

## ADVANCED SKILLS

### Chapter 12

## MANAGING CHANGE & TRANSITION

- 12.1 The Three Phases of Transition
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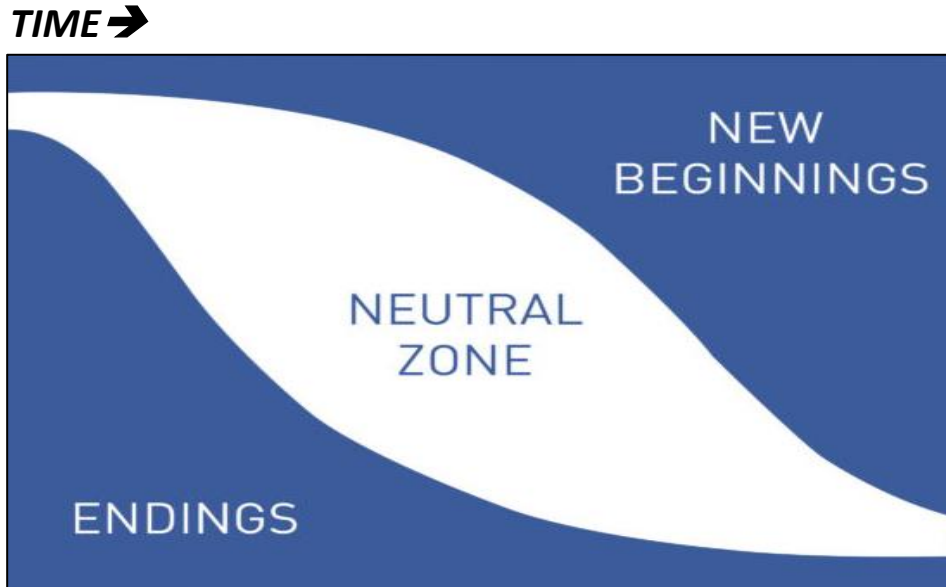
**Changes of any sort succeed or fail on the basis of whether people affected do things differently.**

*William Bridges*  
*Author & Consultant*

## 12.1 The Three Phases of Transition

**ABOUT THIS TOOL**—“It isn’t the changes that do you in, it’s the transitions. They aren’t the same thing. Change is situational; Transition is psychological, a three-phase process that people go through as they internalize and come to terms with the details of the new situation that the change brings about.”<sup>1</sup>

**APPLICATION**—Use this chart as a guide when planning your change initiative.



Endings	The Neutral Zone	The New Beginning
<p>William Bridges describes the change and transition process as paradoxical. That is, you begin with an ending and end with a beginning. It’s important to mark the ending in some concrete way, honor the past, and help employees work through whatever they may be losing as they adapt to the new reality. Individual losses may include relationships, processes, status, influence, team members or locations.</p>	<p>A particular strength of Bridges’ transition model is its frank recognition of the confusion that inevitably follows a change once it’s announced. Allowing for this confusion, this time in the wilderness, must be integral to the planning of any change initiative. Making time for people to adjust, clarify roles, re-establish relationships. Learning new skills requires explicit guidance, temporary systems, and regular communication.</p>	<p>Detailed planning is key! Be clear and concrete about why the change is needed, what exactly is changing, and what isn’t. Showing a stepwise path is essential if employees are to adapt and implement the desired change. Well-managed transitions allow people to learn new skills, implement new processes, and settle into new roles in ways that are grounded in a firm understanding of the change rationale and plan.</p>

Source: Developed by the author based on the works of William Bridges. For more, go to <https://wmbridges.com/about/what-is-transition/>

<sup>1</sup> William & Susan Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: Da Capo, 2016), 3

## 12.2 What to Do in Each Phase

Endings	Neutral Zone	New Beginnings
<p><i>You have to end before you begin</i></p>	<p><i>“The Wilderness”</i></p>	<p><i>The 6 “P”s</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Mark the endings</li> <li>b. Treat the past with respect</li> <li>c. Give people information, and do it again and again <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>In normal times people need 4 times more information than we think they need; during difficult times they need 10 times more. Liz Magoon, consultant</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>d. Identify what is changing and what is remaining the same</li> <li>e. Show how endings ensure the continuity of what really matters</li> <li>f. Acknowledge losses openly and sympathetically</li> <li>g. Expect overreaction and accept grieving: Anger, sadness, anxiety, confusion, denial</li> <li>h. Compensate for the losses in some way</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Normalize the neutral zone; see it as a difficult yet creative time, a time for sorting out</li> <li>b. Make time to take stock and question the usual</li> <li>c. Embrace setbacks as entry points for new solutions</li> <li>d. Experiment; brainstorm new answers to old problems</li> <li>e. Create temporary systems</li> <li>f. Strengthen connections within the group</li> <li>g. Use the neutral zone creatively; plan retreats, field trips, or get-togethers</li> <li>h. Redefine the neutral zone; seek new metaphors</li> <li>i. Monitor the transition through surveys, data collection, open forums, sampling interviews, or transition monitoring teams</li> </ul>	<p><b>PURPOSE</b> Explain the purpose behind the outcome being sought. Why are we doing this?</p> <p><b>PICTURE</b> Paint a picture of how the outcome will look and feel. What are people going to experience that is going to be different?</p> <p><b>PLAN</b> Lay out a step-by-step plan for phasing in the outcome. People need a clear idea of how they can get where they need to go.</p> <p><b>PART TO PLAY</b> Give each person a part to play in both the plan and the outcome. What is the tangible way employees are to contribute to and participate in the transition process and outcome?</p> <p><b>PITFALLS</b> Integrate anticipation of obstacles, setbacks and resistance into your transition planning. Consider doing a premortem before finalizing the needed change. (See Tool 11.4)</p> <p><b>PROGRESS</b> Determine the indicators of progress, including the mechanisms, accountabilities, and timing for collecting data and getting feedback on the relative success of the change initiative.</p>

Source: Developed by the author based on the works of William Bridges

## 12.3 21 Questions for Planning Successful Change

### FRAME THE CHANGE

1. What is the issue prompting the need for change?
2. What will be observable evidence that the desired change is taking root?
3. What are the external factors and time constraints that must be considered?
4. What can be learned from the success or failure of past change initiatives?

### INVOLVE OTHERS

5. Who are the stakeholders and how will you include them in planning the change?
6. Who is your executive champion and how will you involve them?
7. What old scars or unresolved issues will need to be considered? How will you do so?
8. How will decisions be made about the change and who will make them?
9. What pushback or resistance can you anticipate? From whom? Why?
10. To what extent can you count on leadership for support in the face of challenges arising during implementation? If you're unsure, what can you do to bolster leadership support?

### FILL IN THE DETAILS

11. What are the answers to the 6Ps of New Beginnings? [Tool 12.2]
  - a. The Purpose, what's driving the change and what it's meant to accomplish
  - b. The Picture of the better tomorrow that will result from the change
  - c. The Plan for implementing the change, describing what exactly is changing and when
  - d. The Part you want employees to play in implementing the change, what they will be doing differently
  - e. The Pitfalls you can anticipate and how they will influence the change design (See the pre-mortem questions in Tool 11.4)
  - f. The Progress measures you'll monitor to indicate how the change initiative is doing
12. Who will lose what, and what can be done to mitigate their loss, if anything?
13. How will you normalize the "neutral zone"—the period of confusion and inefficiency between the ending and the new beginning?
14. What temporary help can you provide to support employees in successfully adapting to the change?
15. How will you monitor progress?

### COMMUNICATE [Tools 12.5 and 12.6]

16. How will you communicate the urgency of the change and frame the challenge its meant to address?
17. How will employees provide feedback about their needs or concerns with the change and its implementation?
18. How will you mark the ending?

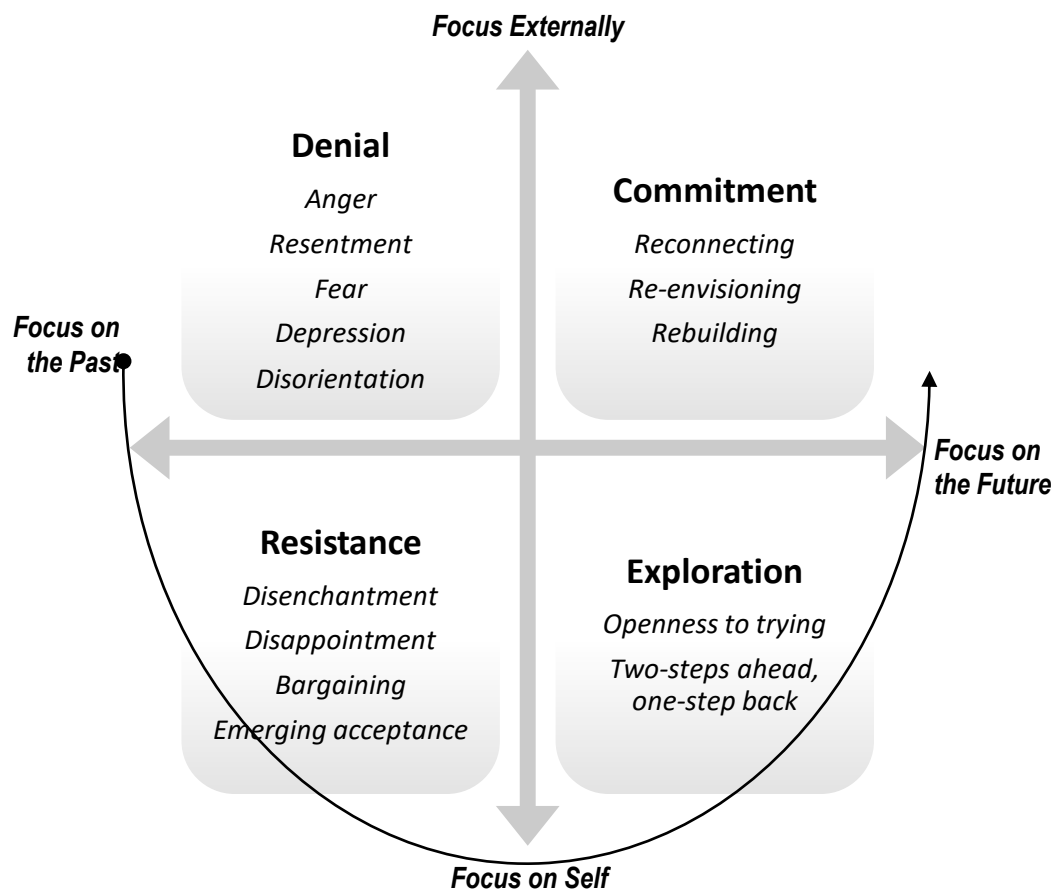
### EVALUATE

19. What is your plan for evaluating the success of the change and its implementation? What circumstances will trigger modification of the change?
20. In what ways can you refine the change to enhance its implementation, even if it is going well?
21. What are the lessons learned from this change that can strengthen future change initiatives?

## 12.4 The Transition Curve

**ABOUT THIS TOOL**—There are many variations of the transition curve shown here. Each depicts in some way the emotional stages employees commonly go through as they move from first learning of a change to embracing it.

**APPLICATION**—Pace implementation of the desired change by respecting the emotional stages people experience. Adapt your planning and communication efforts accordingly.



Source: Adapted from Ruth A. Johnston, Ph.D, "Leading and Facilitating Effective Meetings," (workshop presentation at the University of Washington Tacoma, May 7, 2016)

## 12.5 How to Communicate About Change

**Step 1: Be clear about the change.** Before communicating about it, summarize the change in a few sentences to be sure you and others understand it and agree on it.

**Step 2: Identify a leader or a spokesperson for the change.** Make sure someone is the face of the change so people know who to approach when they need answers.

**Step 3: List the groups who must learn about the change.** Different groups of people need different kinds of information. List the groups separately so that you do not muddy the messages.

**Step 4: For each group, think about the responses you desire.** What do you want each group to do, think, and feel? Knowing what you desire, you will be more likely to inspire those responses.

**When you work on Step 4, consider these questions:**

- How much does each group, or audience, know?
- For each audience, is the news negative, positive, or neutral?
- How is each audience likely to respond to the news?
- How can you reach each audience effectively?
- Who can communicate most effectively with each audience?
- What are the values, concerns, fears, opportunities, etc., of each audience?

**Step 5: List the questions each group will need to have answered.** Thinking about people's questions in advance helps you prepare and avoid being blindsided. When you do communicate, be sure to answer each group's questions. Examples: What is the change? Why is the change being made now? How does the change affect me?

**Step 6: Think about the type of communication to use and the communicators for each audience.** Do not leave this step to chance! It's the heart of the communication plan.

**Step 7: Decide on the timing of the initial communication.** Decide who needs to get the message first, second, etc., and when.

**Step 8: Decide who will review your plan.** Other people may have ideas that will strengthen it.

**Step 9: Follow up. Tweak the plan as necessary.**

Source: Lynn Gaertner-Johnston, Business Writing Blog, Syntax Training, date unknown. <https://www.businesswritingblog.com/>

## 12.6 Change Communication Worksheet

Prepared by (your name)

<b>Summary of the change</b>	
<b>Change leader/ executive owner</b>	
<b>Audiences who must learn about the change</b>	1. 2. 3.
<b>Desired response from each audience: What do you want each audience to do, think, and feel?</b>	1. 2. 3.
<p><b>Issues to consider:</b> <span style="float: right;"><i>Note: Do not fill in this box. Just think about the questions.</i></span></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How much does each audience know?</li> <li>▪ For each audience, is the news negative, positive, or neutral?</li> <li>▪ How is each audience likely to respond to the news?</li> <li>▪ How can you reach each audience effectively?</li> <li>▪ Who can communicate most effectively with each audience?</li> <li>▪ What are the values, concerns, fears, opportunities, etc., of each audience?</li> </ul>	
<b>Questions each audience will want answered now</b>	1. 2. 3.
<b>Type(s) of communication and the communicator(s) for each audience</b>	1. 2. 3.
<b>Timing: Who needs to get the message first, second, etc., and when?</b>	▪ ▪ ▪
<b>Review: Who will review this plan?</b>	

### Communication Calendar

Date	Audience	Vehicle & Sender	Key Messages	Person (s) responsible	Status (e.g., Done)

Source: Lynn Gaertner-Johnston, Better Writing at Work newsletter, November 2018