

Navigating Change

Krasimir Kashinov, MBA, PMP, ACC

Change is inevitable but often unexpected. It presents opportunities for innovation and growth as well as failure. Outcomes are dependent on our preparedness and situational responses. For that reason, how can people and organizations execute desirable changes? Moreover, how do we react and adapt to unfavorable developments? The following change management concepts can help coaches create awareness and accelerate transformation efforts.

Understanding the Change Curve

The Kubler-Ross model notes that people undergo distinct emotional stages when they face a dramatic life event or change. The initial response is shock and denial; people refuse to accept reality. After that, they endure a period of anger and depression, experiencing frustration and lack of initiative. The final stage is acceptance and integration, which represents a turning point when people determine ways to operate differently and potentially reap the benefits of change.

Maintaining an awareness of these phases can help people cope with new situations. Specifically, they can begin integrating change sooner by learning a new skill. Companies can use the Kubler-Ross model to forecast productivity trends and support employees facing changes in the workplace. The support can include providing information about why change is needed, promoting honest and open communication, understanding what motivates employees, and providing additional training. This model refers primarily to unexpected and undesirable change, but how can people plan and execute positive changes, like beginning a new career or committing to a healthier lifestyle?

Prioritizing and Planning for Change

One key to achieving successful personal change is avoiding distractions and spending time on what matters most. The Eisenhower Matrix is a prioritization tool that sorts all tasks into four groups using two factors: urgency and importance. Urgent tasks demand immediate attention and have negative consequences if ignored. Important tasks are those that lead to achieving the desired goals or changes. The four groups are as follows:

1. *Urgent and important.* These tasks are essential, perhaps as a result of approaching deadlines, like submitting a report or filing your taxes. Do these now.

2. *Not urgent, but important.* These tasks will help you achieve your goals and execute changes. Specifically, these include strategic planning, enrolling in a class or learning a new skill. There is no hard deadline to begin, but procrastinating will bring failure. Schedule time to complete these and dedicate consistent effort.
3. *Urgent, but not important.* Such tasks are time-sensitive, but do not help you accomplish your goals. These may include others' demands or routine emails that add no value. Delegate such tasks to someone else, or schedule time to do these at once and move on.
4. *Not urgent, not important.* These are distractions that do not contribute to the end goal, like meetings that can be avoided. Avoid these and save time.

The tasks and activities in group two *not urgent, but important* are essential to achieving strategic change. The Eisenhower Matrix is more applicable to prioritization on a personal level to improve productivity; however, it is interesting how the "urgent and important" concept carries over to the corporate world.

Driving Organizational Change

In a *Harvard Business Review* [article](#), John Kotter explains that the number one reason why organizational change management efforts fail is because they do not establish a high enough sense of urgency. Kotter studied many companies that tried to implement fundamental changes in the way they operate. His model identified eight steps that drive strategic transformation:

1. Increase the sense of urgency for change and convey that doing business as usual is more dangerous than heading in a new direction.
2. Build a guiding team that is powerful enough to drive change efforts. The team should include influential people, not just higher-ups in the company.
3. Create a clear vision for where the company is going and be able to explain this vision in a concise and compelling manner.
4. Communicate the vision consistently across the organization with all means possible. Moreover, lead by example.
5. Empower broad-based action by removing obstacles, providing training, encouraging risk-taking, and doing things differently. Confront those who claim it cannot be done.
6. Generate short-term wins by planning small, visible changes. Celebrate and recognize the individuals involved.

7. Sustain change efforts. Recognize that more effort is needed and invest in hiring, promoting and developing people who can integrate the change vision.
8. Institute change by emphasizing the connection between new action and company success.

Skipping steps, according to Kotter, only creates an illusion of speed and can compromise results. The understanding that change is a process and not an event can make people more patient and consistent as they work to achieve their goals. This is true on both a personal and organizational level.

Coaches are facilitators of change and can help accelerate progress. A coach can create awareness, identify motivations for change, formulate visions and strategies, and hold people accountable to achieve sustained results.

This article was originally published on ICF Coaching World - <https://coachfederation.org/blog/navigate-change>

Author Bio

Krasimir Kashinov, MBA, PMP, ACC, is a management consultant and ICF-Credentialed coach with a background in business strategy and operations. Learning, continuous improvement and creative thinking are some of the things he is passionate about. Krasimir is a director of **Integral Links LLC**, a community of coaches and consultants dedicated to helping individuals and organizations achieve their strategic goals. Connect with Krasimir Kashinov on **LinkedIn**.