



How To Deal With Change To Your Job

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It's time to work on **you** so sit back and listen to practical, actionable advice to accelerate your progress.

How many times can we say “change is inevitable” before you roll your eyes? The fact is we all need to be constantly reminded of that fact. Why? Well, change is distressing. We, humans, are creatures of habit and thrive in routine. Today we'll be talking about change in the workplace, and how to positively deal with changes to your job.

The keyword here is *positive*. It's easy to reject change, especially at work. But if you quit your job at the smallest sign of change, you'd never build the work history or the rapport to have maximised the success of your career.

In general, there are two broad categories of coping mechanisms that humans lean on in reaction to change — avoidance and active coping [1]. Avoidance coping is just what it sounds like — avoiding stress in an effort to avoid the emotions associated with what could be causing that stress. We all know someone who would rather stick their head in the sand and act like everything is going on just as normal. And if that person sounds like you, well, not to worry - we'll get to that.

Active coping involves practical strategies to confront and alleviate your stressors. Strategies like talking through a problem or reframing a situation — all in an effort to meet that stress head-on. Today we'll be looking at active coping mechanisms to confront change in your job, rather than running away from it.

The first of these coping strategies is the most deceptively simple — stay positive. Sounds easy, but when it comes to the workplace it can be hard to keep a positive outlook, especially when your surroundings are suddenly unfamiliar to you. Tamar Chansky, author of *“Freeing Yourself from Anxiety”* says,

“approach change with an open attitude of learning, even if you don't like something

new in the system.”

It's a relatively easy first step towards a positive outlook and a simple method of reframing your thoughts. When you have a negative thought, try asking yourself: “how can I reframe this into a positive statement”. For example, if you think to yourself

“I can't believe I have to start using a new app to track performance, why can't we just stick with spreadsheets? They were working just fine!”

Take a moment to reflect on that statement, and how you can turn the complaint into an opportunity.

“This new app is confusing, but if I spend some time with it maybe I can find a feature to streamline the way we track performance, kind of like what we were doing with spreadsheets.”

In one example, you are focused on the past and see the change as negative with no solution in mind. In the second example, you are acknowledging that the change is difficult; however, you are also searching for a solution by learning about the new situation. By reframing your thinking to a positive, solution-oriented mindset, you'll also be making yourself a lot easier to work **with**. In a time of change, no one wants to have to waste time convincing a coworker to just go along with change. Being a team player is easy when you reframe arbitrary change as opportunities to learn and find a new place within your company structure.

Corporate structure is not as linear as it used to be. Sheryl Sandberg - COO of Facebook and author of bestseller *Lean In* - describes it as a “jungle gym” - with ups and downs, sideways connections, and strange loopholes for you to jump through [2]. A key element of maintaining a positive outlook is to look at what your role is within the current structure, and what you would like it to be. Not in a way that is motivated by envy, but by zooming out and looking at the big picture. Perhaps your role is different now, and it comes with more responsibility. But the way change and modern company structures work, giving in to that change could illuminate a new pathway through that corporate “jungle gym” that would not have existed before those changes occurred.

In order to find those new pathways, you have to communicate like never before. Over-communication may sound unattractive in the workplace, as your instinct may be to appear as the expert, but during times of change asking questions and being consistently honest about your needs will serve you better in the long run.

We've all heard the phrase, “there are no stupid questions” — and we've all quietly said to ourselves that there definitely *are* stupid questions. In a period of change at your job, you have to let go of that second little voice. The fact is, you are in new territory and you can't expect to have all the answers. Ask as many questions as you can so that you set yourself up for success and develop your role even further. One tip is to make sure you

write down the answers to your questions — it will make you appear focused and attentive and can also serve as a personal ‘cheat sheet’ later on. Asking questions can also help you gain a better understanding of why these changes are necessary. Furthermore, if you still do have any serious objections, they’re more likely to receive the gravitas they deserve, since you won’t be seen as simply dragging your heels.

Communicate with everyone around you — your boss, your boss's boss, your coworkers. This will help reinforce the thought that the changes in your workplace are happening to everyone around you and you are not alone. Be honest with what is working and what isn’t — a good boss will be looking for constructive feedback on the changes going on in the workplace. Maintaining good communication with your superiors will help you do your new job more effectively, and can also give you clues on what skills you may want to brush up on to help you move through the new corporate jungle gym.

Fear of change is normal, but sometimes diving into change can be thrilling. Embracing new opportunities at work is never easier than when there is overall change going on around you. Going out of your way to learn and embrace new skills can increase your value at your company, and these days many companies even offer compensation or scholarships for their employees who are looking to develop their skills. It’s a very easy way to show your superiors that you are taking initiative and embracing the changes they are implementing. Author Dan Schawbel suggests making a list of the skills required for your new role and dedicating a small amount of time each week to gradually becoming an expert at it. The silver lining of all this work is that when you master a new skill, you take it with you everywhere you go. So whether you end up moving within your own company or moving away to somewhere new, the skills you learned because of that change will move with you and make you a more attractive employee.

Embracing opportunity isn’t just about learning new skills. But changes in the workplace can happen because of acquisitions and mergers. When that happens, it can open internal pathways that were unavailable to you before. Structural changes can open and expand departments, roles, and job titles. Being stuck in the mud out of your own stubbornness or refusal to accept new opportunities may cause you to miss out on a role that is better for you in the long run [3].

Throughout all this personal work, don’t forget that any changes at your job are probably happening to the people around you as well. This can lead to gossip and an overall negative environment when every employee is avoiding coping with the change. Now is a great time to lead by example, not just with a positive attitude but also by helping others when and where you can. Say you have dedicated some time to learning a new skill — an app that your company now insists on using. Making your expertise available can promote a positive feeling within your coworkers as well as develop camaraderie between you. And at the end of the day, your relationships in the workplace are what will guide you through Sheryl Sandberg’s corporate jungle gym. In this time, don’t forget those you have left behind! You never know when a helping hand, a word of advice, or just a moment to catch up will help you in the future.

Change is a moment to create new networks and strengthen old ones. Reach out to your co-workers whose jobs have changed, or who left the company as they are still part of your network. Doing so can reveal future opportunities for you and, as I said before, you never know who will be around to help you in the future.

Change is inevitable and once it starts there's just no going back or avoiding it. The key to dealing with change at your job is to remember that an active coping strategy is more effective than avoidance. All change becomes routine, you just need to give it time and keep looking for the opportunities that present themselves within it. Soon the growing pains will be a distant memory as you thrive in a new environment.

This week, we want to encourage you to think about change that is either ongoing for you, or that has happened before. Try to remember times that you probably coped by avoiding a stressful situation, rather than dealing with it more actively. Consider how things may have been different, or indeed could be different moving forward, if you employed active coping.

That's all we have time for today. Thanks for listening.

[1] *Coping With Change*, Mind Tools Content Team
<https://www.mindtools.com/amgqesi/coping-with-change>

[2] *Sheryl Sandberg: Careers Aren't Ladders They're Jungle Gyms*, Jenny Luna (2018)
<https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/insights/sheryl-sandberg-careers-arent-ladders-theyre-jungle-gyms>

[3] *How To Cope With Change In The Workplace*, Caroline Castrillon (2020)
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/carolinecastrillon/2020/02/26/how-to-cope-with-change-in-the-workplace/?sh=54f31455d207>