

# Understanding resistance to change

**Resistance is often the primary reason that change fails. It's a human reaction.**

People resisting don't see what they're doing as resistance. They often see it as survival or protecting themselves from perceived harm, which is often a reaction to the way change is being led.

The better we are at understanding what causes resistance, the better we can understand the other side of the coin support for change. There are no born 'resistors' out there waiting to ruin otherwise perfect plans. People resist in response to something.

**Maurer's three levels of resistance model:<sup>1</sup>**

## I don't GET it

This is a logical reaction and is based on not having (or feeling that you don't have) enough information, facts, figures and rationale.

### To help – Communicate

- Explain why before how.
- Use clear and understandable language.
- Find multiple ways to communicate – data/pictures, big chunks/detail, groups/individuals.

## I don't LIKE it

This is both an instinctive and an emotional reaction to change. Blood pressure rises, adrenaline flows. People may become in the grip of the reaction, typified by flight or fight responses, and stop listening.

### To help – Give choice

- Identify and minimise/reduce fear, increase positives.
- For example, explain what opportunities might the change create.
- Engage people fully in the process.
- Provide choice, control and options where you can.

## I don't TRUST it

This is an emotional reaction to you, the change itself or to the company change. People may become guarded and might not trust you or your intentions, at least temporarily. Think about how your leadership style may naturally help or hinder.

### To help – Build trust

- Keep commitments and don't over-promise.
- Find ways to spend time with the team.
- Listen to resistance.
- Admit if you're wrong.

<sup>1</sup> Rick Maurer (1996), Beyond the Wall of Resistance

# Three levels of resistance model

With your own work in mind, identify any adaptive change barriers you are running into. What do the barriers look like and are any of them to do with resistance to change? Using the Rick Maurer model template, work through the three levels of resistance and identify any key leadership actions you could take to try to reduce the impact of the resistance to change:

- I don't **GET** it: Explain the reasons for the changes you are proposing.
- I don't **LIKE** it: Try to think of ways to reduce or minimise fear and increase people's sense of psychological safety.
- I don't **TRUST** it: Try to think of ways to increase people's sense of connection and positive relationships.

Using this interactive table, you can type your thoughts below.

I don't <b>GET</b> it
I don't <b>LIKE</b> it
I don't <b>TRUST</b> it