

TEN TIPS FOR COPING WITH WORKPLACE CHANGE

1. Acknowledge the change

One of the most important things you can do to prepare for and cope with change is to accept that it is happening. Recognising and accepting change is one of the first steps towards managing it and ensuring it doesn't have an enduring, negative impact on you.

2. Face your fear of change

If you tend to be unsettled by change, take time out for yourself and proactively work through some of the emotions which may be triggered by major workplace change. Writing down a plan to manage those fears, should they come to pass, will help defuse future anxiety.

3. Confront your feelings and seek support

Face your feelings about the transition you are going through, especially when the change is being imposed on you or is beyond your control. Workplace change is more than just being asked to do your job in a different way; it could mean the loss of co-workers, joining a new team, or finishing up on a project you have invested a lot of your energy and emotions into.

Often, the sense of loss caused by workplace change is overwhelming. These are valid and reasonable emotional responses to workplace change, but you need to ensure you don't become overwhelmed by them.

Reach out to a trusted colleague, friend or a loved-one to discuss your anxiety or sense of loss caused by workplace change.

4. Stop fearful thoughts by replacing them with something positive

Fear can come from creating negative thoughts and imagining worst-case scenarios in your head about what the future holds. It's worth asking yourself, 'How am I describing the change to myself?', and 'Am I dwelling too much on the negatives and missing the positives?'.

As fear of change creeps in, it's worth stopping and reflecting more consciously about the positives and remembering how you've coped in similar situations in the past. Ask yourself, 'When I've handled change in the past, what did I do well to cope?' and 'What actions did I take that improved things or helped manage the change?'

5. Be flexible and embracing of change

Instead of avoiding change or digging your heels in about changes that are being implemented at your workplace, try to adopt an open mind about change and the positive impacts it can have on you both personally and professionally.

Workplace change provides the opportunity to develop or hone new skills, work with new people and gain valuable experience that will help you in the long run. Flexibility and adaptability are attributes that employers and colleagues value strongly, and being able to respond positively to workplace change is an important skill.



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6. Be part of the change

Adopt an attitude of anticipation and excitement. Often, change represents a series of new opportunities, and by offering to join a committee or a new work team early on, you can help guide change in the workplace and take ownership of it. This will empower you to feel less fearful of change.

7. Reduce stress and anxiety

Big changes can cause stress and anxiety, which are emotionally and physically draining. Focus on staying fit, healthy and resilient. Exercise and good nutrition can restore balance and calm during a period of stressful change. Eating well, staying active and getting enough sleep are key.

8. Communication, communication, communication

Communication is always important in the workplace, but especially during a period of upheaval or change. Often we fear change because of the unknown. If the organisation is not communicating the change effectively, be proactive in finding out more about what is going on. Be a proactive and collaborative communicator. Ask constructive questions to find out meaningful information to help you and your colleagues understand better.

Talk to your boss and your co-workers about your feelings during the period of change and offer constructive feedback about the impact of those changes on you and your work. However, remain conscious that sometimes speculation amongst colleagues can set off a rumour mill, and this could in fact make the feelings of stress and anxiety worse for you or your co-workers. Deal with the facts as they arise and try not to fill in the blanks with speculation or guesswork.

9. Take stock of your strengths and importance to the organisation

Take the time to remind yourself of how valuable you are to the organisation and your employer. It's easy to forget that we all provide a unique mixture of skills and experiences which our colleagues and managers have come to rely upon.

Acknowledge your successes and the value you provide to the organisation and remember that your hard-work will have been noticed by others too. Research shows that valuable employees typically get through the upheaval of significant workplace change unscathed, or even find themselves in a better position altogether.

10. Keep doing your work and see the bigger picture

It's tempting during a period of upheaval or reorganisation at work to want to sit back and see what will happen tomorrow. It's an easy trap to fall in to because the project you're working on may wrap up or the team you're working alongside may be disbanded.

However, it's important to remember that until you have a new direction to work towards, you need to focus on achieving the designated tasks and outcomes in your existing project or role. Remember, that a positive and productive attitude will always reflect well on you with your current boss or their replacement.

