. When you add some fun to new technology implementation, it can help build team morale. Companies have centered change around themes, such as flower power, Las Vegas, or the circus. The key is to make sure all of the "fun" components have a meaningful purpose. Fun, creative things without purpose can backfire on you, especially in the healthcare environment.

Buttons, posters, t-shirts, and other cool items, along with games and prizes, help rally the change message/slogan. Creative, out-of-the-box best practices can help increase employee engagement and satisfaction.

39%

DID YOU KNOW?

Only 39% of employees say their employers were effective at inspiring them in today's age of ongoing transformation[5]

THE ACCOUNTABILITY FACTOR

Accountability is twofold for top leadership. It's essential to be role models of engagement for managers and champions. They need examples of how to encourage their teams and colleagues. Regular meetings also help them stay on track with change initiatives.

Ask your managers every week:

- Who did you talk to this week?

- What did you talk about?

- What did you do to promote change?

ERR ON THE SIDE OF OVERCOMMUNICATION

The rule of thumb is to communicate the same message in different variations at least five times to get it to sink into everyone's minds. You know you're doing something right when a few people start to complain about too much communication. If five out of 50 people express annoyance at the volume of communication, that means there's a good chance everyone is getting the message.

A PARTNER YOU CAN TRUST

When introducing and embracing new technology, remember that how you work together with your vendor is as important as the technology itself. Relationships are everything. It's important to remember to seek a partnership as much as a solution.

Questions to ask your new health IT vendor:

- How many hours will it take to get a solution up and running?

- Does the vendor provide professional training? What are their credentials?

- Will they come on-site to train? Do they provide virtual/remote training?

- Can they show you a training plan?

- How does the vendor support your change management plans before, during, and after implementation?

It's a significant effort to implement a new health IT system. A vendor who stands with your team throughout the change process can help ensure everyone from the top down has a successful user experience.

At the end of the day, they're not thinking about IT, they're thinking about how they made a difference in a person's life.

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

Contact us at 855-510-6398 or results@nextgen.com

Empower your team to make the most of any health IT change. Start with a plan, keep communication clear and consistent, and choose a partner who will help you every step of the way.

1–5 Kristina Martic. "The Ultimate Guide to Organizational Change Management (OCM)," Smarp (blog), blog.smarp.com, March 10, 2020, https://blog.smarp.com/the-2020-guide-to-organizational-change-management-ocm

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