

People react to change in four basic ways:

Disengagement

- A psychological withdrawal from change
- Employee appears to lose initiative and interest in the job
- Employee likely fears the change but chooses to do nothing or hope for the best.
- Employee is physically present but mentally absent.
- Employee lacks drive and commitment
- Employee can be recognized by behaviors such as being hard to find or doing only enough to get the job done.
- Disengagement statements include “no problem” or “This won’t affect me.”
- Management Strategies:
 1. Confront them with their reaction and draw them out so they can identify the concerns to be addressed.
 2. Drawing them out can lead to productive discussion, even though they may never become a “change cheerleader”.
 3. Be an empathetic manager who is willing to listen

Dis-identification

- Employee feels his identity has been threatened by the change and feels vulnerable.
- They cling to past procedures because they felt a sense of mastery over it, and thereby gain a sense of security
- They may appear to be sulking and dwelling in the past by reminiscing about the old ways of doing things
- Often display sadness and worry
- Heard to saying things like, “My job has completely changed”, or “I used to . . .”
- Management Strategies:
 1. encourage them to explore their feelings
 2. help them identify what they liked about the old situation and then transfer those positive feelings to the new situation.
 3. help them see that work and emotion are separable—that they can let go of old ways and experience positive reactions to the new ways of doing their jobs.

Disenchantment

- expressed by negativity or anger
- They realize the past is gone and they’re mad
- They try to enlist support of others by forming coalitions
- Sabotage and backstabbing may result
- Heard to say things like, “this will never work” or “I’m getting out of here . . .”
- When this happens in a culture that doesn’t support open airing of issues, expect passive-aggressive behaviors like bad-mouthing or starting rumors.

- Disenchantment is quite contagious in the workplace.
- Often difficult to reason with disenchanted employees . . .
- Sometimes disenchantment is a mask for one of the other three reactions and must be worked through to get to the root cause.
- Management strategies:
 1. Bring these employees from the highly negative state to a more neutral state. Don't dismiss it; but allow them to let off steam so they can come to terms with their anger.
 2. Acknowledge that their anger is normal and you don't hold it against them.

Disorientation

- Disorientated employees feel lost and confused, and often unsure of their feelings.
- They waste energy attempting to figure out what to do instead of how to do things.
- They ask a lot of questions and become detail-oriented.
- Appear to need a great deal of guidance and leave their work until all questions have been answered
- “Analysis paralysis” is a characteristic of disoriented workers
- They feel they've lost touch with priorities in the company and may want to analyze it to death before acting.
- They ask questions like, “Now what do I do?” or “What should I do first?”
- Disorientation is a common reaction for those who are used to clear goals and unambiguous directions.
- Management strategies:
 1. Explain the change in a way that minimizes the ambiguity.
 2. Put the information in a framework or overall vision so they can see where they fit.
 3. Once they understand where they fit, develop a series of steps to help them adjust . . . give them a sense of priorities to work on.

My Organization's Reaction to Change: (how many of each type?)

	Disengaged	Disidentification	Disenchanted	Disoriented
Managers				
Supervisors				
Caseworkers				
Case aids				
Clerical				
Fiscal				
Other				
Other				
Other				

By teams or units:

Name	Disengaged	Disidentified	Disenchanted	Disoriented

Action steps:

WHO

WILL DO WHAT

BY WHEN

Disengaged

Disidentification

Disenchanted

Disoriented

SOURCE: pp. 558-560, Organizational Behavior, Nelson and Quick, West Publishing, 1994