

Top reasons for change resistance - 288 companies reporting

Ability to change

Participants were asked to rate their organization's ability to change. Figure A shows the distribution of scores on a 1 to 5 scale, with one being the most rigidly opposed to change. Only one fifth of participants rated their organization a 4 or 5, indicating a high level of adaptability to change. More than 40% of participants rated their organization resistant to change with a score of either 2 or 1.

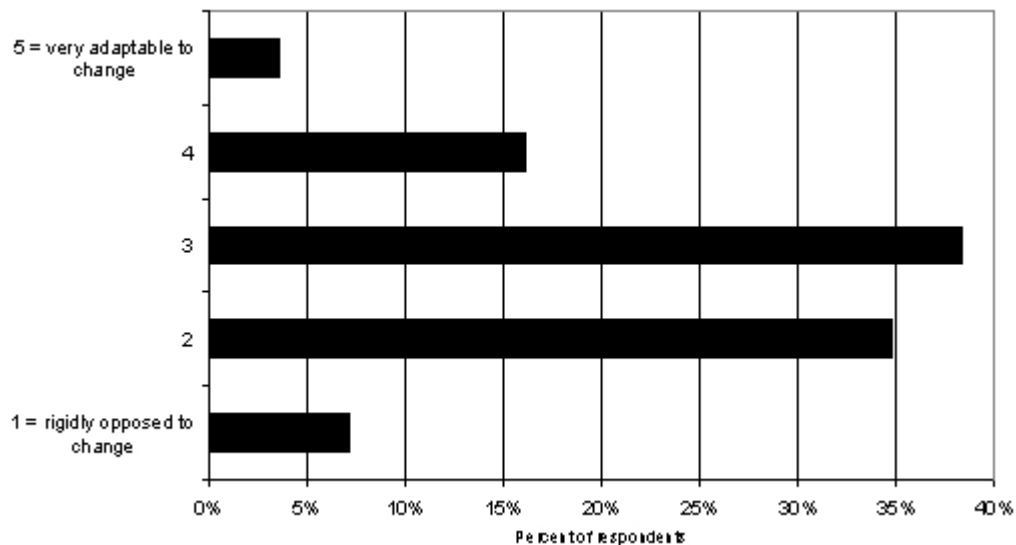


Figure A – Ability to change

Employee resistance

Participants gave a variety of reasons for resistance by employees and managers. The top-five reasons for employee resistance were:

- 1. Lack of understanding around the vision and need for change.**
Participants indicated that the primary reason for employee resistance was that employees did not understand the vision of this particular change project. Employees did not clearly understand why the change was happening, nor did they have adequate knowledge regarding the change itself. Employees did not have the answer to the question, “what’s in it for me?” – or WIIFM. This could include, “Will I have a job?,” “How will it impact my daily work?,” “How will I benefit from the change?”.
- 2. Comfort with the status quo and fear of the unknown.**
Participants indicated that employees tended to be complacent, or that the current way of doing business had been in place for a long time. The current processes and systems

seemed fine to the employees, and they were opposed to the change since it forced them out of their comfort zone. Uncertainty and fear of the new system compounded the desire of employees to continue with the “old way” to which they had grown accustomed.

3. Corporate history and culture.

The organization’s past performance with change projects impacted the employees’ support of the current change project. Employees were desensitized to change initiatives, as many had been introduced and failed. The project was seen merely as the “flavor of the month,” and employees expected it go away like those in the past.

4. Opposition to the new technologies, requirements and processes introduced by the change.

Many participants felt that some employees resisted the change because of opposition to the actual change itself. Employees were opposed to changes that increased the performance and process measurement of their work. The change was seen as adding unwanted work, responsibility and accountability. Lastly, some employees opposed the new processes, systems or technologies because they felt the change would not solve the problems.

5. Fear of job loss.

Employees perceived the business change as a threat to their own job security. Some employees felt that the change would eliminate the need for their job, while others were unsure of their own abilities and skills in the new environment.

Manager resistance

The top-six reasons for manager resistance to change were:

1. Loss of power and control.

The leading reason for manager resistance to change was a fear of losing power. Changes often eliminated something the manager had control of or introduced something that the manager would not have control over. Managers perceived the changes as infringements on their autonomy, and some participants indicated that the change was even perceived as a personal attack on the managers. Managers reacted to the change initiative as a "battle for turf."

2. Overload of current tasks, pressures of daily activities and limited resources.

Managers felt that the change was an additional burden. Limited resources compounded the problem. The change initiative seemed like extra work and resource strain at a time when the pressures of daily activities were already high. In many projects, managers were expected to continue all of their current duties in addition to the duties of implementing the change.

3. Lack of skills and experience needed to manage the change effectively.

Managers were fearful of the new demands that would be placed on them by the business

change. Several skill areas were identified as areas of concern. First, managers were uncomfortable with their role in managing the change. Some feared recrimination while others did not have the experience or tools to effectively manage their employees' resistance. Managers also were concerned about the demands and responsibilities placed on them by the new business processes, systems or technologies.

4. **Fear of job loss.**

Managers felt that the business change would ultimately impact their own job security. Middle management is often the victim of large-scale business change. One participant reaffirmed this fear:

"They were eliminated in the change, so no resistance was recorded."

5. **Disagreement with the new way.**

Some managers disagreed specifically with the change. They did not feel that the solution was the best approach to fixing the problem. Managers who did not play a role or provide input in the design and planning phases tended to resist the solution. Some participants felt that the resistance was due to the solution not being the idea of the manager ("not invented here").

6. **Skepticism about the need for change.**

Managers were not convinced of the need for change. They did not see the business issues driving the change, or they did not identify the same problems as the design team.