



**tips&tools**

**Change management:  
the 5Cs of change  
response**

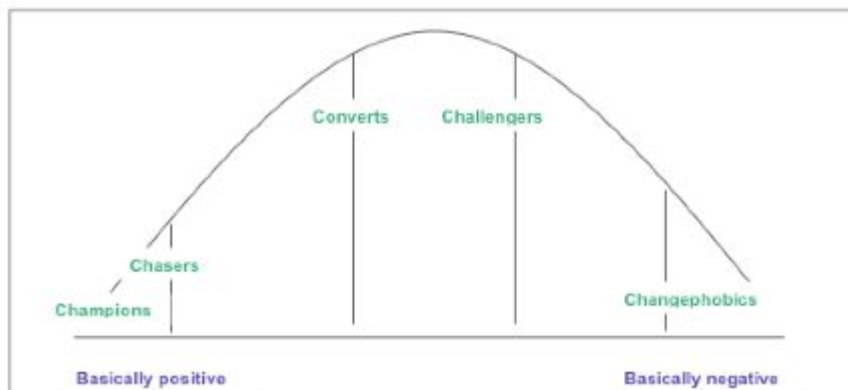
Over the years **=mc** has carried out a significant body of research on, and change work with a wide range of not-for-profit organisations. And we've found there are five core reactions to change, that we call the 5Cs. To be an effective change manager you need to understand these five reactions in your colleagues and adopt appropriate strategies to deal with them.

**Change management: the 5Cs of change response**

As a senior manager, chances are at some point you've been involved in either instituting or supporting change in your organisation. The question is, if the need for change is so obvious to you why isn't the rest of the organisation jumping up and down with excitement?

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The diagram below shows the approximate distribution curve of these reactions at the start of the change process. At any point in the process, an individual can move between categories. If you want to institute a change process, you need to help as many people as possible to move from the 'basically negative' to the 'basically positive' side of the curve.



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## Responses to change: the 5Cs and how to deal with them

We tend to sell organisation benefits when planning change. But not everyone judges the impact of things through organisational perspectives. To be successful, it's essential to reflect on how individuals in the organisation will react or respond to your change announcement. Be prepared and plan an approach for each of the 5Cs...

### Champions

Champions – perhaps 5-10% of the total – are those who are prepared to stick their necks out, run with an idea, and own what happens. After announcing the change you propose, these are the people who'll crowd around you smiling and shaking your hand.

Tempting as it is to embrace their enthusiasm, you need to treat champions cautiously. The advantage of their unstinting support for the change is balanced by some serious disadvantages.

For one thing, champions generally champion everything – even painting the office in stripes. Their enthusiasm could give you a false impression of how everyone else is feeling. And champions won't question you closely on the merits of your proposal. You need some challenge to ensure your idea has rigour.

Give champions something practical to do which absorbs their energy. Be careful about using them as advocates, they're likely to be treated with skepticism by others.

### Chasers

Chasers – 15-20% of the total – don't immediately respond positively to your proposal for change. At the end of a briefing they look around to see who's signed up. They want to discuss your idea with others before forming a judgment, and will generally look to a key opinion maker or 'trigger' person for guidance.

The great advantage of chasers is they give you a more accurate view of how your proposal is going down. When they join you're making progress and, once committed, they'll stay.

And the disadvantages? Well, you'll have to convince the right trigger person to convince the chasers. And that trigger person may well be someone who has social rather than organisational power in your organisation. So you can't tell them to back your idea. And still chasers won't come on board immediately – they may have their own very specific concerns: for example if you're going to restructure, what will be the impact on their team?

Identify the trigger person at different levels in your organisation and brief them in advance so that they encourage the chasers to sign up to your project.

### Converts

At 30 to 40% of the total converts are the biggest single group in your change audience. They listen in silence to the proposed change and don't ask questions. But don't confuse their silence with negativity. Converts want solid evidence in favor of the change in order to come on board.

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They'll also need reassurance about what impact the changes will have on them. Their passivity means you often have to ask questions on their behalf and then answer your own question – FAQs. They want the answer but they're not happy to ask the question.

Converts have two advantages. First, bringing them on board tips a sizable majority of people into the 'mostly positive' camp and ensures your change proposal will be adopted. Second, although they can be slow to adopt a change, they are equally slow to let it go. Once they're convinced, you have momentum.

The main disadvantage with converts is that they may take so long to come round that your initiative loses momentum.

Think about and try to address converts' concerns before launching a change process. That way you'll be able to bring them on board more quickly. Try producing a list of FAQs in advance – it shows you're thinking about the people as well as the organisation.

## **Challengers**

Challengers – 15-20% of the total – ask difficult questions initially and then... continue to do so. Their approach is to confront and be awkward because they have a strong stake in the outcome. It's a personality trait not a personal attack, so don't treat it as an attack. Because challenging is a personality trait it's unlikely you can convince challengers that the change will be a good thing. What's more important is that others will be watching how well you handle the challenger's interventions.

Despite appearances, there are advantages to challengers: their questions force you to be rigorous in your thinking. And, because they ask the questions others merely think, addressing their issues may enable you indirectly to reassure others.

The disadvantages are twofold. Challengers can carry on asking difficult questions beyond usefulness. They may also ask questions on areas not up for discussion.

Handle challengers' queries fairly, however irritated you feel: others are watching. Be firm with them about what's 'off the agenda' – provide groundrules and stick to them.

## **Changephobics**

Changephobics – 5-10% of the total – will not ever be convinced. They can slow down or even derail change. They cause dissent and are essentially immovable. Changephobics are tough.

However, if you're seen dealing with them honestly and fairly, you'll gain brownie points from others for being evenhanded. And however hard it is, keep in mind changephobics don't oppose because they're bad people but because they feel you're destroying something they hold dear.

Changephobic disadvantages are legion – doing their best to stop your initiative, providing unstinting opposition, significantly lowering morale. The harsh reality is that you have to get rid of changephobics as quickly and effectively as you can whether it's to another department or out of the organisation.

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When you lead your change process you will need to consider how you might deal with the 5Cs. Think about all the different stakeholders in your organisation – staff, volunteer, boards and even users. Which of the 5Cs would they fit into? What can you get the champions to do so they feel positive, but stay out of your way? Who do you need to convince to get the chasers on board? What questions do you need to answer for the converts? Who are the challengers? What flaws might they spot? Who are the changeaphobics? How can you get them to leave or help them go?

As we all know, implementing change is no walk in the park. Preparing for the individual responses to change will certainly help you leap ahead of some of the inevitable stress – if not all of it!

## What's next?

**If you've found this article helpful and you would like more information, please call +44 (0)20 7978 1516 and speak to one of our experienced management consultants.**

If you would like to know more about managing change, join us on =mc's Leading and Managing Change programme. This is a challenging and demanding 1-day programme that introduces a toolbox of techniques and approaches that help you get on top of your change initiative. **Click here for more information.**

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