

Managing through Change

A Manual for Supervisors and Managers

Presented by Organizational Effectiveness
a Unit of Human Resources

University of Iowa

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Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to provide general information, guidelines, tools and resources to managers whose departments/areas have experienced position eliminations. We've tried to address situations that vary across campus by focusing on overall themes and recommended coping techniques.

The guide includes information about handling the emotions of people during times of change, reorganizing and reassigning work that still needs to get done, and a list of the support services and resources that are available as you lead your team through the transition process. Also included is an overview of what employees may expect from you, the supervisor, during a time of uncertainty.

Additional support

Organizational Effectiveness, a unit of Human Resources, is ready to offer you support, including:

Management Support

- Management Coaching
- Job Analysis and Position Description Questionnaire (PDQ) Coordination
- Organizational Chart Development
- Departmental Meeting Facilitation on Difficult Topics
- Supervisory Consultations

General Support

- Learning opportunities

Personal Resiliency

- Health coaching
- Counseling

For further information

Visit the OE website at <http://www.uiowa.edu/hr/oe/>.

Call 319-335-2085.

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The Effects of Change on Managers

Let's face it. Supervisors are human, too. Managing people during a time of change is not an easy task. In fact, it's a time when you must be at the top of your game because the tasks you face are unique and inherently more difficult than before. So, it makes sense to start by acknowledging your own feelings and concerns about what's happening.

Think about how you individually have been affected by the recent changes at the University. Organizing your thoughts and emotions will help you empathize with others.

Ask yourself:

- What has this time been like for me?
 - You may feel it has been challenging, stressful, demanding, and unpredictable.
- What have I done in the past that worked well when managing staff?
 - You may have spent more time with staff, informally dropping by to visit with them or formally communicating through regularly scheduled meetings. You may have altered your schedule to make yourself more available.
- What has been most challenging for me as a manager?
 - For some, it may be handling people; for others, it may be getting the department's work done.
- What welcome or unwelcome surprises have I seen?
 - You may have been shocked, or impressed by individual reactions within your team.
- What is my greatest concern going forward?
 - Write down your greatest concern. Articulating issues in words is the first step in the problem solving process. Locate resources on campus that can help you.

Once you have answered these questions, remember that your staff members are working through the same process. It's just as difficult a time for them as it is for you. But, in their eyes, your job is to lead them through this transition period the best way possible. They are looking to you to guide them through the uncharted waters ahead.

This manual is meant to provide you with some guidelines for doing just that.

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Managing the “Human Side” of Change

One of the most difficult tasks supervisors and managers deal with after there have been layoffs in an organization is helping the remaining employees deal with their reactions to the situation. Managers must move their departments beyond the grief, anger and loss of morale that characterizes this significant organizational event.

The next few pages will focus on helping supervisors and managers recognize and deal with the natural reactions of those remaining in the organization/department, and determine the right timing for moving employees from reacting emotionally to focusing on the present and future. By developing a resiliency strategy, supervisors and managers can keep employees motivated and engaged in their work.

Never say anything negative about employees whose jobs have been eliminated when addressing the remaining employees or anyone else involved (i.e., department head, Human Resources, UI in general). Negative comments will undermine trust in you and are very likely to get back to your former employees. Make sure that anything you say to your remaining employees could be repeated to the eliminated employee, or anyone else, without causing embarrassment or harm to you and the University.

Range of emotions employees may be feeling

When employees hear the bad news about declining resources and layoffs, they appear to go through many of the same stages of grief described by Dr. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross. Ross, a psychiatrist and author of the ground-breaking book, *On Death and Dying*, outlines the five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.

In addition to understanding that individuals and work groups go through the process of the “loss response”, it’s important to also understand that people respond differently to loss. Some adjust more quickly than others. Some may interpret the change as an opportunity rather than a threat. With appropriate guidance, most people can return to productive working conditions, but occasionally a more significant action plan may be necessary in dealing with a specific employee or situation. Some of the emotions that employees experience include:

Sadness: Employees will feel a sense of personal loss at seeing their colleagues leaving or departmental positions eliminated. Colleagues that have worked together for a long time may have developed close connections. The old way of doing things is gone. Something has ended. It is reasonable and proper to mourn the loss.

Guilt: Those who remain often experience some guilt that they still have a job while former colleagues have lost their jobs. Some will feel guilty for feeling relieved that they did not lose their job.

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Anger: Anger is a natural response to receiving bad news. This may be displaced and directed toward the supervisor, the manager and the administrators. It is human nature to want to blame someone for what is happening. Anger has the positive effect of allowing people to let off steam. Usually the basis for anger is fear of the unknown. Employees need to be able to express their anger in appropriate ways so that they can move beyond it.

Anxiety: Employees may feel stress due to the uncertainty of the future. They may be worried that there will be more changes and/or that they will lose their job.

Acceptance: As employees come to accept the loss and change, a sense of normalcy begins to return. Productivity increases as employees focus on the job at hand rather than dwelling on loss, change, and personal anxiety. Acceptance of loss and change is the start of the readjustment stage.

Responding to the emotional reactions of remaining employees

Ask for questions and concerns. If possible, try to anticipate an employee's reactions. Be sure to validate legitimate concerns and negative effects of change that employees express. Employees need to know that they are being heard.

Ask for feelings and opinions. There may be some employees who are silent and withdrawn. You may need to draw them out by reassuring them that these feelings are normal and that it is safe to express them. Sharing your feelings is not only appropriate, but will help employees feel safe to express their own. If feelings are not expressed, they may come out in less healthy ways in the workplace.

Resist becoming defensive. There may be mistrust between you or the organization and your employees that you will need to address. Instead of becoming defensive, make a concentrated effort to listen to employees rather than arguing with them. Encourage communication to enhance trust. An opportunity to express feelings will help diffuse employee resistance. Be careful to refrain from problem-solving at this point. Listening first will help you solve problems later.

Be visible and involved. As a supervisor, it will be important to be visible and accessible. Spend time with your employees. This is not the time to retreat to your office. Employees will perceive your unavailability as you knowing something but reluctant to say, and it may refuel the uncertainty. Employees will need to have you available on a daily basis. It may be worthwhile to have meetings more often and to encourage employees to engage in group projects. By spending time with your employees and giving them frequent feedback you can begin to reestablish trust and loyalty.

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Provide information. In each phase of the process, providing information will help in dealing with the fear of uncertainty. Providing specific information may be difficult, but it's helpful to let employees know the facts you know, as well as any questions you are asking. Resistance comes from fear of the unknown and can be reduced by providing appropriate information.

Be patient. Individual reactions may differ so the loss response may not be as distinct or intense in every employee. Nevertheless, each employee will go through the loss response to some degree. Employees cannot reach optimal productivity until they have completed this transition. It will take some judgment on your part as a supervisor to know when to move to the stage of readjustment with a focus on the present and future.

Managing the difficult employee

Occasionally there may be an employee that has an especially difficult time accepting change. Managers must anticipate and address situations in which an employee's negative behavior impacts the team and departmental productivity.

- Identify the problem in terms of performance and behaviors, not personality. For example, instead of addressing what you may perceive as an employee's negative attitude, consider that the real problem may be the behavior that results from negativity. Is he/she abrupt and unwelcoming to customers? Does he/she continually complain in a way that demoralizes his/her coworkers? When you can clearly identify problem behaviors, the resultant impact on performance, and the new behaviors you need to see, you'll be able to effectively convey these to your employee.
- Communicate with the employee; err on the side of "too much" discussion, rather than too little. No supervisor looks forward to confronting an employee; it's a natural tendency to hope the problems will resolve themselves. Most of the time, they don't, and the delay in addressing the issues just allows the situation to worsen. Early supervisory intervention will lead to a quicker resolution of the issues. Don't minimize your concerns when meeting with your employee. While you may feel that vaguely referencing performance problems is kinder or easier, lack of clarity is actually doing your employee a disservice. You can be both concise and supportive.
- When discussing the problem with the employee, ask for, and listen carefully to, his/her feedback and ask what you can do to help the employee be successful. Does the employee have a clear idea of his/her job duties? Does the employee have the necessary skills to perform those duties? Remember that in an uncertain job environment, employees may be hesitant to reveal their lack of knowledge or training. Are there other factors that are impacting negatively on job performance? Make sure that you have done everything you should as a supervisor to allow your employee be successful.

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- Let the employee know that you need to see improvement, how you will measure improvement, and that you will have regular meetings with the employee to provide feedback and support. Ideally, schedule the feedback sessions with the employee ahead of time, and hold to that schedule. Try to make time to meet with the employee again within two or three weeks.
- Document for your own records the conversations that you have with your employees. It is much easier to rely on notes than memory.
- Be careful to not accept a less than satisfactory response from an employee. If problems continue, contact University Human Resources. HR will work with you to discuss options and help resolve the issues. University Human Resources works with a variety of employee relations tools, including facilitated conversations, performance management plans and job search assistance. The Office of the Ombudsperson is also available to assist in Conflict Resolution Services.
- Faculty and Staff Services/EAP is available as a confidential resource for supervisors and employees to discuss the concerns and challenges of maintaining productivity and morale in an uncertain workplace. Supervisors should feel free to let their employees know about FSS/EAP and consider allowing employees to take time away from the office during the workday to meet with FSS/EAP staff.

Managing the Future Performance of the Team

William Bridges, a leading authority on organizational change processes, says, “If it isn’t the changes that do you in, it’s the transitions. They aren’t the same thing.

Change is the situational; the move to the site, the retirement of the founder, the reorganization of the roles on the team, the revisions to the pension plan.

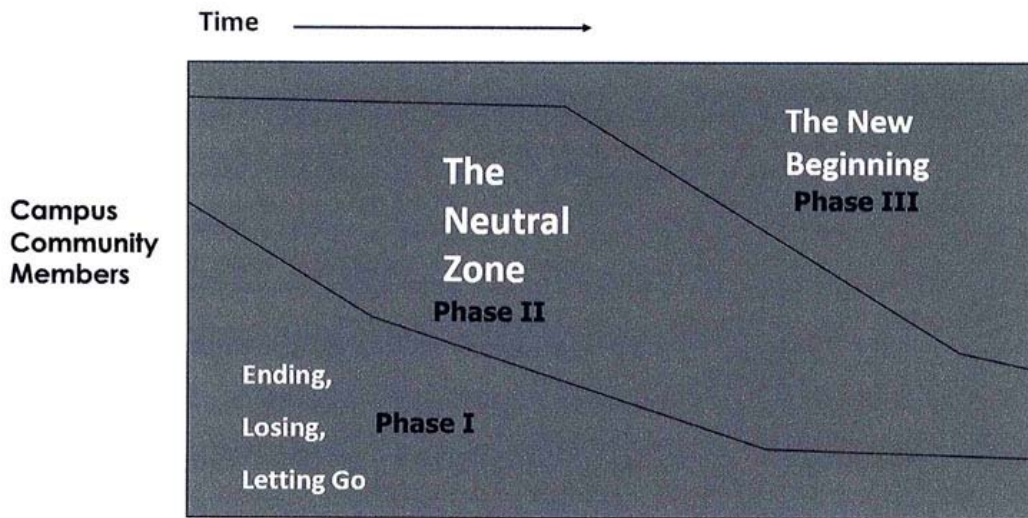
Transition, on the other hand, is psychological; it is a three-phase process that people go through as they internalize and come to terms with the details of the new situation that the change brings about.”¹

Bridges explains that, over time, managers need to lead people through:

- Phase I – Ending, Losing and Letting Go,
- Phase II – the Neutral Zone, and,
- Phase III, the New Beginning, as illustrated on the next page.

¹ Bridges, William. *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, 2nd Ed. Perseus Publishing Services, (2003), page 3.

Transitioning to a “New Beginning”



Source: Adapted from Bridges, William. *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, 2nd Ed. Perseus Publishing Services, (2003), 5.

As illustrated in the graph, the campus community will not enter or exit a phase together or at the same time. Thus, when a major change is announced on campus not everyone reacts the same. Campus leaders and the administration chart a course for change based on their understanding of the end result, or “The New Beginning”. Colleges or departments unaffected by the change and those who have had advance notice of the change and thus have reconciled with it, fall into “The Neutral Zone.” The first phase, “Ending, Losing, Letting Go”, comprises those for which the change is unexpected and struggle to grapple with the news when it is first announced. Understanding all of the phases helps managers to identify where they fall personally and where individual members of their department fall as they transition to a new beginning.

Phase I: Ending, Losing, Letting Go

Some tactics discussed in the previous section (Managing the “Human Side” of Change, page 5) are part of Phase I. Bridges says that managers should let people know that they understand the situation, help their team deal with their losses, and offer support. Managers at The University of Iowa are fortunate to have on-site employee counseling services available through Faculty and Staff Services/EAP. If you have an employee who has trouble letting go of the past, encourage him/her to seek support from FSS/EAP. While it is important to show understanding and support, as a manager, you also need to help people move on to and through Phase II, the Neutral Zone.

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Phase II: The Neutral Zone

Bridges explains that the Neutral zone can be minimized by providing people with the following:

- 1. Explain the purpose behind the outcome sought.**

There's no need to reinvent the wheel. During this time, review past and current e-mail messages from the President, Provost, and Human Resources, and others, with your team. Their messages fully articulate what we as a University need to accomplish and why, and they explain the logic behind the actions being taken. Continue the discussion as new messages from leadership are sent.

Note: A crucial element to help your team move forward is your support for the changes taking place. If you can't get behind the change, avoid communicating your lack of support to your staff members. Instead, seek the assistance of your manager and voice your concerns to him or her.

- 2. Paint a picture of how the outcome will look.**

- 3. Lay out a step-by-step plan.**

- 4. Give each person a part to play.²**

The next section of Phase II explains how you can implement steps 2, 3 and 4 to take your team through the Neutral Zone as quickly as possible.

Phase II: the Neutral Zone Evaluating and Reassigning the Work

Typically when one or more jobs are eliminated from a team, some or all of the previous duties will still need to be completed and the work must be divided between the employees who remain.

As a manager it is your responsibility to evaluate the work and reassign it so that nothing is neglected or missed. Consider the full range of needs, such as the number and the complexity of individual tasks, as you reassign work.

Follow these five steps, detailed below, to reassign work.

1. Analyze and reassign the job tasks.
2. Update the job description for each employee accepting new tasks. If the scope and responsibilities have changed significantly, also complete a PDQ. Review all processes/procedures and create a new organizational chart if necessary.
3. Provide clear direction on newly assigned tasks.
4. Conduct a department meeting to explain changes to the whole team.

² Bridges, page 60

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1) Analyze and reassign the job tasks.

Begin by listing all of the tasks completed within an eliminated job. Note each one with any specific knowledge, skills, and/or competencies needed for success. Then rate each task using a scale from “unimportant” to “critical.” To aid you, a Task Analysis form has been created (see page 15).

Next you must assign the work. Consider the following when making decisions.

- Which position within the team makes the most sense to absorb the work?
- Does the position that is absorbing the new task(s) already have a full workload?
If so, do you need to complete a similar exercise for that position to determine what is less critical at this time?
- Who has the skills, competencies, or knowledge needed for the task(s)?
- If skills, knowledge, or competencies are lacking, what training will the person need.

In some departments, there are only one or two staff members involved in the reassignment. Therefore, the tasks would need only to be analyzed for highest importance. By taking a fresh look at the job in light of today’s situation, you may find that some tasks are simply not relevant.

Here’s an example of a completed form:

Task analysis Form			
Task	Task Rating (Circle One)	Knowledge, Skills, Competencies Needed	Possible Assignment
Manage fiscal operations, including budget development, account management, invoicing and reconciliation of receivables, managing grants and payroll.	Critical Important Somewhat Important Not important	Accounting an budget management Understanding of grant management Understanding of payroll Excel skills needed	Samantha
Serve as secretary to the advisory board.	Critical Important Somewhat Important Not important	Must take accurate minutes Must be customer focused Word processing skills needed, especially using mail merges	Georgia
Manage human resources needs, including the hiring, supervising, evaluating of staff; function as liaison with HR	Critical Important Somewhat Important Not important	Understanding of human resource practices Excellent communication skills	Samantha
Serve as liaison for community partners and campus network.	Critical Important Somewhat Important Not important	Excellent collaboration skills needed Must be customer focused	Georgia
Work closely with director and Associate Director to plan and implement annual conference.	Critical Important Somewhat Important Not important	Event planning skills needed Excellent attention to detail needed <i>Note: Conference suspended until further notice</i>	No reassignment needed
Manage special projects.	Critical Important Somewhat Important Not important	<i>Note: Special projects suspended for now</i>	No reassignment needed

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Once you have tentatively reassigned the tasks, you may want to have an informal conversation with employees with newly assigned tasks to get their input and gain buy-in to your tentative redesign.

2) Update the job description and/or PDQ for each employee accepting new tasks.

Clear expectations are important to employees during times of change. To insure your reassignments are translated into expectations, update the employee's job description. If the scope and responsibilities have changed significantly, also complete a PDQ. Complete the PDQ template from the HR/Compensation and Classification web site at http://www.uiowa.edu/hr/classcomp/prof/establish_position_prof.html for each employee whose job has been altered and submit it via the workflow path.

3) Review all Processes/Procedures and, if necessary, Create a New Organizational Chart.

List any processes or procedures that are affected by the personnel changes and that need to be maintained or reestablished. Work with those involved to map out each process, convey your expectations on procedures, and, where needed, communicate changes to any other departments/areas that intersect with your staff within those processes or procedures.

If several jobs are altered within a department or area, or if lines of authority have changes, you may want to create a new organizational chart. It's helpful to the staff to visualize the big picture and how each staff member fits in.

4) Provide clear direction to individuals with newly assigned tasks.

Meet individually with each staff member whose job has been changed. Provide him/her with a finalized PDQ. If created, review the new organizational chart with them. If you need assistance creating the chart, contact Organizational Effectiveness to request a workplace consultation.

5) Conduct a departmental meeting to explain changes to the whole team.

After all the task reassignments have been communicated to the individual employees involved, departments with more than two or three employees should schedule a departmental meeting to clearly outline group expectations. Explain all of the task reassignments. Review the new organizational chart, if recreated, and highlight any changes in authority.

"There are actually three parties with a stake in the separation: the manager who delivers the message, the employee who is being separated and the remaining employees at the firm."

*~Karyl Innis
CEO, The Innis*

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Phase III – The New Beginning

Leading people through change is a process. It starts immediately and evolves over time. Working with your HR representative, department head, director or dean, develop a step-by-step plan. Outline a picture of the future, the expectations, the part each staff member will play, and how you will lead your team to a new beginning. The following checklist, taken in part from Bridges' book, *Managing Transitions*, will help you prepare.

Managing the New Beginning: A Checklist³

Yes No

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| — | — | Am I distinguishing in my own mind, and in my expectations of others, between the current state, which has happened on a planned schedule, and the new beginning, which will not? |
| — | — | Do I accept the fact that people are going to be ambivalent toward the beginning I am trying to bring about? |
| — | — | Have I taken care of the ending(s) and the Neutral Zone, or am I trying to make a new beginning happen before it possibly can? |
| — | — | Have I clarified and communicated the purpose of the change? |
| — | — | Have I drawn a picture of the change's outcome and found ways to communicate it effectively? |
| — | — | Have I created a plan to bring people through the three phases of transition? |
| — | — | Have I helped people to discover as soon as possible the part that they will play within the organization? |
| — | — | Have I checked to see that policies, procedures, and priorities are consistent with the new beginning I am trying to make so that inconsistencies aren't sending a mixed message? |
| — | — | Am I watching my own actions carefully to be sure that I am effectively modeling the attitudes and behaviors I am asking others to develop? |

Final Question

Based on all of the information here and your answers to the above questions, what can you do to get started on your transition management? Make your notes below.

³ Bridges, page 73-74

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Resources from Organizational Effectiveness

319-335-2085

<http://www.uiowa.edu/hr/oe/>

Organizational Development

- Business Process Improvement
- Work Redesign
- LEAN
- Workplace Consultation
- UI LEAD

Faculty and Staff Services/Employee Assistance Program

EAPhelp@uiowa.edu

- Personal Counseling
- Supervisory Referrals to EAP
- Supervisory Consultation

UI Wellness

uiwellness@uiowa.edu

- Personal Health Coach Service

Additional Resources

Managing Transitions 2nd Edition

By William Bridges, (2003)

Team Reconstruction: Building a High performance Work Group During Change

By Price Pritchett and Ron Pound (1992)

The Manager's Communication Handbook

By David Cottrell and Eric Harvey (2003)

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**Many thanks to Syracuse University for sharing their manual, *Managing through Change*.**

# Managing through Change

| Task Analysis Form |                                                              |                                        |                     |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Task               | Task Rating (Circle One)                                     | Knowledge, Skills, Competencies Needed | Possible Assignment |
|                    | Critical<br>Important<br>Somewhat Important<br>Not important |                                        |                     |
|                    | Critical<br>Important<br>Somewhat Important<br>Not important |                                        |                     |
|                    | Critical<br>Important<br>Somewhat Important<br>Not important |                                        |                     |
|                    | Critical<br>Important<br>Somewhat Important<br>Not important |                                        |                     |
|                    | Critical<br>Important<br>Somewhat Important<br>Not important |                                        |                     |
|                    | Critical<br>Important<br>Somewhat Important<br>Not important |                                        |                     |
|                    | Critical<br>Important<br>Somewhat Important<br>Not important |                                        |                     |
|                    | Critical<br>Important<br>Somewhat Important<br>Not important |                                        |                     |
|                    | Critical<br>Important<br>Somewhat Important<br>Not important |                                        |                     |
|                    | Critical<br>Important<br>Somewhat Important<br>Not important |                                        |                     |
|                    | Critical<br>Important<br>Somewhat Important<br>Not important |                                        |                     |