

WIRED TO RESIST. 2.0

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



Britt Andreatta, PhD

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

Discover the science-based secrets for boosting your change readiness and resilience.

"Illustrated by real-life examples and evidence from renowned scholars and practitioners, *Wired to Resist* provides novel insights into why efforts to change often fail and—more importantly—how they can succeed. This new edition includes issues like AI, the changing workforce, and provides updated strategies for today's leaders."

Barry Posner, PhD, New York Times bestselling author of *The Leadership Challenge*

"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 scientifically proven steps to help us shift to positive outcomes. In this updated edition, the personal stories from diverse backgrounds helped me feel less alone in my struggles with change, giving me the confidence to embrace whatever changes lie ahead."

Jacqui Burge, Founder and CEO, Desk Yogi

"After reading *Wired to Resist*, I brought Dr. Andreatta in to help us launch an important change initiative. Her research created the "aha! moments" our executive team needed, and we deployed the strategies to great results. I continue to use her work weekly in my role as an organizational leader, mentor, and collaborative peer."

Forest Key, VP of Global Partnerships, Code.org

"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 science-based look at the nature of resistance with proven methods for overcoming it. The best practices for mergers and acquisitions are especially insightful. I couldn't put it down."

Erin Earle, VP of Global HR People Partners, Splunk

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. In this fully revised and expanded second edition, Dr. Andreatta synthesizes the latest research into a model for change that harnesses the power of neuro-science and shows you how to thrive and lead through all kinds of change.

Dr. Britt Andreatta is an internationally recognized thought leader who creates 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 experience consulting with executives from all types of organizations. Learn more at: www.BrittAndreatta.com.



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WIRED TO RESIST

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

Second Edition
Revised and Expanded

Britt Andreatta, PhD

 7th Mind
Publishing

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For my daughter, Kiana.

You are the source of so much love, learning, and growth in our lives.

It has been an honor to be your mom. I can't wait to watch the rest
of your life unfold and all the wonderful adventures you'll have.

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INTRODUCTION

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

Glenn Llopis, author, *The Innovation Mentality*

I wrote the first edition of this book in 2017, just after LinkedIn acquired the video training company Lynda.com, where I served as the chief learning officer. At the time, it was one of the largest and fastest tech acquisition deals in US history, allowing LinkedIn to add learning to its suite of services for working professionals.

Overnight, I was thrust into a massive change experience that altered everything about my world. Literally, ev-er-y-thing. I was reassigned to an office 500 miles away. My projects stopped. My supervisor switched. My colleagues shifted. And my career plan became obsolete.

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 like Kotter’s 8-step process, McKinsey’s 7S model, and Prosci’s ADKAR framework.

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 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. As a result, I created the Change Quest® model based on the latest findings from a variety of academic and corporate studies, as well as interviews with leaders from all kinds of organizations.

This New Edition

I did not expect that first edition to become a bestseller, nor to be inundated with requests from learning professionals to create a certification so they could bring the model and training to their organizations. Nor did I expect that during the COVID-19 pandemic, an e-course I offered at the time would take off, becoming a tool that helped thousands of people around the world navigate the months of confusion and chaos of lockdowns, layoffs, and the trauma and grief we all witnessed.

Change comes in all kinds of forms, from the small and annoying to the epic and earth shattering. As you will learn, we can assess the impact of change by how long it takes to get acclimated to the new normal and how much disruption it creates in our daily lives. The pandemic was both highly disruptive and took months to go through and will take years, if not decades, to fully recover from.

I found myself inundated with work as organizations and executive teams brought me in to advise them during those turbulent times. It was gratifying to share science-based principles and practical actions people could use every day to navigate the pandemic, while also increasing their change readiness, agility, and resilience moving forward.

Since then, I have brought the Change Quest model to hundreds of organizations around the world. Using this research and these tools, I helped executive teams navigate major culture transformations, product launches, technology adoptions, and acquisitions.

This new edition is born from those experiences and the tough conversations about change that happen every day across industries. It includes several new chapters on the main drivers of changes and pressing issues challenging organizations of all sizes, including technology and artificial intelligence (AI), the growing impact of change fatigue and burnout, the environment and climate change, and shifting workforce demographics pushing organizations to become more purpose-driven. It also includes a greatly expanded section for executives and senior leaders with updated strategies for these modern times.

I added a new chapter on mergers and acquisitions (M&As) after interviewing several executives who played a central role in some of the biggest deals of the past few years with Nestlé, Microsoft, Amazon, Starbucks, T-Mobile, McDonnell Douglas, and Cisco.

I also invited people to submit their own stories of change and was thrilled to receive stories from around the world representing all kinds of organizations and changes. And, of course, I have updated previous sections with new research and findings on the neuroscience of change

How to Use This Book

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. The truth is that change affects us every day, both at work and at home, so I synthesize my research into practical takeaways to use anywhere they're needed. Knowing how we are wired to resist change and, more importantly, how to overcome that resistance to become more adaptive and resilient will serve you throughout your life. To that end, this book is organized into seven sections:

- I. We'll begin by understanding what change looks like in today's organizations.
- II. Next, we'll dive into the brain science of change and why it drives fear, fatigue, and burnout.

- III. Then I'll introduce you to the new Change Quest model that synthesizes all the findings into an effective framework you can apply to changes of all kinds.
- IV. This section offers tips and strategies for employees to successfully navigate change as well as for managers who are responsible for leading others through change.
- V. Then we'll explore the four big drivers of change and how they impact organizations where you work, as well as others you engage with as a customer or community member.
- VI. This section focuses on several strategies and best practices for executives and senior leaders to prepare you factors that will drive change in your organization for years to come.
- VII. We'll end with some final thoughts on change, you'll synthesize your learning journeys, and I'll share my acknowledgments as well as the references for every study I mention.

Throughout every section, you will find stories about change, first-person narratives from 20 individuals from around the world. They answered an open call for submissions and represent a wide range of industries, as diverse as finance, manufacturing, hospitality, education, technology, and healthcare. Each person tells their own story of moving through a change journey, some of which were smooth and successful while others were filled with struggle. Each story is set off in a box with this mountain icon. Consider this first story:



Change Journey 1

Industry: Manufacturing

I owned a sign manufacturing company. We did great work with a high level of satisfaction with our customers. Our staff was well trained and happy in their positions, and we finally started to make money two years after we opened.

At the time, we were mainly pursuing real estate and construction firms, who gave us a lot of business. However, we didn't pay attention to the warning signs of the market and that the "bubble" was about to burst.

Despite coaches advising me to change direction and our employees making recommendations for tapping into other markets, I did not shift fast enough. Subsequently, the next year I moved my entire operation from our storefront to my home basement, and then into oblivion by October.

My staff became disappointed and disillusioned as they lost their livelihoods. And I ultimately had to file for bankruptcy and go through foreclosure. Unfortunately, I made several mistakes. I did not set a clear

vision, nor allow my team to engage in shared decision-making. I had an unwillingness to change because I was focused on our current success and unable to look to the future. Ultimately, I let ego get in the way and it cost me everything.

My Research Process

I have been studying, synthesizing, and writing about the science of success in books and other media for 20 years. All thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors originate in the brain and neuroscience offers unique and valuable insights into how we can bring out the best in people and organizations.

I read several books about change and change management, but primarily focus on neuroscience, reading journals like *Neuron*, *The Journal of Neuroscience*, and *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*. Inevitably, these studies led me to other disciplines and studies in biology, psychology, business, and education. I reviewed research from many branches of business, economics, and environmental studies. I also conducted a content analysis of the personal stories submitted to identify common themes and experiences.

Another important part of my research process is mapping what scientists find in their labs to issues that impact today's workplaces. I leverage research by data giants like Deloitte, Gallup, Gartner, and McKinsey, as well as professional organizations like the Association for Talent Development (ATD), the Association of Change Management Professionals (ACMP), and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). Many of these global studies yielded fascinating insights about change.

To be clear, I am not a neuroscientist; my PhD is in education, leadership, and organizations, and my career has focused on the intersection between effective leadership and learning. Because I am an active practitioner, designing and delivering learning experiences out in the field, I can see where lab studies do and do not translate to how people experience these concepts in the real world and especially at work.

I used this research to build science-based training programs that are proving to be exceptionally effective. If you want to learn more, visit www.BrainAwareTraining.com.



Take a Learning Journey

Before I wrote this book, I taught this content to live audiences and used these strategies with executive teams.

Engaging with concepts in a personal way helps the brain learn and retain material and, more importantly, it's where any meaningful shift in actions starts. To help you gain the most from this book, you will find this light bulb icon

marking an element called “Your Learning Journey” at the end of each section. Each includes instructions for applying the content to your experiences.

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). To maximize your experience, I also recommend you find a partner, as social learning boosts long-term retention, and when you work in partnership you 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.

A Note about the Cover Design

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 as shorthand in notetaking 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 failed attempt by OpenAI's board to remove CEO Sam Altman, which cost nearly \$100 billion and a three percent drop in Microsoft stock value. Or the return-to-office (RTO) mandates driving high turnover and difficulties recruiting new employees. Or consider David Zaslav's drastic cost-cutting measures at Warner Bros Discovery that alienated some of the world's legendary filmmakers and ultimately galvanized the Writers Guild of America and Screen Actors Guild to strike. These failed changes made headline news for weeks.

Other equally expensive changes die quiet deaths 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 has not achieved success after three attempts. And a 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 at all levels of an organization. They can occur in every function from marketing to human resources, and from production to legal. Studies at Harvard show that 50 to 70 percent of change initiatives fail and another study found that, depending on the type of change, the range is 40 to 80 percent. 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, many will fail . . . expensively and sometimes spectacularly. Change can fail for a wide variety of reasons. According to McKinsey, a global consulting firm, there are three forms of failure:

- **Failure to launch**, which happens when there is 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

Another study found that only 43 percent of employees say their organization is good at managing change. And only 25 percent feel that managing change is a strength of their senior leaders.

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, many employees leave, contributing to labor shortages in nearly every industry. Gallup estimates that 52 percent of the global workforce is actively seeking a new job.

This is certainly an issue in the United States where the Chamber of Commerce states that companies are, “facing unprecedented challenges trying to find enough workers to fill open jobs.” US Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that there are more job openings than unemployed adults—if every person who is unemployed found a job, millions would still be unfilled. And several industries are struggling under intense talent shortages for specific skills or roles.

It’s happening around the world too. The World Economic Forum is predicting that by 2030, there will be a net growth of 78 million jobs worldwide, even accounting for anticipated job displacement by technology/AI and other trends. Many of the fastest growing jobs are highly technical, which means that critical shortages are anticipated even with aggressive efforts to upskill workers.

Before employees quit, they disengage. Gallup, known for its global research on employee engagement, estimates that it costs the world economy nearly \$9 trillion, or 9 percent of global GDP. In the US, engagement has declined the last few years, hitting the lowest scores in a decade, correlated with decreases in mental health and well-being. Disengaged employees cost organizations over \$550 billion per year in the US alone.

As described in their recent *State of the Global Workplace* report, Gallup identifies three levels of employee engagement (see table for regions):

- **Engaged** employees “are highly involved in and enthusiastic about their work and workplace. They are psychological ‘owners,’ drive performance and innovation, and move the organization forward.”
- **Not Engaged** employees “are psychologically unattached to their work and company. Because their engagement needs are not being fully met, they’re putting time—but not energy or passion—into their work.”
- **Actively Disengaged** employees “aren’t just unhappy at work—they are resentful that their needs aren’t being met and are acting out their unhappiness. Every day, these workers potentially undermine what their engaged coworkers accomplish.”

	North America	Latin America	APAC	EMEA
Engaged	33%	32%	24%	18%
Not Engaged	51%	58%	63%	64%
Actively Disengaged	16%	10%	13%	18%

Other talent development researchers like Gartner, Blessingwhite, and Deloitte identify employee engagement as a critical issue that impacts organizational success in every industry.

The financial cost of actively disengaged employees shows up in tardiness, missed work days, decreased productivity or quality, and shrinkage (theft of supplies and other resources). Gallup calculates that each disengaged employee costs \$3,400 for every \$10,000 in salary, or 34 percent.

When I consult with executives, I help them understand the real cost of disengagement by showing what Gallup’s analysis means for their organization. All I need is their headcount and median salary to show them this compelling data (see two examples below).

	Company A US Offices	Company B Denver Office
Headcount	5000	150
# of disengaged (US avg 16%)	800	24
Median salary	\$75,000/yr	\$75,000/yr
% Cost of disengagement	34%	34%
Cost per disengaged employee	\$25,500/yr	\$25,500/yr
TOTAL COST	\$20.4 Billion/yr	\$612,000/yr

An example of calculating the costs of disengagement in the US

	Company C India (APAC)	Company D Brazil (LATAM)
Headcount	500	500
# of disengaged (region avg)	65 (13%)	50 (10%)
Median salary	\$5,000/yr	\$1,750/yr
% Cost of disengagement	34%	34%
Cost per disengaged employee	\$1,700/yr	\$595/yr
TOTAL COST	\$110,500/yr	\$29,750/yr

Calculating the costs of disengagement by global region

When leaders see the overall and real costs of disengaged employees, they get focused on creating an engaging work environment. Using Gallup’s data, I can also show the impact of disengagement in certain industries, like advertising, or in a sector like state or federal government.

What does change have to do with engagement? Quite a bit, actually. As you’ll discover in future chapters, humans 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 (SHRM) 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. Turnover rates vary by industry with a low of 18 percent for government organizations to a high of 79 percent for hospital-ity—the average is 41 percent.

This can seem abstract so I find it helpful to calculate the 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. Look at this example below—losing 20 front-line employees can cost half a million dollars while 20 technical employees can cost more than \$17 billion!

	Entry Level Employee	Technical/ Leader Level
Annual Salary + Benefits	\$50,000	\$350,000
SHRM Percentage	X 50%	X 250%
Cost to replace employee	\$25,000	\$875,000
X Total number of employees	20	20
TOTAL COST	\$500,000	\$17.5 Billion

Costs of replacing employees

The website Bonusly.com has an online “cost of employee turnover” calculator that allows you to enter your data and see more details. Again, leaders are genuinely surprised to see how much attrition is actually costing them. We'll explore more on the costs of failed change in chapter 23, but it's clear that getting change right is a major competitive advantage.

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 and articles galore, all attempting to address this critical issue.

Clearly, there is a lot of opportunity to improve our understanding of today's change. Few people are exploring the neuroscience of change and even fewer know how to translate that knowledge into actionable strategies for employees, managers, and executives. This is what we'll cover in this book.



Change Journey 2

Industry: Construction

Our organization suffered a massive upheaval when the board decided to fire one of our senior leaders, prompting the Executive Director to resign in protest. This left the organization suddenly up in the air and those in middle management were left to keep things on track.

The board did its best to “right the ship” by installing a temporary director while searching for more permanent leadership. But unfortunately, they chose someone who was not invested in the organization's future, nor were they respected or prepared to lead the organization out of the quicksand. Ironically, there were many qualified leaders who were ready and willing to step up, but the board's choice led to disaster.

Instead of adding stability, the new leader was disorganized and created chaos. They immediately pushed sweeping changes that caught many off-guard, miscommunicating the goals and mission while moving staff around to different positions within the organization.

The toxic environment only festered and a wave of resignations followed. The organization continued to bleed resources—both human and financial—to the point that they had to cut salaries, close locations, and suspend services.

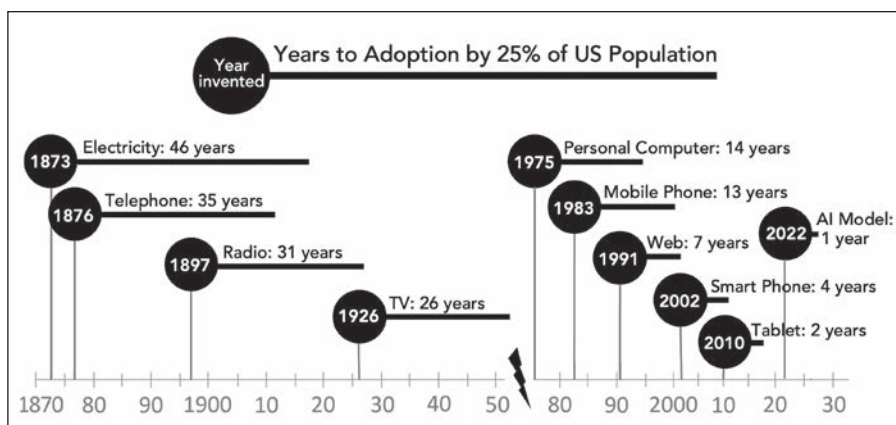
After a year of this, I decided to leave. I was burned out, stressed, feeling like there was no real leadership, goal, “journey,” or optimism. Luckily, that career move worked out for me, but I hear from former colleagues (who stuck it out) that the organization is still toxic, has high turnover, low trust, constant conflict, and a bad reputation, making it difficult to attract new employees.

It is truly sad, but also totally avoidable—if the board had communicated better, involved the employees in the change, and not pushed so much radical changes in a short window of time, it could have been a success and I probably would have stayed!

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. As you can see, the advent of smart phones and tablets drove very rapid adoption rates and generative AI tools like ChatGPT and DeepSeek are exploding at even faster rates.



Adoption of new technology over time

Just think about how much your day-to-day work has changed with the immediate demands for information and communication. 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. Consider which of these common change initiatives you experienced over the past 12 months:

- Different or new job or role
- New manager or new leader over your function or organization
- Switch to a different work station or work place
- Transition on your team (the loss or gain of coworkers)
- Shift in a process, policy, or procedure
- Implementation of new or different technology
- Drive to capture a new client or market
- New global territory with different cultures, languages, and laws
- Merger or acquisition
- Geopolitical shift that affects the your market or supply chain
- Climate emergency such as a natural disaster or pandemic

These work changes may drive big personal changes as well: moving into a new home, settling into 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 moving through multiple change initiatives simultaneously.

Five Types of Change

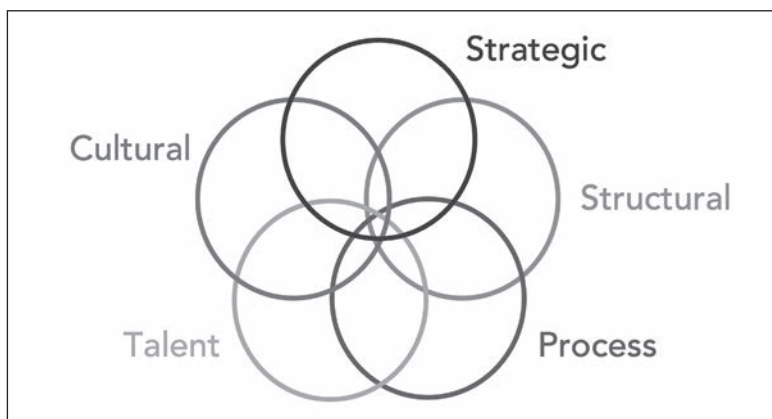
While they can differ in size and impact, there are essentially five types of change. Identify which types are at play right now in your organization:

1. **Strategic (how the organization will fulfill its mission):** This includes redesigning products or services and targeting new markets. For example, when LinkedIn acquired Lynda.com to add learning to its suite of services. 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 depart-

ments, hiring growth that adds layers of hierarchy, or expanding locations. Every time German grocery giant Aldi 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 system or mobile access. For example, when Amazon, T-Mobile, and American Red Cross implemented Salesforce, they engaged in a process-oriented change.



The five types of change at work

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 annual rating process and many have followed suit, including GE, Gap, Accenture, Netflix, 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, or how people engage with a product or service. For example, when Satya Nadella took over as Microsoft's CEO, he launched an intentional cultural shift toward continuous learning and improvement, based on the growth mindset principles espoused by Dr. Carol Dweck.

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.



Change Journey 3

Industry: NGO/Nonprofit

I worked for a local non-governmental organization (NGO) as a grants program manager. We embarked on a journey to change the mission in response to various pressures. We had an extensive history of positive humanitarian work, but faced ongoing challenges due to a stigma surrounding “Islamic” in its name. Originally founded to advocate for a marginalized sect in the vulnerable community, the NGO has since transitioned to pure humanitarian efforts, with employees and board members representing diverse religious backgrounds.

One of the challenges we faced was that despite receiving funding from reputable international organizations, misconceptions persisted regarding our affiliation with religious and political entities, hindering our efforts to secure grants and funding. But we committed to overcoming the stigma.

The transformation of the NGO from its original sectarian roots to a purely humanitarian entity was primarily driven by its commitment to addressing the needs of marginalized communities and promoting social cohesion and inclusion. This shift was also influenced by evolving global standards and best practices in humanitarian aid, which emphasized the principles of humanity, impartiality, independence, and neutrality.

Additionally, the dedication and perseverance of our leadership, staff, and volunteers played a crucial role in navigating the challenges and complexities associated with this transition. By prioritizing the well-being of the communities it served and maintaining a steadfast focus on humanitarian principles, the NGO successfully embraced its new identity as a credible and respected humanitarian actor.

The evidence of our successful transition lies in our extensive track record of impactful projects and collaborations with reputable international NGOs like Acted, British Council, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Expertise France, and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). Last year, we reached 52,927 beneficiaries with 1,755 being people with special needs. Our Primary Health Care Center alone serves up to 7,000 services per month, demonstrating significant outcomes.

Further, letters of recommendations from UNICEF, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and CRS among others attest to our commitment to humanitarian principles. Our dedication to serving marginalized communities and upholding humanitarian values remains unwavering, underscoring our continued impact in the field.

3. Change vs. Transition

The concept of change encompasses two large and very different entities, and it's vital to understand the difference. On the one hand, you have the change itself, which is 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 the 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 mistake of focusing only on designing and executing a change plan without preparing for 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.

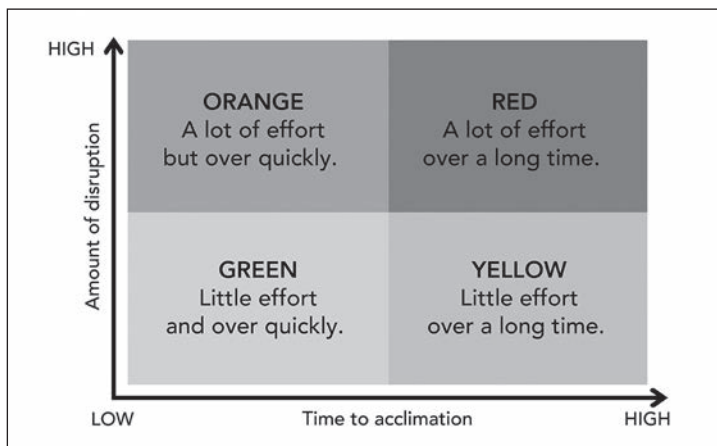
Mapping Change Difficulty: Disruption and Acclimation

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 it 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, 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 new email and calendar software or implementing a new customer relationship management (CRM) system like Hubspot or Salesforce. Almost inevitably, changes that impact how people communicate, manage their time, or close deals 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 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 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 important 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.

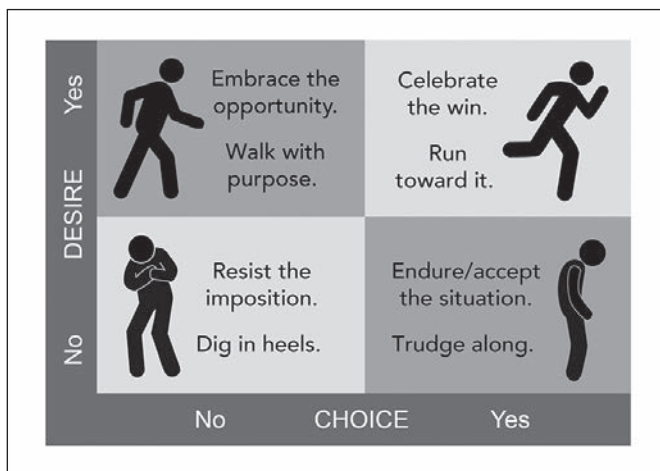
When you both desire and choose a change (yes and yes), you are likely to be happy about it and experience it with enthusiasm and energy. For example, you really want a job and you accept the offer. Your motivation would probably look like you are running toward it and celebrating the win. Even though 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.

The same for if your team has been pushing to redesign a service or update the marketing campaign. If this change is approved, you'll be excited even if it is a lot of work.

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 Lynda.com—while I didn't choose it, I was excited because I was a big fan of the buying company and I 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.



Mapping choice and desire

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 initiatives 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.



Change Journey 4

Industry: Healthcare/State Government

I worked for a state agency, which was launching a grant program to increase the number of healthcare providers in schools. The rationale was that student outcomes would improve since health is a crucial determinant of success in life, school, and career.

A grant was to be disbursed to an initial group of 67 school districts and local education providers with the aim of bringing them together to collaborate. In order to measure the collective impact, providers had to agree to collect the same data points and share them so they could be aggregated at the state level. This required a significant change because providers were used to working independently.

As the consultant leading this effort, I had to identify the forces keeping the system in its current state. First, I gathered information about past efforts and current pressures. Next, I asked what the ideal outcome was and what would be different if all providers were truly collaborating. I also established relationships with providers to understand their motivations, desires, and concerns about how this change could disrupt their current operations.

There were several barriers keeping providers working in silos, competition, and distrust. First, providers considered the state as a compliance enforcer who lacked an understanding of their reality and operational constraints, such as limited staffing and resources, as well as children with challenging life conditions. As a result, providers believed that the state could not appropriately use their data fairly when comparing providers to determine who should receive resources. Second, the providers often saw each other as competitors for funding. In the past, data had been used as a tool for punishment and/or funding cuts, so providers kept their data confidential.

I organized a planning retreat for 10 representative providers to help them define their common goal and strategize the best ways to bring about impactful change with the allocated funds. By the end of the retreat, providers had a solid plan based on their collective motivations, and it was grounded in the reality of their work. They left with a strong sense of partnership and trust, and they agreed to collect and share the same nine data points to measure success.

At the end of the first year, all grantees were collecting and sharing common data points, which provided valuable insights into how state funds were impacting access to healthcare and reducing negative outcomes for students. The program has been so successful that it is ongoing, with 186 grantees and over \$30 million in funding disbursed. This success has enabled the state to tell a compelling story, supported by aligned data, demonstrating that the investment is effective.

Change is often met with resistance due to various reasons such as past failures, fear of the unknown, or fatigue from previous attempts. However, by understanding the reasons behind the resistance, both providers and the state were able to work collaboratively to overcome these challenges.

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VII: THE PATH AHEAD: FINAL THOUGHTS

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May you all thrive on your change journeys!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

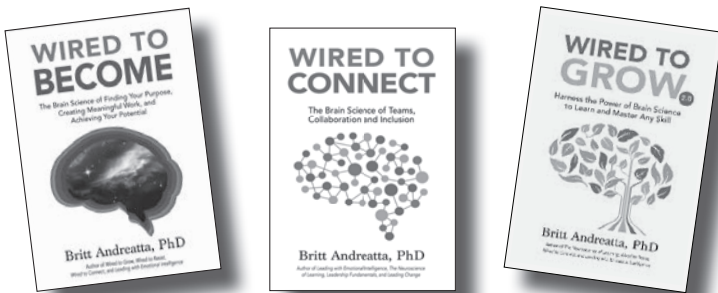


Dr. Britt Andreatta is an internationally recognized thought leader who creates science-based solutions for today's challenges. As CEO of Brain Aware Training, Britt Andreatta draws on her unique background in leadership, neuroscience, psychology, and learning to unlock the best in people and organizations.

In 2024, the Association for Talent Development named Britt the Thought Leader of the Year “in recognition of her exceptional contributions of thought leadership to the profession of talent development, which has had sustained impact over a number of years.”

In 2022, she was named a Top 10 Influencer in Learning, and in 2021, she was a Top 20 Learning Influencer and a Top 20 HR Influencer for Leadership Development. Britt's industry accolades include the Global Leadership Award from the World Training & Development Congress, and the Gold Medal for *Chief Learning Officer* magazine's Trailblazer Award. *Talent Development* magazine calls her as an “outstanding thought leader and pioneer.”

Britt's other titles include *Wired to Become: The Brain Science of Finding Your Purpose, Creating Meaningful Work, and Achieving Your Potential*; *Wired to Connect: The Brain Science of Teams and a New Model for Creating Collaboration and Inclusion*; and *Wired to Grow: Harness the Power of Brain Science to Master Any Skill*.



She is a regular contributor to *Entrepreneur*, *Training Industry*, *Chief Learning Officer*, and *Talent Management* magazines.

As the former Chief Learning Officer for Lynda.com (now LinkedIn Learning), Britt is a seasoned professional with more than 25 years' experience. She regularly consults with businesses, universities, and nonprofit organizations on leadership development and learning strategy. Corporate clients include Fortune 100 companies like Comcast and Apple, and also Ernst & Young, John Deere, Microsoft, LinkedIn, Marriott, Splunk, Domino's, Franklin Covey, EvergreenHealth, DPR Construction, Rust-Oleum, Zillow, Pacific Life, SHI, Dell, and Sempra Energy.

Dr. Andreatta has worked with major educational institutions like the University of California, Dartmouth University, and the University of New Mexico, and nonprofit organizations like the YMCA and Prison Fellowship's Warden Exchange Program. She has served as professor and dean at the University of California, Antioch University, and several graduate schools.

Her courses on LinkedIn Learning, Skillssoft, and Cornerstone On Demand have received over 10 million views worldwide. Titles include *Leading with Emotional Intelligence*, *Advice for Leaders During a Crisis*, *Increasing Collaboration on Your Team*, *Creating Winning Teams*, *Organizational L&D*, and *20 Questions to Improve Learning at Your Organization*.

A highly sought-after and engaging speaker, Britt delivered a TEDx talk called "How Your Past Hijacks Your Future." She regularly speaks at corporate events and international conferences, receiving rave reviews and awards for "best session of conference."

Due to popular demand, Dr. Andreatta now offers certifications in her brain-based training programs. These award-winning programs drive sustained behavior change at organizations across a wide range of industries like technology, healthcare, finance, food, media, and manufacturing. Learn more at BrainAwareTraining.com.

Dr. Andreatta regularly consults with executives and organizations on how to maximize their full potential. To learn more, visit her website and social channels:



Website: BrittAndreatta.com



Instagram: [Instagram.com/brittandreatta/](https://www.instagram.com/brittandreatta/)



LinkedIn: [Linkedin.com/in/brittandreatta/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/brittandreatta/)



Bluesky: [@BrittAndreatta](https://bsky.app/profile/BrittAndreatta)



Youtube: [Youtube.com/c/BrittAndreattaTraining](https://www.youtube.com/c/BrittAndreattaTraining)

LEARN MORE ABOUT TRAINING

Dr. Andreatta's robust, science-based training solutions feature her ground-breaking research, trademarked models, and uniquely effective learning design that drives real behavior change. Signature products include:

Brain Aware® Leader

This award-winning program gives leaders the critical skills they need to drive success. Discover the neuroscience of what brings out the best in others. In every engaging session, leaders actively apply content and concepts to their current teams and projects. There are six interconnected sessions as well as industry-specific versions for Sales, Healthcare, and Technology/Engineering.



Managing
People



Coaching
For Impact



Increasing
Emotional Intelligence



Creating Peak
Performing Teams



Leading Effective
Change



Driving Execution
+ Accountability

Brain Aware® Executive

This program gives executives the sophisticated skills they need to drive successful strategy, vision, and innovation in their organizations for years to come.

Change Quest®

Why do 50 to 70 percent of change initiatives fail? Typical approaches don't take into account human biology and that we are wired to resist change. But once you understand the brain structures activated by change, you can mitigate their effects, increasing adaptability and resilience. With content for senior leaders, managers, and the recipients of change (i.e., employees, customers, etc.), participants gain new strategies they can use immediately.

Four Gates to Peak Team Performance®

Teams power more and more of today's work. Recent discoveries in neuroscience illuminate what differentiates high-performing teams from the rest. Learn how safety, inclusion, purpose, and belonging create the necessary conditions for true collaboration and team excellence. With sessions specifically for team leaders, team members, and senior executives, participants will gain effective strategies to consistently create peak-performing teams.



To get certified,
contact us at:

Info@BA-Train.com

(805) 883-6616

BrainAwareTraining.com



PRAISE

Speaking

“You were not only the best keynote we have had for this annual conference, you were the best keynote I have seen, EVER.”

Mark Walker, Board Member at Technology Affinity Group

“The top two sessions were Britt Andreatta and President Barack Obama” + “Your research/presentations are THE BEST! Thank you for pouring your passion and curiosity into your work and sharing it with us.”

Attendees, Association for Talent Development’s (ATD)
International Conference and Expo 2024

“Britt, sending a ton of thanks for your support of the Leader meeting last week—a TERRIFIC experience. The talk you gave spirited people in such a positive way AND your delivery was flawless. Thank you for helping us to get our leaders into the “think differently” space. Loved it!”

Martha Soehren, Chief Talent Officer at Comcast

Training

“When a company has a major culture shift, you can rarely look to one person. Britt was an exception to this. What looked like company-wide management training became the foundation for the conversations, relationships, and plans to positively impact the culture. She was the rock star in the organization making sure the culture was solid.”

Hilary Miller Headlee, EVP of Global Sales & Customer Success,
Insight Partners (formerly Altryx and Zoom)

“You have powerful influence in our field and a whole generation of Learning & Development professionals is hungry for your message. People are better because of what you do.”

Cory Kreeck, Executive Director for Training and
Development, Beachbody

Executive Coaching

“I absolutely credit Britt’s executive training and coaching for helping us to change our culture. As a result of working with her, we were able to have critical conversations, build better trust, and become a peak-performing team.”

Tim Tully, Chief Technology Officer at Splunk

“I have partnered with Britt on several major initiatives. She rapidly assesses a business situation and is able to apply the perfect concepts and craft a learning journey that enhances participants’ capability to achieve their goals. I can’t imagine taking a company through rapid growth or major change without her.”

Dr. Kelly McGill, Chief People Officer at Lighthouse
(formerly Amazon, Avvo, and LinkedIn)