

Fundamentally, there are four reasons why people resist change in organizations. Each requires a different response from the manager involved.

All of this is based on the fact that resistance is **smart** for some reasons for some people at some times. Consequently, when you get resistance to change, your task is to figure out why it's smart for the people resisting. If you simply get angry, and push back at them for resisting, you will not be able to overcome it.

1. The first reason that people resist is because they **do not understand** - they simply don't follow what you are talking about. They don't have the background. They don't understand where you are going. They don't understand how you are planning the get there.

The manager's response has to be "communication". You have to explain to them "Why". You have to answer "I don't know" questions: Why, What, When, How and Where. You may have to do it several things over.

Remember the effectiveness of a communication is not a function of the "message sent" but of the "message received". Make sure you get them to repeat the message they received. See how it aligns with the message you sent. If there is any discrepancy, communicate again. Check the message received again. You may have to repeat this cycle 3 to 7 times before you are sure that message sent = message received.

2. The second reason people resist change is that they **don't have the time** to engage with the change. They cannot both change and handle their current accountabilities. Focusing their energy on the change activity puts them at risk on meeting their required accountabilities. People are smart when they resist being put in this situation.

The manager has to address the task management issue. Lighten their workloads so they can participate in the change. Re-prioritize their work so that they are not caught in the dilemma. Do not expect people to have the energy to change when this means failing on the tasks for which they are accountable.

3. The third reason that people resist is because they **do not have the competencies to do what they have to do in the new world**. It makes sense for people to resist under those circumstances when participating in the new process simply serves to demonstrate that they are not competent.

Unfortunately, the response starts to get more difficult from a managerial point of view. The first thing that a manager has to figure out is whether or not the resisting individuals have the ability to acquire the new competencies.

If the answer to that is "no", then you have to help them make a graceful exit from the organization. You are the one indicating the change. They are caught in between a rock and a hard place. Even if they want to participate in the change, they know it will have a negative impact on the way that you see and evaluate them. It is a lose-lose situation not of their own initiation. You have to take on the responsible of determining what it takes to make the exit graceful and carry through on it.

If the answer is "yes", then you have to decide if you are going to invest in them and give them the resource they need to acquire the new competencies.

Once again if you decide not to invest, you have to help the resisters make a graceful exit from the organization. You have initiated the change. You have decided that you will not invest in them even though you judge that they are capable of learning what it takes to function in the new world. You bear the responsibility for helping them deal with it.

If you do decide to invest, then you in fact have to invest. This process requires some very tough face-to-face conversations with people. You have to set clear targets for “what”, “by when” and “how demonstrated”. These are not black and white dialogues. They involve shapes of grey. They are different from person to person.

As well, you have to enter the dialogue assuming that it will be carried out as “Adult to Adult”. People have different capabilities to do this, often for reasons they do not consciously understand. They may start out in “Adult to Adult” mode and move away from it because of difficulties which arise during the competency acquisition process. Your own frustration and response to pressure may move you from this mode. In general, success in this kind of dialogue requires support from “relatively” dis-interested folks. Your HR professionals or organization change consultants may be useful resources for this role.

4. The last reason people resist is because they **don't share the values drive the change**. This essentially means that they think you are wrong to initiate it. They believe that the “change” is wrong. The only thing you can do in those circumstances is exit them quickly from the organization. They have no choice but to resist you strongly in order to preserve their self esteem. The energy you spend dealing with them is better spent on implementing the change.

## RESISTANCE IS SMART

REASON FOR RESISTANCE	Manger's Response
1. Do not understand.	Communicate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why</li> <li>• What</li> <li>• When</li> <li>• How</li> <li>• (Where)</li> </ul>
2. Do not have the time.	Task Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lighten workload</li> <li>• Reprioritize</li> </ul>
3. Do not have the competencies to do what they have to.  Requires Adult to Adult mature conversation ... ..	<div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Does the Person Have the Potential to Acquire New Skills</p> <pre> graph TD     A[Does the Person Have the Potential to Acquire New Skills] --&gt; B[No]     A --&gt; C[Yes]     B --&gt; D[Graceful Dignified Exit]     C --&gt; E[Invest?]     E --&gt; F[No]     E --&gt; G[Yes]     F --&gt; D     G --&gt; H[Invest]           </pre> </div>
4. They don't share the values. - they think that change is wrong.	Exit Quickly