WIRED TO RESIST

The Brain Science of Why Change Fails and a New Model for Driving Success

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Britt Andreatta, PhD

Author of *Wired to Grow, Leading with Emotional Intelligence, Leading Change, The Neuroscience of Learning,* and *Having Difficult Conversations*

Discover how to harness the power of your brain and thrive through any change.

"Illustrated by real-life examples and evidence from renowned scholars and practitioners, *Wired to Resist* provides novel insights into understanding why efforts to change often fail and—more importantly—how they can succeed." **Barry Posner, PhD,** *New York Times* **best-selling author of** *The Leadership Challenge*

"A must-read for business leaders and HR professionals. In this constantly changing world, it's critical to find leadership strategies that realistically address the human side of change. Dr. Andreatta offers a fresh look at the nature of resistance with a clear path to overcoming it. I couldn't put it down." **Erin Earle, VP of HR for Engineering, LinkedIn**

"I've read many books on leading organizational change and I appreciate how Dr. Andreatta gives me insight into the 'whys' behind the 'hows.' *Wired to Resist* arrived just as I was launching a new change initiative in my organization—and it immediately showed me several things I needed to address to increase our chances of success." **Kevin Goldsmith, Chief Technology Officer, Spotify, Adobe, and Avvo**

"Making a simple change in our behavior can be the difference between success and failure, but so often we quickly go to our default position and don't know why. Dr. Andreatta unlocks the puzzle and guides us with proven scientific steps to help us shift to positive outcomes every time we tackle a new goal." **Jacqui Burge, Founder, Desk Yogi**

Every year failed change costs billions of dollars. We are biologically wired to resist change: it's the key to our survival and the obstacle that often gets in the way of us fulfilling our potential. *Wired to Resist* provides a new understanding of our biology and why change fails, despite our best plans. Dr. Andreatta synthesizes the latest research into a new model for change that harnesses the power of neuroscience and shows you how to thrive and lead through all kinds of change.

Dr. Britt Andreatta is an internationally recognized thought leader who creates brain science-based solutions for today's challenges. She draws on her unique background in leadership, neuroscience, psychology, and education to unlock the best in people and organizations. She has over 25 years of experience consulting with executives from all types of organizations. Learn more at: www.BrittAndreatta.com.

7th Mind Publishing

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7th Mind
Publishing

For my mom, Georgene Burton (1935–2016).
I am so grateful for everything you taught me.

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"Change is one of the most powerful professional development tools available."

Glenn Llopis, author,
The Innovation Mentality

Introduction—The Day Change Knocked Me on My Ass

I woke up to a text from my boss. "Don't go to LA. Cancel training. Come to HQ ASAP." There was no explanation and no details. My body had an immediate reaction. What had happened? Was something wrong? Or worse, had I done something wrong? I wracked my brain but could not think of anything. But that didn't quiet the knot in my stomach or the worry in my brain. So I got out the door as quickly as I could and began driving to the office. As usual, I turned on the radio, and to my surprise heard that the company I worked for at that time (Lynda.com) had been acquired by LinkedIn.

Wait, what?! I had absolutely no inkling that this was coming—and I even worked in HR, reporting to the chief people officer. I was clueless and confused.

But I was also excited. I had just seen LinkedIn CEO Jeff Weiner speak at the Wisdom 2.0 conference the previous month and had been very impressed with his values and leadership presence. After his talk, I turned to my friend and said, "I would love to work for that company someday." So as I drove to my office, my head was filled with positive thoughts like, *This is so great. What an awesome company to work for. I can't wait to be a part of it.*

I arrived at the office and went straight to my boss's office. She sat me down and told me about the acquisition. It was fast-tracked and would be complete in 30 days, one of the fastest transactions on record for a purchase of this size. I was getting a raise and a nice stock package and I would be part of the global Learning and Development team. At that moment, I was shocked but happy and excited too.

She then shared that while me and two other employees were receiving job offers from LinkedIn, the rest of our 50-person team would end employment the day the deal closed. While it's typical that core functions like human resources and finance have redundancy in an acquisition, I now felt sadness and frustration. I was losing so many friends and colleagues with whom I had worked closely for four years.

My boss wrapped up by telling me that the L&D team worked in Sunnyvale, five hundred miles away, and I would need to commute there, weekly to start, with the goal of working remotely as soon as things settled down. I would now report to a person I had never met. This added to my worry and sense of overwhelm.

This conversation took less than ten minutes, and yet it changed everything about my world. Literally, ev-er-y-thing. The projects I was working on stopped. The people I collaborated with shifted. The career plan I had crafted became obsolete. And the person who supervised me switched.

As the acquisition closed, I experienced more changes, from the email client and laptop I used to the benefits I received to the travel reimbursement policy. I had to learn all new systems to request tech support, track sick days, book conference rooms, and set quarterly goals. I had to learn the culture, navigate relationships, and support my new supervisor, all while trying to demonstrate my value.

My exploration into the neuroscience of change began three months later, as I watched myself and my colleagues experience things that were not accounted for by all the well-known models and theories about change—yes, the very models I had previously taught.

Now granted, I was going through one of the biggest change initiatives you can experience professionally—a sudden and uninvited change with no ability to plan for it. But I was still struck by how much the models couldn't account for what was happening. And I would be remiss if I don't point out that I was lucky because this change was one I was excited about and it left me employed and insured, unlike the thousands of employees every year who get laid off or fired.

But clearly, something was amiss in what we know about change, so I set off to learn more because my book on the neuroscience of learning had just come out and it was natural to carry over that research into the topic of change. I also knew there was value in dissecting change from inside my own experience because I would find lessons that would apply to other organizations.

What I discovered astounded me. Several structures in our brain are actually designed to protect us from the potentially harmful results of change. Humans are wired to resist change and we are working against our biology at every turn. It's well documented that every year 50 to 70 percent of all change initiatives fail. I believe that we can reduce that number significantly by working *with* human biology and harnessing the power of our brains to thrive through change.

This book contains the results of my research into the latest findings from a variety of academic and corporate studies as well as interviews with leaders from all kinds of organizations and culminates in the new Change Quest model. I synthesize them into practical

takeaways for you to use in your life. The truth is that change affects us every day, both at work and at home. Knowing how we are wired to resist change and, more importantly, how to overcome that resistance will serve you throughout your life.

This book is written for working adults everywhere. Whether you are on the leading or receiving end of change, you'll find useful tips and strategies you can implement today. In addition, I used this research to build new training programs for leaders, managers, and employees and they are proving to be exceptionally effective in all kinds of organizations and industries around the world. If you want to learn more, visit www.Training.BrittAndreatta.com.

This book is organized into five sections:

I.   We'll begin by understanding what change looks like in today's organizations.

II. Next, we'll dive in to the brain science of change and why it drives fear, fatigue, and failure.

III. Then I will introduce you to the new Change Quest model that synthesizes all of the findings into an effective tool.

IV. I will also share tips and strategies for employees and every level of leader responsible for designing or implementing change.

V.   We'll end with a look ahead to the factors that will drive change in your organization for years to come.

Take a Learning Journey

Before I wrote this book, I taught this content through workshops, keynote presentations at conferences and corporations, and through training courses I designed for leaders and employees. In a live presentation, I model best practices in learning design, based on the research of my previous book, *Wired to Grow: Harness the Power of Brain Science to Master Any Skill.*

Engaging with concepts in a personal way will help you understand and remember the material, and help you shift behaviors, so you do things in a new way. To replicate that for you here, at the end of each section you will find this light bulb icon marking a section called "Your Learning Journey." Each includes instructions for

applying the content to your current or anticipated change experiences. I recommend that you use these sections to build your confidence and competence around change. By the end, you will have a plan for implementing successful change and thriving through the chaotic effects of relentless change.

To make this easier, I have created a free downloadable PDF for you to fill out as you explore each concept (www.BrittAndreatta.com/Wired-to-Resist).

Tip: To maximize your experience, find a partner you can share this material with. Social learning actually boosts long-term retention, and when you work in partnership you both gain the insights of each other's experiences. So ask a friend or colleague who is also moving through change (hint: that would be anyone with a heartbeat) and explore together.

In addition, I have created a comprehensive training program for the Change Quest model. It includes presentations, videos, hands-on activities, assessments, and a copy of this book. If you want to become certified in the model or bring this training to your organization, please visit www.Training.BrittAndreatta.com.

A note about the cover. In science, the symbol for change is Δ, or delta. When I was in college, we used Δ in our lab reports but it's also used in shorthand for note-taking to represent the concept of change or difference. In addition, the triangle is the shape of road signs that convey some sort of warning and it also represents a mountain that can be climbed. It seemed appropriate to riff on these concepts to convey the neuroscience of change, our biological resistance to it, and our ability to successfully move through a change journey.

UNDERSTANDING CHANGE

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."

Charles Darwin, biologist and author,
On the Origin of Species

1. The Costs of Change Gone Wrong

Failed change is costing trillions of dollars per year. Some of these failures are so spectacular or widespread that we all know about them. Consider the HealthCare.gov website or Samsung's Galaxy Note 7 smartphone, costing over $840 billion and $5 million respectively. Or consider JC Penney's epic rebranding misses or the demise of Borders bookstores after several strategic missteps. These failed changes made headline news for weeks.

Other equally expensive changes die a quiet death in organizations all around the world, known only by the people who work there. For example, one global pharmaceutical company invested millions of dollars to implement a new enterprise resource planning (ERP) system and still had not achieved success after three attempts. And a global high-tech company had to scrap an expensive overhaul of its performance review process after a last-minute change in executive support.

Failed changed initiatives affect every industry and every level of organization. They can occur in every function from marketing to human resources, from production to legal. Several studies have shown that 50 percent to 70 percent of change initiatives fail. Think about how astounding that is. Change initiatives are not just spontaneous whims thrown together by idiots. They are carefully designed, and expertly crafted by leaders and subject matter experts. Reports are written, data is analyzed, and rollout plans are built.

Even so, half to three-quarters will fail . . . expensively and sometimes spectacularly. Change can fail for a wide variety of reasons. According to McKinsey & Company, a global consulting company, there are three forms of failure:

- **Failure to launch**, which indicates that there was too much resistance to get the planned change off the ground

- **Failure to sustain**, which happens when a good idea gets launched but never gets sufficient adoption to become part of the day-to-day work or culture of the organization

- **Failure to scale**, which occurs when the change cannot transition successfully as the organization grows

Unintended Consequences

The cost of the failed change is not the only consequence. Failed change initiatives can generate a ripple effect that harms customer satisfaction as well as employee loyalty. In fact, mismanaged change, if it's systemic, can cause employees to lose faith in their leaders and the future of the organization. As a result, employees disengage and ultimately leave.

This is certainly an issue in the United States where the US Bureau of Labor Statistics is showing that there are now more job openings than hires, allowing employees more power to find a better place to work. But it's happening around the world too. According to a 2015 global study by Globoforce, a talent development company, HR leaders in all kinds of industries are identifying employee turnover and engagement as their top concerns.

Researchers have been studying the cost of employee disengagement and Gallup estimates that a disengaged employee costs $3,400 for every $10,000 in salary, or 34 percent. Gallup is known for its groundbreaking and global research on employee engagement. As described in their *State of the American Workplace* report, they have identified three types of employees:

- **Engaged:** "Engaged employees work with passion and feel a profound connection to their company. They drive innovation and move the organization forward." In the US, Gallup's study shows that 30 percent of employees fall in this category.

- **Not engaged:** They find 52 percent of employees are not engaged. They are defined as employees who "are essentially 'checked out.' They're sleepwalking through their workday, putting time—but not energy or passion—into their work."

- **Disengaged:** In the US, approximately 18 percent of employees are actively disengaged and are "acting out their unhappiness, undermining what their engaged coworkers accomplish." The financial cost shows up in tardiness, missed work days, decreased productivity, and shrinkage, which is a fancy word for stealing the office supplies and other resources.

	Company A US Offices	Company B Denver Office
Headcount	3,725	120
% disengaged (nat'l avg 18%)	671	22
Median salary	$150,000/year	$50,000/year
% cost of disengagement	34%	34%
Cost per disengaged employee	$51,000/year	$13,600/year
Total cost of disengagement	$34,221,000/year	$299,200/year

An example of calculating the costs of disengagement

When I consult with executives, I like to help them understand the real cost of disengagement. I build a slide that shows what Gallup's analysis means for their organization. All I need is their headcount and median salary in their organization and I can show them this compelling data (see two examples above). Using Gallup's data, I can also show the impact of disengagement in certain industries, like ad agencies, or in a sector like state or federal government.

It's estimated that disengaged employees cost organizations over $550 billion per year in the United States alone. But what about the rest of the world? Gallup's *State of the Global Workplace* report shows that 30

	Company C India	Company D South Africa
Headcount	500	500
% disengaged (nat'l avg)	160 (32%)	225 (45%)
Median salary	$15,000/year	$15,000/year
% cost of disengagement	34%	34%
Cost per disengaged employee	$5,100/year	$5,100/year
Total cost of disengagement	$816,000/year	$1,147,500/year

Costs of disengagement by region

percent of global employees are actively disengaged and the report has country- and region-specific data. In India, for example, 32 percent of employees are disengaged, and that number climbs to 45 percent in South Africa and dips to 14 percent in United Arab Emirates.

When leaders see the overall and real costs of disengaged employees, they get very focused on creating an engaging work environment.

What does change have to do with engagement? Quite a bit, actually. As you'll discover in future chapters, we are biologically wired for constancy and can find chaotic or rapidly changing environments to be quite stressful. While we might first respond by focusing and working harder, ultimately our brain will push us to check out emotionally, and even physically, becoming the sleepwalking and unhappy employees that Gallup describes.

We'll also learn that when employees can't find their way through change, they are more likely to quit. While losing a disengaged employee might be a blessing, the truth is that you're more likely to lose your best people. And replacing good people is much more expensive than leaders often realize.

Research by the Society for Human Resource Management finds that the cost of replacing an employee is 50 percent to 250 percent of their annual salary plus benefits. This takes into account the cost of recruiting and hiring a new person, the lost productivity of the role until it's filled, and the time it takes for the new person to get up to speed and fully productive.

The range of percentage is based on the employee's skill level. Entry-level positions will cost 50 percent of their salary plus benefits to replace while a position of leadership or high level of skill (for example, IT or engineering) will be closer to 250 percent. Again, this can seem very abstract so I find it helpful to calculate the true costs so leaders can see the real impact. Use data from HR and industry sources to create a sense of the real hit to your bottom line. The website Bonus.com has an online "cost of employee turnover" calculator that allows you to enter your data and see more details. Again, leaders are often surprised to see how much attrition is actually costing them.

It's not like people aren't trying to fix this problem. Hundreds of books have been written on managing change and thousands of consulting firms offer their services. You can find whitepapers, articles, and blog posts galore, all attempting to crack this tough nut.

For example, consider these findings from consulting firm Willis Towers Watson's global survey on the ROI (return on investment) of change and communication involving companies from North America, Asia, and Europe:

- 29 percent of change initiatives launch without any kind of formal structure to support them
- 87 percent of respondents stated that they provide change management training to their managers but only 22 percent of organizations say their change training is effective
- While 68 percent of senior leaders say they are "getting the message" about the change, this drops to 53 percent for middle managers and 40 percent for front-line supervisors

Clearly, there is a lot of opportunity to improve our understanding of today's change. To date, few people are exploring the neuroscience of change and even fewer know how to translate that knowledge into actionable takeaways and leadership training. That is what I plan to accomplish with this book.

2. Change in the Modern World

There is no getting around change. It happens every day in every type of organization. But the nature of workplace change has definitely shifted over the last 30 years, driven by a few key factors.

First, the pace of technological innovation has increased. When you map our generation's advancements in technology on a timeline, the space between them gets smaller and smaller. And the time until 25 percent of the US population is using it gets shorter and shorter. Each innovation has the power to radically shift society, including how business is done.
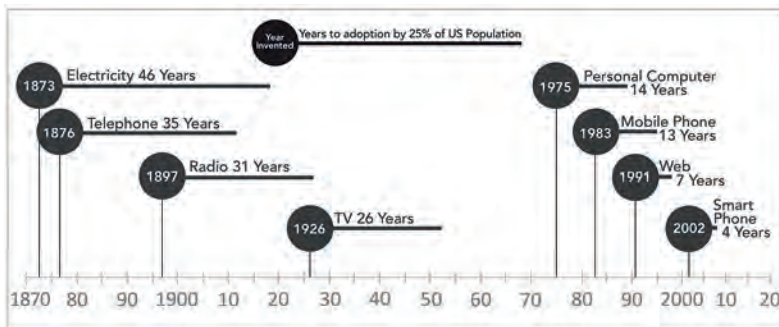
Adoption of new technology over time (source: Singularity.com)

Just think about how much your day-to-day work has changed with the immediate communication demands of email and websites. And how the widespread use of smartphones is pushing more demand for mobile access, so that you have everything you need in your pocket, 24 hours per day.

In addition, technology is big business, and innovation by the makers of computers, smartphones, and software creates a fast-paced, competitive market that drives unending upgrades and versions. If your organization has no change initiatives beyond keeping up with technology, you are still likely plenty busy with those.

Second, technology has enabled global communication and global business in a way that means that work is often 24/7, 365 days per year because, somewhere, you have an employee working or are trying to reach a potential client or supplier. Even if you are a small mom-and-pop business working traditional hours on Main Street, you cannot buffer yourself from all this change because it impacts your employees and customers.

Third, and finally, capitalism drives a relentless surge of growth and improvement. The market is filled with potential disruptors, especially because technology has made it so easy to create new businesses in this digital economy. For companies to survive, they must be striving for the newer/faster/better thing that distinguishes them from their competitors.

Change is constant, it is fast-paced, and it is relentless, much like ocean waves that pound on the shore. You might duck under one but when you look out, you just see sets of waves building and heading your way. Some might be small and others might be whoppers that can kick your butt if you aren't ready or don't have the right skills.

How does all this change show up in the average employee's life? It takes many forms in today's modern organizations. It can be a relatively small, like a new phone system, or sweeping, like a total redesign of the organization or its products. Employees experience a range of changes, such as these common change initiatives. Consider which ones have affected you over the past 12 months:

- A new job or role
- A new manager
- A switch to a different work station or work place
- A new leader of your function or organization
- A change on your team (the loss or gain of coworkers)
- A change in another department or team that affects yours
- A shift in a process, policy, or procedure
- An implementation of new or different technology
- A drive to capture a new client or market
- A move into a new regional or global territory with different cultures, laws, customs, and perhaps languages
- A merger or acquisition
- A geopolitical shift that affects the common market

These work changes may drive big personal changes as well: moving into a new home, settling in to a new neighborhood or community, and perhaps moving your kids to a new school.

You can see that change is happening in many ways and that we are actually moving through multiple change initiatives simultaneously.

Five Types of Change

While they can differ in size and impact, there are essentially five types of change. See if you can identify which types are at play right now in your organization:

1. **Strategic (how the organization will fulfill its mission):** This includes redesigning products or services and targeting new markets. For example, when LinkedIn added learning to its suite of services by acquiring Lynda.com. While the company had previously focused on helping professionals find opportunities and build their network, adding learning allowed them to help people close skill gaps to be more qualified for certain roles.

2. **Structural (the organization's internal set up):** This includes its divisions or functions, its org chart of authority, and administrative procedures. Changes might include reorganization of teams or departments, hiring growth that adds layers of hierarchy, or expanding locations. Every time furniture giant IKEA opens a new store within an existing territory or expands into a new country, they are making a structural change.

3. **Process (how the organization maximizes productivity and workflow):** This includes optimizing manufacturing processes, implementing new software to support sales, or shifting technology such as implementing a new email
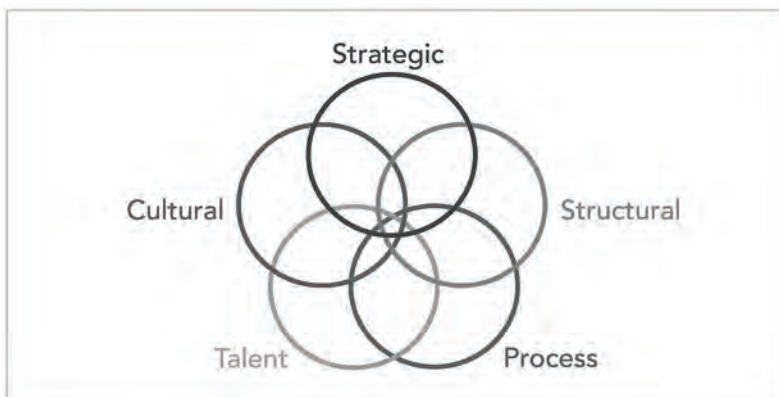

The five types of change at work

system or mobile access. For example, when Coca-Cola, Stanley Black & Decker, and American Red Cross implemented Salesforce, they engaged in a process-oriented change.

4. **Talent (maximizing employee skill and performance):** This involves initiatives affiliated with every aspect of the employee lifecycle including hiring, supervising, coaching, and training. Many organizations are shifting how they do performance reviews. Adobe was one of the first to do away with the traditional annual rating process and many companies have followed suit including GE, Gap, Accenture, and Deloitte to name a few.

5. **Cultural (shifting the attitudes, values, and behaviors of people such as employees and customers):** This might include revising core values, branding, and marketing, and even how people engage with a product or service. For example, when Satya Nadella took over as Microsoft's new CEO in 2014, he launched an intentional cultural shift toward continuous learning and improvement, the principles espoused by Dr. Carol Dweck's work on the growth mindset.

But not all change is created equal. Large changes often include more than one of these types, creating a domino effect across the organization, and all can potentially impact others outside the organization—such as suppliers, customers, and shareholders— creating an intricate web of potential effects and consequences. Other changes may be small, and barely register as a blip in the organization. This got me thinking about what distinguishes one change experience from another and whether these differences might help us analyze change readiness or predict potential problems.

3. Change vs. Transition

The concept of *change* really encompasses two large and very different entities, and it's vital to understand the difference. On the one hand, you have the change itself, factual and structural; a thing you execute. It can be encapsulated in a detailed change plan written with measurable goals, milestones, and deadlines. And then there is *transition*, the human psychological response to change, which includes humans' emotional reactions when confronted with change and how motivated they are to move through it. Transition is a process, largely driven by our biology, so it is something that requires adjustment rather than execution.

The Change	The Transition
Structural	Emotional
Factual	Reactive
Plan	Process
Execution	Adjustment
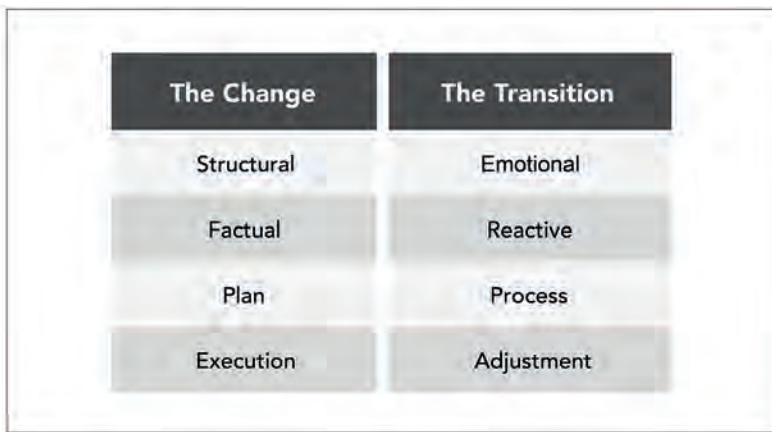
Change versus transition

Dr. William Bridges, author of *Managing Transitions*, argues that, too often, leaders in organizations make the big mistake of focusing only on designing and executing a change plan without preparing for or appropriately managing the transition.

I believe mismanaging the transition is the reason so many change initiatives fail. All changes require people to get on board and participate. All the detailed change plans in the world cannot overcome people who are resistant, reluctant, or downright oppositional.

The good news is that it doesn't have to be this way. With the right assessment and planning, leaders can be ready to successfully navigate the transition and, more importantly, help their people do the same.

Mapping Change Difficulty: Disruption and Acclimation

From all the various change initiatives I have witnessed in my years of consulting, I have consistently seen four factors influence outcomes. The first two:

- **Disruption:** How much disruption does the change create for employees? Some completely disrupt the day-to-day workflow while others have a negligible impact. So there is a continuum of disruption from very low to very high.

- **Acclimation:** The time is takes to acclimate or get used to the change is another factor. Some changes can be acclimated to very quickly (hours or days) and others can drag on for months or even years. This would be another continuum from very little time to a lot of time.

These two factors allow us to plot the impact of different types of changes into quadrants. Changes that are low disruption and require a low amount acclimation time fall into the bottom-left, or green zone: changes that are easy to adjust to quickly. For example, if you upgrade to eco-friendly lighting or if you switch to a different vendor or provider, employees might not even notice the difference.
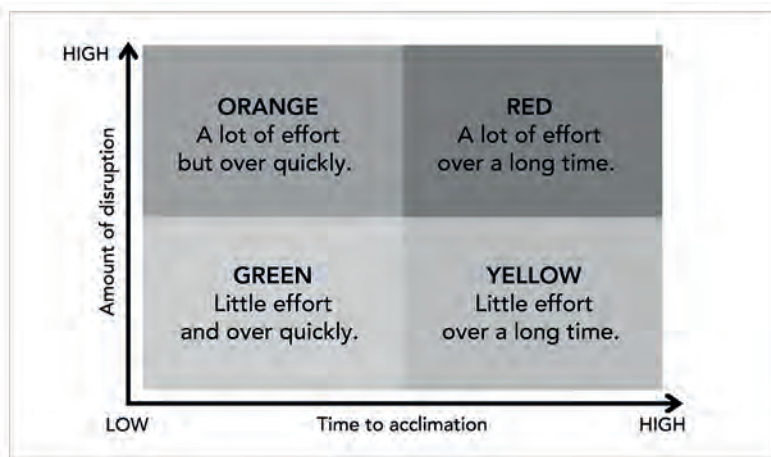
Matrix of disruption and acclimation

If a change falls into the bottom-right zone (yellow), it doesn't cause much disruption but will require stamina, since the adjustment period will take longer. For example, the slow preparation to meet a new regulation that goes into effect in two years.

The upper-left zone (orange) represents changes that are quite disruptive but are acclimated to quickly, such as converting to a new email and calendar system like Microsoft Outlook or the Google suite. Almost inevitably, changes that impact how people communicate, schedule meetings, and manage their time will be disruptive for a bit. Usually conversions like this are implemented over a weekend, although months of work were going on in the background up until the date of conversion.

Finally, the upper-right zone (red) represents changes that are high in disruption and time to acclimation. Examples include a complete revision of an organization's products and services, or a merger or acquisition with a company with very different values, leadership structure, etc.

This matrix provides a quick way to assess changes. For example, Facilities might decide that they need to switch the faucets in the bathrooms or resurface the parking lot. Depending on the situation, those things might fall into the green zone—unless the organization has limited bathrooms and parking spaces, in which case this change may require people to completely alter their routines (disruption) for many days (acclimation), putting these changes into the orange zone.

When working with leaders on change initiatives, I have them use this matrix to consider the impact proposed changes will have on employees. It's a good predictor of how much resistance and upset a change is likely to cause.

However, the change-difficulty matrix does not yet tell the whole story because two more factors play a significant role in how employees respond to change:

- **Individual choice:** Do the employees choose the change or will it be put upon them?
- **Desire:** How much do the employees want the change, or again, is it being put upon them?

These two factors are the most significant because they shape key psychological aspects of how humans are wired.

Mapping Employee Motivation

Choice and desire impact our emotions, attitudes, and motivations, as I am sure you have seen in your own experiences. It's easier to get on

board with changes that you choose or want, even when they represent more disruption or longer acclimation time. Again, these two factors can be mapped against each other as a grid against "yes" or "no" for both choice and desire.
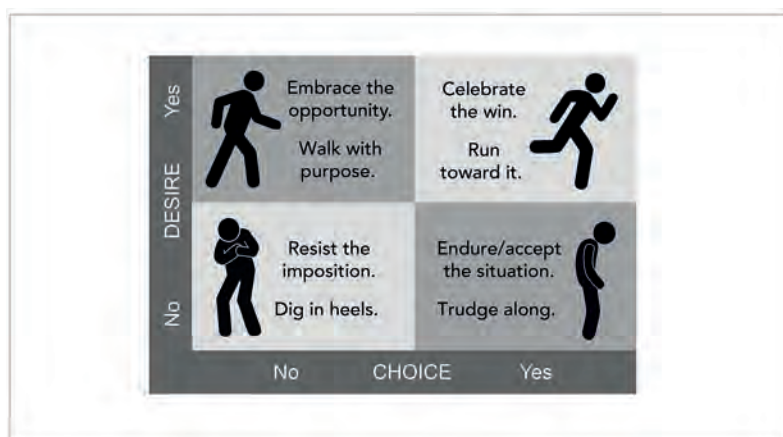
Mapping choice and desire

When you both desire and choose a change (yes and yes), you are likely to be happy about it and experience it with enthusiasm and energy. For example, you really want a job and you accept the offer. Your motivation would probably look like you running toward it and celebrating the win. Even though this awesome new job may represent quite a bit of disruption in your life and acclimating to it may take time, your motivation will be very positive, which is why we need both matrices to really understand change.

If you really want a change that you did not choose, you are likely to see it an unexpected but good opportunity. This is how I felt about the acquisition of my company—while I didn't choose it, I was super-excited because I was a big fan of the buying company and I really admired their CEO. My motivation looked like me walking toward it, feeling good about embracing the unexpected opportunity.

The next quadrant—a change that you did not desire but did choose—is tricky, and probably represents some kind of "should" or intentional sacrifice, like accepting a lower position rather than being laid off or relocating because it might lead to more opportunities down the road. These are a bit harder to get excited about, so motivation is lower because you are enduring or accepting the conditions. It might feel like you are trudging along and could include feelings of resentment or disappointment, even if you are trying to make the best of it.

Finally, in the fourth quadrant are changes that you did not choose nor did you want (no and no—or sometimes "Hell no!"). Obviously, without natural motivation you are likely to feel a lot of resistance toward this imposition, perhaps needing others to push or drag you along. Depending on how badly you feel about it, you might even actively fight the change, digging in your heels.

When you begin mapping change initiatives against these four factors—disruption, acclimation, choice, and desire—you'll find you have a much better way of predicting when people (employees, customers, constituents, etc.) are likely to resist. You will also have a better understanding of how much skill leaders and managers need to help people through the related challenges. An inexperienced or ineffective manager can probably do just fine leading an eager group through a green or yellow change. But it's going to require many more nuanced leadership skills if you have trudgers or resisters and are taking them through a highly disruptive change.

This assessment helped a chief technology executive completely revise his approach to change at one of the world's top research universities. He had been hired to accomplish a major shift in how technology services were provided across the whole campus, serving students, staff and faculty. In addition, he had inherited a team of experienced professional staff who had been in their roles for years.

He needed to roll out several major change iniatives over a three-year period, most of which would be disruptive, first to his team and then the various constituents they served. By mapping these four factors, he gained valuable insight that helped him shape the timing, messaging, and method for each of the initiatives. He also was able to define who needed what kind of training to best prepare them for success.