

Step 3 – Understand the change

Quick Reference Guide – Resistance management

What is resistance management?

Resistance often emerges during any effort in which people need to change the way they work. When individuals and groups perceive that a change that is occurring is a threat to them, they can be resistant to the change.

Resistors can emerge at any level of the organisation - from the senior leadership level to middle managers and frontline employees.

Resistance management is a mechanism used to acknowledge, understand the reasons for and respond to resistance or opposition during a time of change, by identifying types of resistors and effectively mitigating risks that arise from resistance.

Why do people resist change?

Resistance typically arises from the following:

1. **Lack of awareness:** employees may not understand *the why?* i.e the reason for and benefits of the change.
2. **Change saturation or fatigue:** in situations where multiple initiatives are rolling out concurrently, employees may be inundated with information and mentally exhausted from processing everything that is changing around them.
3. **Fear of the change:** this can translate into 'fear of the unknown' or the fear generated around anything new that needs to be learned.
4. **Lack of support from management/leadership:** when employees see leaders inadequately support the change, it creates a momentum for them to follow suit. It reduces confidence that the change will happen and/or succeed.

How to identify resistance

Resistors can be identified across various touchpoints and techniques throughout the programme or project lifecycle.

Avenues for identifying resistance include:

Observe/soft measurement

- Meetings/1:1 discussions
- Hallway conversations
- Past experience of implementing change (history)
- Insights from the change agent network
- Project documentation (e.g. As Is/To Be)

Specific measurement tools

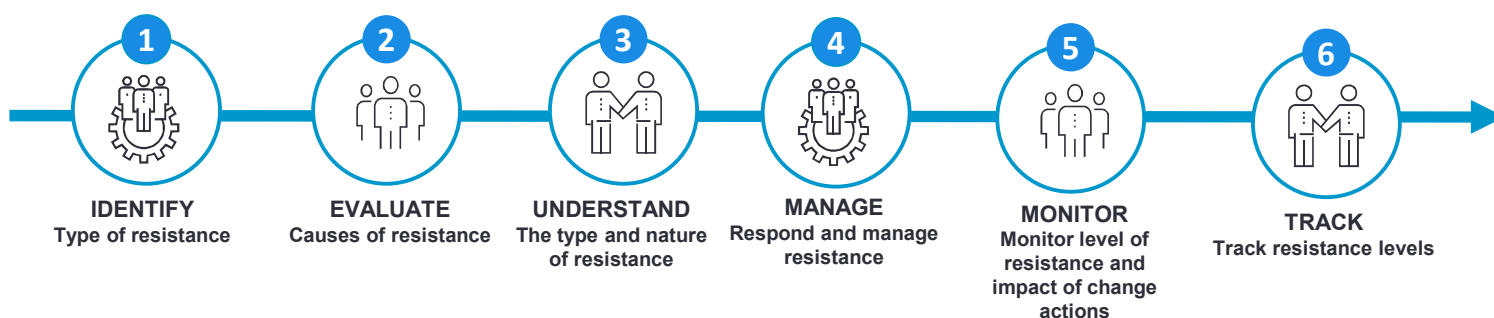
- Surveys/assessments
- Conducting interviews

Who plays a part in resistance management?



Effectively managing resistance requires participation and ownership from both the project and the MDA. Key roles are:

- Change Agents
- Managers and Supervisors
- Steering Committee
- Sponsors



Three (3) main strategies for managing resistance

- ☐ **Preventative:** embedding effective change management best practices in sponsorship, engagement and communication plans may minimise any type of resistance along the change journey.
- ☐ **Proactive:** this type of resistance management anticipates likely resistance during a change. Early identification of potential resistance means that change activities can be planned for, and resistance addressed throughout the duration of the change. This is the best form of resistance management because it identifies early the likely audiences or individuals that may feel negatively impacted by the change and implements proactive measures to increase engagement and address concerns.
- ☐ **Reactive:** this resistance management strategy is used to respond to resistance as it arises. This is the most challenging type of tactic to implement especially for programmes with longer durations and lead times. Not all resistance can be proactively managed - for unplanned resistance, try to identify and address the root cause of the resistance. The level of effort to eliminate or minimise the resistance will be dependent on its size, complexity and potential impact to the success of the programme or project.

Tools and template



Visit our [Toolkit essentials](#) to access supporting tools

[Resistance management guide](#)

[Resistance log](#)

Helpful tips



- ☐ Expect resistance, it's natural and can be a good thing as it makes concerns transparent
- ☐ Show respect for those showing resistance – there will be a legitimate reason in their minds
- ☐ Always make it safe and easy for people to express their concerns and fears
- ☐ Go beyond the superficial answers to issues or you'll end up addressing the wrong problems – identify the root cause and build solutions to address these
- ☐ If you are a leader, be positive about the changes and listen to concerns of those impacted

Contact details



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