

Organization Change Management: Kurt Lewin's Change Management Model

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DISCUSSION TOPICS

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Why Change Fails

Top barriers in major change initiatives:

- Competing resources 48%
- Functional boundaries 44%
- Lack of change skills 42%
- Middle management 38%
- Long IT lead times 35%
- Communication 34%
- Employee opposition (resistance) 33%
- Initiative fatigue 32%
- Unrealistic timetables 31%

- Source: PricewaterhouseCoopers

Making Change Succeed

Factors that helped the most successful organizations achieve their goals

- | | |
|---|------|
| • Good communication | 100% |
| • Strong mandate by senior management | 95% |
| • Setting intermediate goals and deadlines | 95% |
| • Having an adaptive plan | 91% |
| • Having access to adequate resources | 86% |
| • Demonstrating urgency of change | 86% |
| • Setting performance measures | 81% |
| • Delivering early, tangible results (quick wins) | 76% |
| • Involving customers and suppliers early | 62% |
| • Benchmarking competitors | 62% |

- Source: PricewaterhouseCoopers

Lewin's Change Management Model

Who was Kurt Lewin?

- Kurt Lewin was born in Poland in 1890
- Modern pioneer in social, organizational, and applied psychology
- Professor at University of Berlin & a number of U.S. universities before becoming director of the Center for Group Dynamics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
- **Theories formulated in 1940s and still in use today**
- **Referred to as the Guru of Organizational Change theory**

Lewin's Golden Rules for Change

Kurt Lewin's change theory identified several golden rules on how change should be implemented:

1. Change should only be implemented for good reason.
2. Change is most effective when done gradually.
3. Change should be planned and not sporadic or sudden.
4. Strive to include individuals who may be affected by the change as much as possible in planning for the change.

Lewin's Golden Rules for Change

Lewin: *"Motivation for change must be generated before change can occur."*

Three Stage Model

One of the cornerstone models for understanding organizational change was developed by Lewin back in the 1940s, and is still effective in the modern era

- His model, known as **Unfreeze – Change – Refreeze**, refers to the three-stage process of change he describes.
- He explained organizational change using the analogy of changing the shape of a block of ice.

Three Stage Model



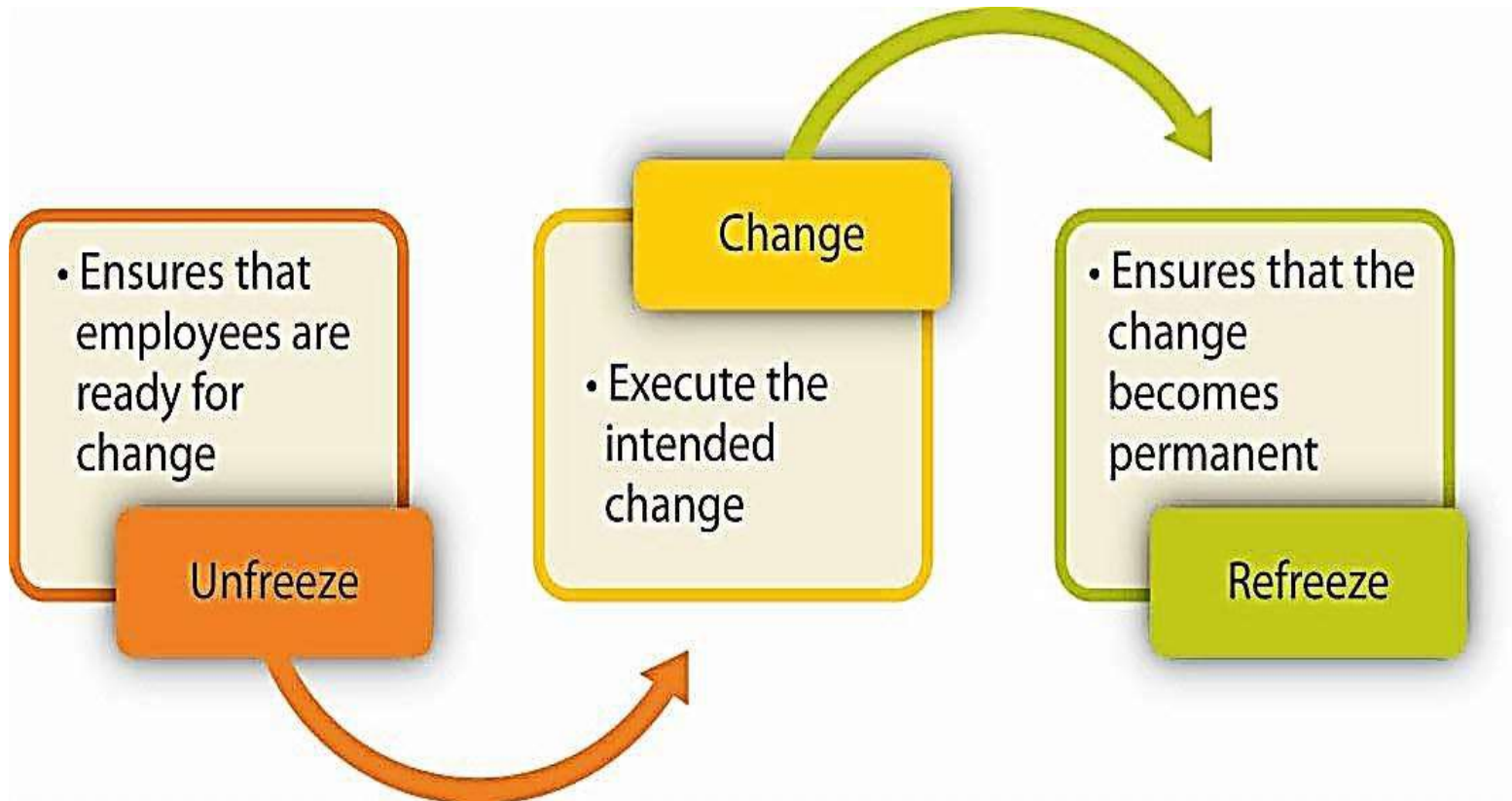
Three Stage Model

Unfreezing – creating a sense a change is needed.

Changing – moving toward a new and desired behavior.

Refreezing – setting this behavior as the new normal.

Three Stage Model



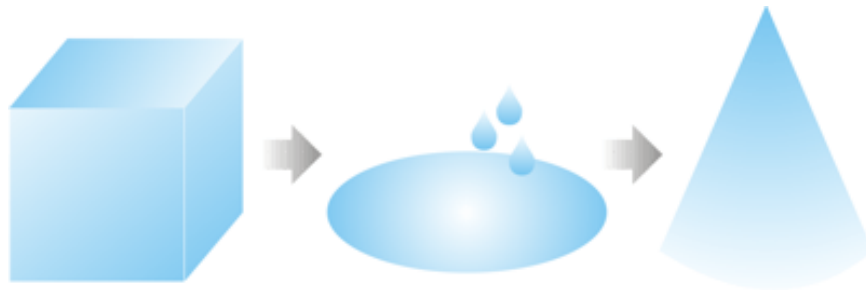
Three Stage Model

The pandemic has provided impetus for unfreezing and for being agile.

Lewin's Block of Ice Metaphor

Let's say you have a 'cube' of ice but you'd like to have a 'cone' of ice. To transform the cube shape you must:

1. "unfreeze" or melt the ice
2. "change" the mold to a cone shape and
3. "refreeze" the water into the new, desired shape



Lewin's Block of Ice Metaphor (Cont.)

It's a simple three-stage process that allows you to easily diagnose which stage you are in.

Stage 1: Unfreeze

The '**Unfreeze**' stage involves preparing the organization to accept that change is necessary and then creating the motivation to change

However, motivation is intrinsic to each individual.

I cannot motivate you. You cannot motivate me. But I can create the conditions, messages, and environment that may influence you to want to change.

The key: Develop a compelling message showing why the existing way of doing things cannot continue.

- Easiest to frame when you can point to something tangible (declining revenue, poor financial results, concerning employee or student satisfaction surveys, etc.)

Example: COVID-19 – UW-Milwaukee moved from business as usual to totally remote in a matter of days! Sometimes the unfreeze must be quick!

Stage 1: Unfreeze

Keep in mind that the first part of the change process is usually the most difficult and stressful – expect challenges!

In this stage, ask yourself: “Why did we do certain things the way that we did?” (challenge the status quo).

What to expect: many people will feel uncomfortable and off balance; strong reactions from some people, but....the unfreeze process is necessary!

- **Note:** The pandemic has and will reduce much of the pushback during this time of change

Requires strong support from Management

Bottom line: With uncertainty already existing and the need for change evident, it’s important for the organization to re-examine its core and build a strong motivation to seek out a new equilibrium. Without this motivation, it’s difficult to obtain the buy-in and participation necessary to effect meaningful change.

What are some positive ways we have or will have to frame the need for change at UW-Milwaukee during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?

Force Field Analysis

Lewin's change model suggested a methodology for analyzing change he called the **Force Field Analysis**. Essentially, this involved three steps:

- **Analyze** the restraining or driving forces that will affect the transition to the future state – restraining forces include the reactions from those who see change as 'unnecessary', constituting a 'threat', or are feeling uncertainty or fear during the pandemic.
- **Assess** driving or restraining forces – which ones are critical to involve or address?
- **Take steps** to increase the critical driving forces + decrease the critical restraining forces.
 - **Example**

How can we use this process to leapfrog during this difficult time?

Stage 2: Change

The ‘**Change**’ stage has a focus on the solution – new ways of working. It begins with new approaches to problems. With new approaches comes new learning and it takes place here:

- Goals are established
- Smaller, acceptable changes that reinforce and support change are instituted
- Management structures are developed
- Open, two-way communication (dialogue) is maintained

This stage requires active stakeholder participation (especially w/ those impacted by the change).

Usually, the transition from unfreeze to change does not happen overnight: people take time to embrace the new direction and participate proactively in the change.

Common Stages in a Change Curve

Another helpful change model, the Change Curve, focuses on the specific issue of personal transitions in a changing environment and is useful for understanding the stages individuals may go through during a change initiative.

Example:

- **Shock** – “Oh no, not another form.”
- **Denial** – “Maybe if I don’t look at my emails...”
- **Frustration** – “I don’t have 25 hours in my day.”
- **Depression** – “Well, I have no choice. I have to get this done.”
- **Experiment** – “How can I get this done? What is the best way?”
- **Decision** – “I am accountable for this and will get this done. It is best for the students/patients/staff.”
- **Integration** – “Woo-hoo! I succeeded and this feels great!”

Where do you think most of your team members are in the curve at this time?

Recognizing the Individual Change Response



Another Change Consideration: WIIFM?

What's in it for me?

In order to accept the change and contribute to making it successful, people need to understand how it will benefit them. Not everyone will fall in line just because the change is necessary and will benefit the organization. This is a common assumption and a pitfall that should be avoided.

Unfortunately, some people will genuinely be harmed by change, particularly those who benefit strongly from the status quo. Others may take a long time to recognize the benefits that change brings. It's important to foresee and manage these situations.

How do you assess who will be negatively affected the most by the necessary changes in a post COVID-19 UW-Milwaukee?

- ***What can you do for those groups of people?***

Sound Reasoning & Inclusion With Decision-Making

When you are making the actual changes, internal acceptance may be lacking if you don't:

- Base your decisions on a rigorous and systematic process (hunches yielding a "good enough" outcome just won't cut it)
 - Using CDC data, NJ Directives, and other approved resources will drastically reduce the second-guessing of decisions made at this time
- Involve all who are concerned by the change

"It's not so much that we're afraid of change or so in love with the old ways, but it's that place in between that we fear . . . It's like being between trapezes. It's Linus when his blanket is in the dryer. There's nothing to hold on to."

— **Marilyn Ferguson**

What to Expect from Change Initiatives

No matter how positive, promising or proactive the change is, **expect a sense of loss from some people**

No matter how competent and committed stakeholders are, **expect a sense of confusion at times**

No matter how loyal employees are, **expect some initial skepticism and an increase in “me” focus**

Modern case study for Lewin’s Model: Gas Prices and the American auto industry in the 21st century, go to this YouTube video (about 2 minutes long):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHR8gw6derg>

Stage 3: Refreeze

The '**Refreeze**' stage needs to help people and the organization internalize or institutionalize the changes.

Measure success – Are the new measures being followed consistently? Are they incorporated into everyday business?

Offer training to those struggling with the change; accountability if necessary

Don't tweak a new process too soon – give it time to allow for a more accurate measure of the success of it (although that may be difficult during fluid times!)

New attitudes, values, and behaviors are established as the new status quo. Staff will begin to feel confident and comfortable in this new world until.....

The next cycle of change comes around, that is! And it will as we continue to react. With change initiatives, we want to be proactive but in this difficult time how we plan will depend on some forces that are outside our control.

The Importance of the Refreeze Stage

You might ask, “Why create a sense of stability when we live in an ever-changing world?”

Even though change is a constant, this refreezing stage is still very important. Without it, employees get caught in a transition trap where they aren't sure how things should be done, so nothing ever gets done to full capacity. There isn't even a brief settling in time...

So, in the absence of a new frozen state, it becomes very difficult to tackle the next change initiative effectively. How do you go about convincing people that something needs changing if you haven't allowed the most recent changes to sink in? Change will be perceived as change for change's sake, and the motivation required to implement new changes simply won't be there.

Important Note: As part of the refreezing process, make sure that you celebrate the success of the change – this helps people to find closure, thanks them for enduring a painful time, and helps them believe that future change will be successful. ***It's a critical step not to skip!***

Why are all of the stages so important?

Let's look at this scenario to explain why all three steps are so important.

Let's imagine you skip the **'unfreezing'** phase and go straight to the **'change'** phase. What will happen?

- Most likely, the change will meet resistance.

Why?

Prevailing forces such as old values will begin to increase to counter the change. This leads to misunderstandings and a lack of trust (consider the Force Field Analysis model to visualize this scenario – the restraining forces can wreak havoc on the change initiative)!

One challenge we will have to deal with is that although the pandemic unfroze our environment, many people still expect to return to the status quo.

Practical Steps for Using the Model

Stage 1 – Unfreeze:

1. Determine what needs to change

- Examine/Survey the organization to understand the current state
- Understand why change has to take place

2. Ensure there is strong support from senior management

- Use Stakeholder Analysis/Management to identify and win the support of key people within the organization
- Frame the issue as one of organization-wide importance

3. Create the need for change

- Create a compelling message about why change has to occur
- Use your vision and strategy as supporting evidence
- Communicate the vision in terms of the change required

4. Manage and understand the doubts and concerns

- Remain open to employee concerns and address them in terms of the need to change

Practical Steps for Using the Model

Stage 2 – Change:

1. **Communicate often**

- Do so throughout the planning and implementation of the changes
- Describe the benefits
- Explain specifically how the changes will affect everyone/Prepare everyone for what is coming

2. **Dispel rumors**

- Answer questions openly and honestly
- Deal with problems quickly
- Relate the need for change back to operational necessities

3. **Empower action**

- Provide lots of opportunity for employee involvement
- Have line managers provide day-to-day direction

The Key: Change is fluid but it's important for employees to understand where Rowan is in the process and why we have done it!

Practical Steps for Using the Model

Stage 3 – Refreeze:

1. Anchor the changes into the culture

- Identify what supports the change
- Identify barriers to sustaining change

2. Develop ways to sustain the change

- Ensure leadership support
- Create a reward system if applicable
- Establish feedback systems
- Adapt the organizational structure as necessary

3. Provide support and training

- Keep everyone informed and supported

4. Celebrate success!

Example: For UW-Milwaukee, the first Refreeze may be bringing students back on campus.

Keep in mind: This stage may not fully occur until we are past COVID-19

Criticisms of Lewin's Change Model

The main criticism of Lewin's change model is that it is quaint and simple for the modern era of constant and rapid change. The critics would ask:

- Isn't the Unfreeze – Change – Refreeze model too simplistic for today's rapidly changing world?

The 'Refreeze' stage, in particular, implies a great deal of time is spent establishing the new status quo. Does that work in our fast paced society?

Lewin's model is sometimes criticized as being linear and without consideration for emotional life as people journey through change.

Criticisms Rebuttle

The simplicity criticism may actually be the strength of the Lewin model. True, change management is complex, but simplifying it makes it easier for people to take action where uncertainty and complexity can paralyze any action altogether.

As far as the question about the Refreeze stage taking too long goes –

- Even in our current era of high speed and frequent change, we must have some degree of **'refreeze'**, otherwise we would “get caught in a transition trap where people aren't sure how things should be done”. As a result, we would not be able to perform at best capacity.

Perhaps the biggest selling point for Lewin's model is that many change management models that followed have their roots in, and were inspired by his ideas.

Additional General Guidance for **Managing Change**

Ensure communication is presented with a united front; No we/they discussions or silos

Empower action – Win over your naysayers and utilize them as your content experts

Reinforce and reward small steps in the process as major victories

Make sure the changes are understood

Remember to clarify what is not changing along with what is

A key for UW-Milwaukee at this time is managing our teams effectively in the remote environment (and will continue to be)

Additional General Guidance for **Managing Change**

Take the time to understand how people are handling the changes

- Find out how people are doing ***along the way***, not just at the end
- Provide opportunities for ***two way communication*** and “Venting” (surveys, virtual Town Hall meetings, etc.)
- Don’t just hear; ***Listen!***

Find supporting people

- Leverage the help of those who ***commit early***

Framework for Change Communication

(5 Communication Points)

1. Why is the change necessary?

- (rationale) – **Example:** Rowan – To survive budget reductions, provide for safety of students, faculty, and staff

2. What are we changing to?

- (Vision)

3. How and when do we intend to get there?

- (plan)

4. What is the personal impact?

- (What's in it for me? How does it affect everyone?)

5. Is help available to support the transitions?

- (resources)

Stress and Its Impact on Communication

- Mental noise in high-stress situations reduces the ability to process information by 80%, on average. Under stress, people have difficulty hearing, understanding and recalling information. Data shows that attention spans shrink to just 12 minutes or less, and people are only able to retain three main ideas.
- That means most of the 30-minute team conference calls, or the lengthy email updates explaining all the ins and outs of an organization's response to the virus, probably aren't breaking through the noise.
 - Keep messages concise and clear and consider 3 concepts per communication
- Also using graphics, visual aids, analogies and personal anecdotes are usually effective because they can improve understanding by more than 50%.

Communication with empathy

The delivery method matters – People need to know that you truly care about them before they start to care about what you know. It is critical during times of crisis to begin every communication with empathy.

A simple opening such as “I know the current situation has been very challenging, and we appreciate the toll it is taking on everyone” helps diffuse anxiety and get people ready to listen to the facts that come next.

Resistance & Pushback

- It's important to understand that resistance is inevitable with any type of major change. Resistance can actually be a positive sign, evidence that people are hearing your message. It's a natural reaction to feeling a loss of control. People are no longer able to operate as they had expected, and that's uncomfortable.
- It's counterintuitive, but leaders should embrace resistance when it emerges, because only then can we respond wisely.
- Resistance follows highly predictable patterns. Think of the Kübler-Ross stages of grief as a guide to how people process difficult change. After the initial shock, the steps are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.
- The stages of grief above are a part of the framework that makes up our learning to live with the ones we have lost. They are tools to help us frame and identify what we may be feeling. But they are not stops on a linear timeline in grief.

Resistance Example

- The early response in Italy to the partial pandemic restrictions issued at first in the north exemplifies the resistance phenomenon. After a presumed period of shock, denial and anger, many residents entered a period of bargaining, the “you should make an exception for me because . . .” stage. Many continued going about their daily lives. The virus continued to spread.
- We highlight this example not to cast blame but to illustrate that the reaction is normal and to be expected. Italy’s next implementation of a nationwide restriction on movement and closure of nonessential businesses seems to have been more successful.
- Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte asked Italians to join him in an “I Stay Home” pledge. He urged citizens to make a common sacrifice to protect the elderly and avoid overwhelming the health system. His messages were full of empathy and clear facts, painting a picture of why this was necessary. Conte’s approach helped his people move quickly through the resistance curve, accept the change and stay home.

Common Sources of Resistance

Aptitude

- The individual is unable to (or at least it's very difficult to) make the change

Attitude

- The individual doesn't want to make the change

Threshold for Change

- The individual doesn't have the “energy” to make the change

Sources of Resistance: Aptitude

- Individual Abilities
 - See change *as more work*
 - Fear ***inability*** to develop the new skills required
 - ***Don't understand*** what it will take to be successful in the future state
- Low Tolerance for Change
 - ***Fear the unknown***
 - Don't want to accept the death of the old ways (***preservation of the past***)
 - Have “***scars***” from prior changes

Managing Resistance: Aptitude

Identify needed knowledge and skills

Provide a training / development program

Create opportunities to practice without consequences

Reward demonstrations of new abilities

Mentor and model desired behaviors and skills

Monitor workloads to ensure they remain realistic

Sources of Resistance: Attitude

- Lack of Motivation
 - ***Don't see the need*** for change
 - A compelling ***vision*** has not been presented
 - No ***positive*** consequences for changing
 - ***Perceive*** costs greater than benefit
- Differing Assessments
 - Change initiators usually have more ***information*** than stakeholders
 - Those affected may not see the ***“Big Picture”*** therefore the change does not make sense

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Managing Resistance: Attitude

Ensure people understand why change is needed – the business case for change

Put the change into the context of the “Big Picture”; possibly link it to other changes

Convey a compelling vision for the future

If possible, personalize benefits of the change

Establish rewards, recognition, and performance objectives that support change objectives

Resistance Takeaways

Leaders are trained to see resistance as bad when, in fact, it is the first sign that people are taking the change seriously.

The right leadership reaction to resistance is to listen with empathy. Only then can we remind people why things need to change and begin to discuss how to make the change happen.

In crisis situations, especially those as fluid as the coronavirus outbreak, many leaders are naturally drawn to a more protective, or fixed, mindset and behaviors. This can include defensiveness, denial, intransience in the face of changing facts on the ground and even blaming others.

A learning mindset will serve us better. It involves adapting to what is needed and being willing to adjust a game plan as new facts emerge. Address the challenge with openness and optimism, conveying empathy for how people may feel.

Resistance Self-Reflection

What resistance to change have you encountered in the past?

How did you handle it?

What worked well?

What did not work well?

Who can assist you?

“5 Ways to lead in an era of constant change”

Ted Talks: Organizational Change Expert Jim Hemerling

https://www.ted.com/talks/jim_hemerling_5_ways_to_lead_in_an_era_of_constant_change?language=en#t-554202

Additional Information: If seeking some more information regarding organizational change, watch this 13 minute video; it provides some exceptional tips for organizational change in this era of constant change

“The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence; it is to act with yesterday’s logic.”

- Peter Drucker

Feedback & Implementation

What are your thoughts on Lewin's Change Model?

What concepts discussed today resonated the most with you?

What changes will be the most challenging for Rowan following the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Thank you for your attentiveness
and your time!**

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