

John Fisher's personal transition curve

Anxiety

The awareness that events lie outside one's range of understanding or control. I believe the problem here is that individuals are unable to adequately picture the future. They do not have enough information to allow them to anticipate behaving in a different way within the new organization. They are unsure how to adequately construe acting in the new work and social situations.

Happiness

The awareness that one's viewpoint is recognised and shared by others. The impact of this is two-fold. At the basic level there is a feeling of relief that something is going to change, and not continue as before. Whether the past is perceived positively or negatively, there is still a feeling of anticipation, and possibly excitement, at the prospect of improvement. On another level, there is the satisfaction of knowing that some of your thoughts about the old system were correct (generally no matter how well we like the status quo, there is something that is unsatisfactory about it) and that something is going to be done about it. In this phase we generally expect the best and anticipate a bright future, placing our own construct system onto the change and seeing ourselves succeeding. One of the dangers in this phase is that of the inappropriate psychological contract. We may perceive more to the change, or believe we will get more from the change than is actually the case. The organization needs to manage this phase and ensure unrealistic expectations are managed and redefined in the organizations terms, without alienating the individual.

Fear

The awareness of an imminent incidental change in one's core behavioural system. People will need to act in a different manner and this will have an impact on both their self-perception and on how others externally see them. However, in the main, they see little change in their normal interactions and believe they will be operating in much the same way, merely choosing a more appropriate, but new, action.

Threat

The awareness of an imminent comprehensive change in one's core behavioural structures. Here clients perceive a major lifestyle change, one that will radically alter their future choices and other people's perception of them. They are unsure as to how they will be able to act/react in what is, potentially, a totally new and alien environment - one where the "old rules" no longer apply and there are no "new" ones established as yet.

Guilt

Awareness of dislodgement of self from one's core self perception. Once the individual begins exploring their self-perception, how they acted/reacted in the past and looking at alternative interpretations they begin to re-define their sense of self. This, generally, involves identifying what are their core beliefs and how closely they have been to meeting them. Recognition of the inappropriateness of their previous actions and the implications for them as people can cause guilt as they realise the impact of their behaviour.

Depression

This phase is characterised by a general lack of motivation and confusion. Individuals are uncertain as to what the future holds and how they can fit into the future "world". Their

representations are inappropriate and the resultant undermining of their core sense of self leaves them adrift with no sense of identity and no clear vision of how to operate.

Disillusionment

The awareness that your values, beliefs and goals are incompatible with those of the organization. The pitfalls associated with this phase are that the employee becomes unmotivated, unfocused and increasingly dissatisfied and gradually withdraws their labour, either mentally (by just "going through the motions", doing the bare minimum, actively undermining the change by criticising/complaining) or physically by resigning.

Hostility

Continued effort to validate social predictions that have already proved to be a failure. The problem here is that individual's continue to operate processes that have repeatedly failed to achieve a successful outcome and are no longer part of the new process or are surplus to the new way of working. The new processes are ignored at best and actively undermined at worst.

Denial

This stage is defined by a lack of acceptance of any change and denies that there will be any impact on the individual. People keep acting as if the change has not happened, using old practices and processes and ignoring evidence or information contrary to their belief systems.

It can be seen from the transition curve that it is important for an individual to understand the impact that the change will have on their own personal construct systems; and for them to be able to work through the implications for their self perception. Any change, no matter how small, has the potential to impact on an individual and may generate conflict between existing values and beliefs and anticipated altered ones.

One danger for the individual, team and organization occurs when an individual persists in operating a set of practices that have been consistently shown to fail (or result in an undesirable consequence) in the past and that do not help extend and elaborate their world-view. Another danger area is that of denial where people maintain operating as they always have denying that there is any change at all. Both of these can have detrimental impact on an organization trying to change the culture and focus of its people.