Second Edition

Transition Guide

How to Manage the Human Side of Major Change

Michael Berney

FEDERAL JUDICIAL CENTER

The Federal Judicial Center

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Introduction

All courts face major change at some time: Executives are hired or new judges installed. Staff are reorganized into teams, or switched from specialist to generalist functions, or given new duties that affect co-workers. New technology is introduced. People are laid off. While court managers can control the implementation of change to some extent, no one can control how people respond to change. In fact, how different people adapt to any one change can vary tremendously.

As William Bridges, a well-known authority on organizational change, notes in his book *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, "Change is situational: the new site, the new boss, the new team roles, the new policy." The psychological processes people go through in coming to terms with the new situation, however, Bridges calls "transition."

This guide focuses on managing the transition that accompanies major change. It does not review theory or research on transitions. Rather, it describes a three-phase model of transition and suggests specific strategies for helping staff move successfully through each phase.

Good Reasons for Managing Transition

We all know what happens when people make New Year's resolutions. After a few attempts to change their behavior, they begin to wonder, "Is this really worth it?" They may continue to recognize the value of their goals, but they find the work involved to be both time consuming and painful. Not giving up and reverting to old behaviors takes dedication.

> "**PEOPLE FEAR** not being able to adjust to a change or a new environment. That fear fuels anxiety. Once they are convinced that there is no conspiracy to push them out, those who were once apprehensive often become the biggest cheerleaders for change."
>
> **Sylvia Moseley, Deputy-in-Charge, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, Southern District of Ohio**

The same is true of organizational change. Achieving a worthwhile goal takes time and effort and demands patience and sensitivity from the person leading the staff through the change. And not all change is positive. What you as a court manager do while people are in transition can decide whether people embrace the change or resist it.

There are other reasons for managing the transition associated with major change. First, as Rosabeth Moss Kanter observes in *When Giants Learn to Dance*, managers typically overestimate the degree to which staff will cooperate with a major change and underestimate such byproducts as discontinuity, disorder, and distraction, which all reduce productivity. Attending to the human aspects of transition increases the probability that staff will fully support the change.

Second, in the federal judiciary, all court units, and especially district and appellate clerks' offices, have been insulated from change because of the historical stability of these organizations. As Allan J. McCarthy warns in *The Transition Equation: A Proven Strategy for Organizational Change*, such organizations "usually experience the most difficult transitional periods . . . because they are the least experienced with change."

Because managing transition is not easy, you should be proactive, learning how to handle problems before they surface. Refer to this guide before implementing a major change. It will help you anticipate people's reactions to change and better prepare you to respond. Examining the guide before a change may also remind you of insights gained in your experience.

Comments from Managers

Throughout this guide you will find comments, such as the one on the previous page, from managers in court units across the United States. These comments relate personal experiences and insights obtained in the course of a variety of transitions.

1. Analyzing Major Change in the Courts

Whether a change is major—and thus presents the prospect of significant transition—depends on how your staff view the change. Following are examples of changes collected from court unit executives across the federal judiciary during fiscal year 1996. Which changes have you and your staff experienced? Which do you predict await you? Note the differences in kind and scope.

Changes in External Pressures

- Civil filings rapidly increased.
- Caseloads declined.
- Caseloads grew rapidly, followed by a rapid decline three years later.
- Drug offenses were federalized.
- The court relocated.

Changes in Leadership

- The chief resigned, and staff adjusted pending designation of a replacement.
- Within 18 months, the clerk (with 40 years' tenure), the operations manager (with 30 years' tenure), and the finance administrator (with 35 years' tenure) retired, and a new chief judge took over.
- A new clerk of court with a different management style was appointed.
- The office of the chief judge changed.

Changes in Personnel

- Employees were laid off.
- A large number of employees was hired.

> "**DOWNSIZING** represented a major change for our court. In a small court where a single person handles most functions, downsizing causes significant disruption, and managing the change involves reorganizing and reassigning work."
>
> **Mark J. Langer, Clerk of Court,**
> **U.S. Court of Appeals,**
> **District of Columbia Circuit**

- Employees with different backgrounds and experience than existing staff were hired.
- A divisional office opened amidst staff reductions.

Changes in Policies and Procedures

- New policies and procedures were developed and put in writing.
- The Cost Control Monitoring System for personnel budget allocation and

the Personnel Projection System were adopted.

- The budget was decentralized.
- The jury plan changed.
- A layoff policy was developed.

> "**WHAT I LEARNED** after four years of constant change is that 'how we operate' will keep on changing—and it must if we desire to successfully meet the future. I thought that we would come to some point, reach the top, and relax, but now I realize that we will never stop moving forward. This is the way we do business now."
>
> **Sharon Kologie, Administrative Analyst, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, District of New Mexico**

Changes in Roles and Responsibilities

- A major automation effort eliminated many manual tasks.
- Probation and pretrial services officers began to produce their own work using computers.
- Case management was introduced.
- Generalist positions changed to specialist positions.
- Staff was reorganized due to layoffs.
- Team-based management (in which the role traditionally played by a supervisor is shared) was introduced.
- Total Quality Service was adopted.

Changes in Structure

- A new divisional office opened.
- The number of organizational layers was reduced.
- The chief deputy position was eliminated.
- Resources began to be shared with another court unit.
- Court services (automation, human resources, etc.) were consolidated in a new unit.

Changes in Technology

- The Windows operating system was installed on computers.
- E-mail was introduced.
- File scanning was introduced.
- Docketing changed from BANCAP to NIBS.
- Electronic monitoring was introduced.

Activity: Exploring Your Experience with Major Change

Your experience can help you identify what events would cause major change for your staff, as well as what would and would not work in managing such change.

Consider a major change that you led. Write down in a few sentences what you did that seemed to help staff adjust to the change. Then, focusing on your communication with staff, describe what you might do differently next time.

Now think of a different change in your office—one in which you participated but did not lead. In a few sentences, describe what court leaders did that eased or accelerated staff acceptance of the change. Then describe what you might do differently, focusing this time on your role as a participant in the change.

> "**Change** brings uncertainty, and uncertainty is scary. Leadership is about inspiring people to move to a new place."
>
> **George Santa Cruz, U.S. Probation Officer, District of Massachusetts**

Activity: Exploring Your Staff's Experience with Transitions

Using the list of changes above as an example, have staff write down changes that they anticipate. Compare the lists, asking staff to distinguish changes they have previously undergone from those with which they have no experience. Have staff rate past changes from one to three, one indicating minor change that did not disrupt staff, two indicating marginal change that caused some disruption, and three indicating major change and significant staff disruption. Finally, ask staff to consider past changes with these two questions in mind: What worked? and What would they do differently?

By promoting discussion about the impact of prior change, these exercises will help your staff anticipate change to come. The advantage is obvious: People who anticipate change are better prepared to move through transitions than people who are caught off guard or who remain blind to changes even as they are occurring.

2. The Phases of Transition

In *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, William Bridges describes three phases of transitions:

- endings, in which old behavior patterns are stopped;
- the neutral zone, a period of uncertainty and reorientation between endings and new beginnings; and
- new beginnings, in which the change is up and running.

The challenge for individuals leading major changes is to help others move through these phases—to permit people to experience feelings of loss, identify what is different, and learn new ways of working. Denied an orderly transition, staff may not fully support a change.

Keep in mind too that people move through the phases of transition at different speeds. If you expect staff to adapt to changes too quickly, you may frustrate them or become frustrated yourself.

> "CHANGING our telephone system and installing voice mail resulted in the loss of several coveted telephone lines. Even with much thought, preparation, follow-up, discussion, and revision and creation of procedures, we still encountered a long period of adjustment. People tended to exaggerate any telephone problems they subsequently encountered. Anticipate this reaction. It will dissipate eventually. Just give your staff time to work through this phase before taking any additional action."
>
> **John Cisternino, Chief Deputy Clerk, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, Western District of Missouri**

Endings

For a change to take place, an old pattern of behavior or way of doing business must end. Introducing a team approach to handling certain functions, for instance, means individuals will lose some responsibilities. To use a more specific example, having officers compose their investigation reports on computer means that reports will no longer be passed on to clerks for typing.

In any organization, people find comfort in doing what they know best. Letting go of established routines thus can be difficult for them. In the federal judiciary the value placed on precedent may compound this difficulty.

The Neutral Zone

When people let go of old routines, they enter a phase in which new routines are not yet comfortable. For example, installing equipment to support a newly automated process may take a few hours, but mastering the software may take staff many months. Likewise, a court executive may pass control of his or her office to a successor within a week, but staff's adjustment to the new regime may take far longer.

Until people become comfortable with a change, they will be in the neutral zone. During this phase, some staff may experience anxiety. Morale may suffer. Some employees may begin missing work. And unresolved issues may resurface. In the neutral zone, Bridges says, "old weaknesses, long patched over or compensated for, reemerge in full flower."

New Beginnings

Beginnings are exciting. At the same time, people commonly fear them. Beginnings trigger memories of loss. They also pose a risk of failure and disturb the slower pace of the neutral zone. A true beginning has occurred when people make an emotional commitment to do things in a new way—for example, when individuals program a new automated system to meet their particular needs or supervisors defend a new executive's decisions in conversations with staff.

Expectations

Understanding the phases of transition will help you to develop realistic expectations for your staff and to appreciate why they do not always adapt to change as quickly as you expect. This understanding may decrease your frustration and increase your effectiveness as a leader.

If you are in the midst of a major change, refer to the preceding descriptions to identify the phases in which you and your colleagues currently find yourselves. Focus on your staff (managers are often a phase ahead of their staffs). Once you have identified where your staff is in the transition, turn to the appropriate chapter of this guide for advice on managing that phase.

3. The Endings Phase

When a major change is introduced, the transition that people go through begins with an ending. Your challenge in this ending phase is to get people to accept that a change is occurring and that some old processes must end. Here are three basic strategies for the endings phase:

- Provide whatever information you have.
- Make clear that the change will result in an ending.
- State exactly what must end.

Expect staff to resist your message. They may have been working under certain assumptions that are no longer accurate. They may have become attached to certain procedures or feel comfortable working with a particular group of people. If the change you describe disrupts things, they may think they did not hear you correctly or hope that you spoke prematurely and that things will remain as they are. In our ever-changing world, this wish for stability is perfectly normal. The challenge for you as a manager is to mark the ending clearly, providing the information people need to assimilate the change, in a tone that allays misgivings and promotes support for the change.

Provide Information

One thing that slows acceptance of change is lack of information. People need to understand what led to the change. They should know if there are problems with current operations, and they should know what those problems are.

"**WE PURCHASED** interactive software that enabled officers to dictate directly to their computers. Unfortunately, the transition to the new technology was not very successful, and officers kept doing dictation the old way. One factor was that we did not sell the change. We assumed that people would think this was so 'neat' that they would just naturally take to the new system."

Trudi A. Schmitt,
Chief U.S. Probation Officer,
Eastern District of Wisconsin

State what is ending. Say, "This worked well for our court for many years, but circumstances (filings, budget, etc.) have changed." Be specific in describing what practices you want people to abandon.

Provide whatever information on the change is currently available. People are better off getting incomplete information rather than no information. If you delay providing information, people will become suspicious and start broadcasting rumors. Talk about negative as well as positive aspects of the change. Point out potential obstacles. Statements like "This transition will not be easy and the outcome is not certain" convey empathy and invite people to talk truthfully about what is happening. In turn, listen to staff's concerns, and respond to those concerns with concrete, honest information.

> **"ONE THING I LEARNED** was the importance of bringing people together to talk about what was happening. I had hoped that we could move forward to deal with the press of court business. In retrospect, it would have saved time if we had taken time out during this critical period to more fully acknowledge people's feelings. They also needed to hear from me as their executive. Not that I could control changes, not that I could answer all their questions. But at least I could understand the impact on them. They needed empathy."
>
> **Richard Wieking, Clerk of Court, U.S. District Court, Northern District of California**

If you have been slow to address the change, admit it. Take responsibility for any mistakes you have made. This is as important as providing information on the change itself, because it builds people's trust in you.

If you do not know all the details of the change, state when you expect to have more information. As the weather service does when major storms threaten, warn people to remain alert for further information, and spell out precautions they should take.

In the case of downsizing, courts that the Federal Judicial Center surveyed all said they erred in not giving out information early enough on the number of positions to be cut, how layoffs would be determined, and when the actual terminations would occur. They also said that in situations where it was unclear how many people were going to be cut, they should have given out weekly updates saying that there was no more news.

Show Confidence In Your Staff

The tone of your message is as important as the information you convey. In the endings phase, staff are likely to feel vulnerable. You need to project an attitude of confidence that they can handle the situation.

Remind staff of obstacles they surmounted in the past. Show pride in how people tackled problems that at first seemed formidable, and ask people to draw on those same skills during the coming change. Further, live up to your words through your actions. Show up during implementation meetings. And share the burden of some of the detail work that the change imposes on staff.

Above all, avoid cheerleading. Statements like "Just do it" and "Think positive" can be construed as insensitive demands and can actually undermine people's morale and hamper communication.

Use Varied Media, and Involve Your Management Team

You may need to use more than one approach in order to communicate effectively to your staff. Overwhelmed by the change, people might not hear your whole message at first or might focus only on certain aspects of the change. Use your newsletter (if you publish one), small group discussions, focus groups, memoranda, and one-on-one meetings to communicate information.

In addition to using different approaches, use different messengers. Think of your management team as a resource. Encourage your managers to give a comprehensive overview of changes to their staffs. Give them all the resources and background information they need to fully explain the situation, and help them anticipate the questions that will be asked. Be certain to evaluate the appropriateness of alternative messengers, however. For example, an announcement regarding a layoff might best come from you.

On the following page you will find a checklist to use in ensuring that your communications during the endings phase (and throughout the transition) are effective.

> **"WE HELD A 'SUMMIT'** in Washington Western, where I previously worked, to talk about the future role of support staff and what changes, good and bad, we could expect. One clerk, who had come to pretrial from probation when there was a two-officer-to-one-clerk ratio, admitted that she was unhappy when officers began to work independently. It was disappointing, she said, to lose the personal recognition, relationships, and loyalty that she had developed with 'her' officers. Even though change would bring improvements, this clerk was in fact giving some important things up. Verbalizing her feelings, explaining that there was a legitimate reason for her anxiety, helped her and the entire group."
>
> **Carol Miyashiro, Chief U.S. Pretrial Services Officer, District of Hawaii**

Acknowledge What Will Be Lost and What Will Continue

The degree to which people experience loss varies. Remember to judge change

Communications Checklist

- ❑ Have you communicated accurate, timely information?
- ❑ Have you communicated information clearly to people who perceive they are affected by the change as well as to those you know to be affected by it? Is the information consistent enough to withstand scrutiny by the various constituencies?
- ❑ If there are things you don't know, have you said so (thus enhancing your unit's or office's credibility)?
- ❑ For unresolved issues, have you indicated which factors will influence future decisions and when, given the information you have, these decisions will be made?
- ❑ Have you repeated essential information and communicated it through multiple channels?
- ❑ Have you accounted for the fact that people process information in different ways and at different speeds?

Based on a checklist developed by AT&T and presented in *The Public Manager* (Summer 1995): 26.

from your staff's perspective. They may have more to lose than you, or they may be experiencing a loss that you already dealt with when you initiated or implemented the change.

People tend to hide their feelings about loss. Denial is normal and fairly common. In one bankruptcy court, for example, some staff continued to perform assets closings, which they considered a vital part of their job, even after the clerk announced that the office would no longer perform this task.

To move forward, people must experience closure. Funerals in our culture serve an important function in this regard. Likewise, the following group activity will provide your staff an opportunity to identify what will end and what will continue in the wake of a major change. This activity should be undertaken sometime after you have communicated the reasons for the change. Don't rush into it. If the change was a surprise, allow a week or two for people to grasp the reality of the change. Then announce that there will be a meeting for staff to discuss the impact of the change.

Convene a planning committee consisting of a cross-section of staff to design the meeting format. Make sure the committee understands the purpose of the meeting and appreciates the impact it will have on colleagues. Establish some guidelines (time allotment, budget), but leave the committee to organize the meeting on its own. Resist the urge to join or direct the planning session.

As the meeting date approaches, check with the planners and offer your assistance. Often you can help in making sure that the right people are there by arranging for office phone coverage or by personally contacting individuals.

Participate fully in the meeting itself, according to the role planners set for you. Add something personal that will help make this ceremonial ending meaningful to staff.

One court unit held such a "letting go" meeting when a number of staff continued to use a redundant form that management had eliminated. These individuals were attached to the form, management learned, because they had been involved in developing it. At the meeting, management gave staff a clear reason to stop using the form and, to reinforce the point that the form was obsolete, held a New Orleans-style "jazz funeral" at which staff burned the form and scattered the ashes on the courthouse steps.

In thus making staff part of the form's retirement, management recognized that staff had been part of its birth. And by making time for an ending, management helped people move forward.

"**SOMETIMES** you get frustrated with how anxious and troubled staff seem, or with the pace of implementing change. As managers, we often feel we have done everything possible to make a transition go smoothly. For me, it was hard to understand why, with everything in place, the change was still languishing. If we examine ourselves, we will remember that we felt the same way at the beginning. We've had the time to work through the change, and now we need to find the patience to let others move through it at their own pace."

Tawana Marshall, Clerk of Court,
U.S. Bankruptcy Court,
Northern District of Texas

As the preceding example demonstrates, in the ending phase your role as manager is not to "fix things." Rather, it is to

- listen and try to understand;
- show people that you can tolerate their feelings of loss; and
- remain patient as each individual deals with the loss in his or her own way.

4. The Neutral Zone Phase

You can get people out of an old process in an afternoon. Getting an old process out of people takes much longer.

During the neutral zone phase, the office is in a state of limbo. New procedures and the necessary equipment, forms, or personnel may be in place, but old work patterns are still in use.

To manage this phase, you must begin with your own expectations. Understand that the transition may not progress as smoothly as you wish. As staff focus on the change, performance commonly slows and work quality suffers. Expect this, and let people know up front that you understand it might happen. At the same time, establish some temporary measures to help implement the change. Start by identifying and capitalizing on people's concerns and interests. Foster creativity. Arrange for appropriate training. If you work in a large office, consider establishing a transition monitoring team. And disarm potential critics by giving them a role in the transition.

Identify Concerns and Interests

The neutral zone phase is a good time to create new roles for staff, redefine reporting relationships—even temporarily reconfigure your organizational hierarchy. But first you need to identify supporters of the change and potential resisters.

To begin, think about the individuals or groups in your office. What are their primary concerns or interests? For example, in one probation office, officers who were asked to spend more time in the field complained that they returned to a stack of phone messages and that they were falling increasingly behind in their paperwork. One of the officers' interests thus was keeping up with their cases. In a district court that reorganized staff into teams and moved to an open office plan, individuals began fighting about the room temperature. The underlying concern in this case was perceived loss of control over the work environment. In one bank-

> "**IF YOU WANT** people to really have some ownership in a major change, they have to be participants and understand what you are proposing. Although ultimate decisions will be the administration's, their contributing to the change will actually accelerate their accepting it."
>
> **F. Manuel Quintana, Supervising U.S. Probation Officer, District of Colorado**

Staff Concerns and Interests

The major change: ______________________________ **Date:** ______________

Individual or group	Primary concern or interest regarding this change	Block	Watch	Help	Lead

(Mark **O** *or* **X***, see below.)*

O = where they are now **X** = where we want them to be

Terms

Block: opposes the change and will attempt to undermine or prevent it
Watch: neither opposes nor supports the change
Help: supports the change and will assist it
Lead: is an initiator of the change and will mobilize support among others

Notes

Make sure you understand and accurately represent people's concerns and interests. Think carefully before classifying individuals or groups "block" or "watch." Individuals or groups may move to the left or the right along the block-watch-help-lead spectrum. It is rare to move more than one "box" in either direction. You do not need everyone to be in the "lead" column for the change to be successful.

Adapted from a form used by Fred Nader, formerly a vice president of American Management Systems, Inc., and a former faculty member of Georgetown University's Organizational Development Certificate Program.

ruptcy court, staff complained when they moved into a new basement office. Their concern was a perceived loss of status.

Using the form on the facing page, record the concerns or interests of each individual or group in your office. Note the individual's or group's stance, as you see it, vis-à-vis the change: block, watch, help, or lead. (Refer to the definitions at the bottom of the form.) Also note what you want that stance to be. If you are unsure where an individual or group stands, now is a good time to learn. Ask open-ended questions to draw staff out.

It is unlikely that everyone will be in the same category. If you have indicated that you want people to move more than one space to the right of where they are now, your expectation is probably unrealistic. Remember that you do not need to move everyone to the lead column for the change to succeed. The point is to have an accurate assessment of people's concerns and interests so that you can respond effectively.

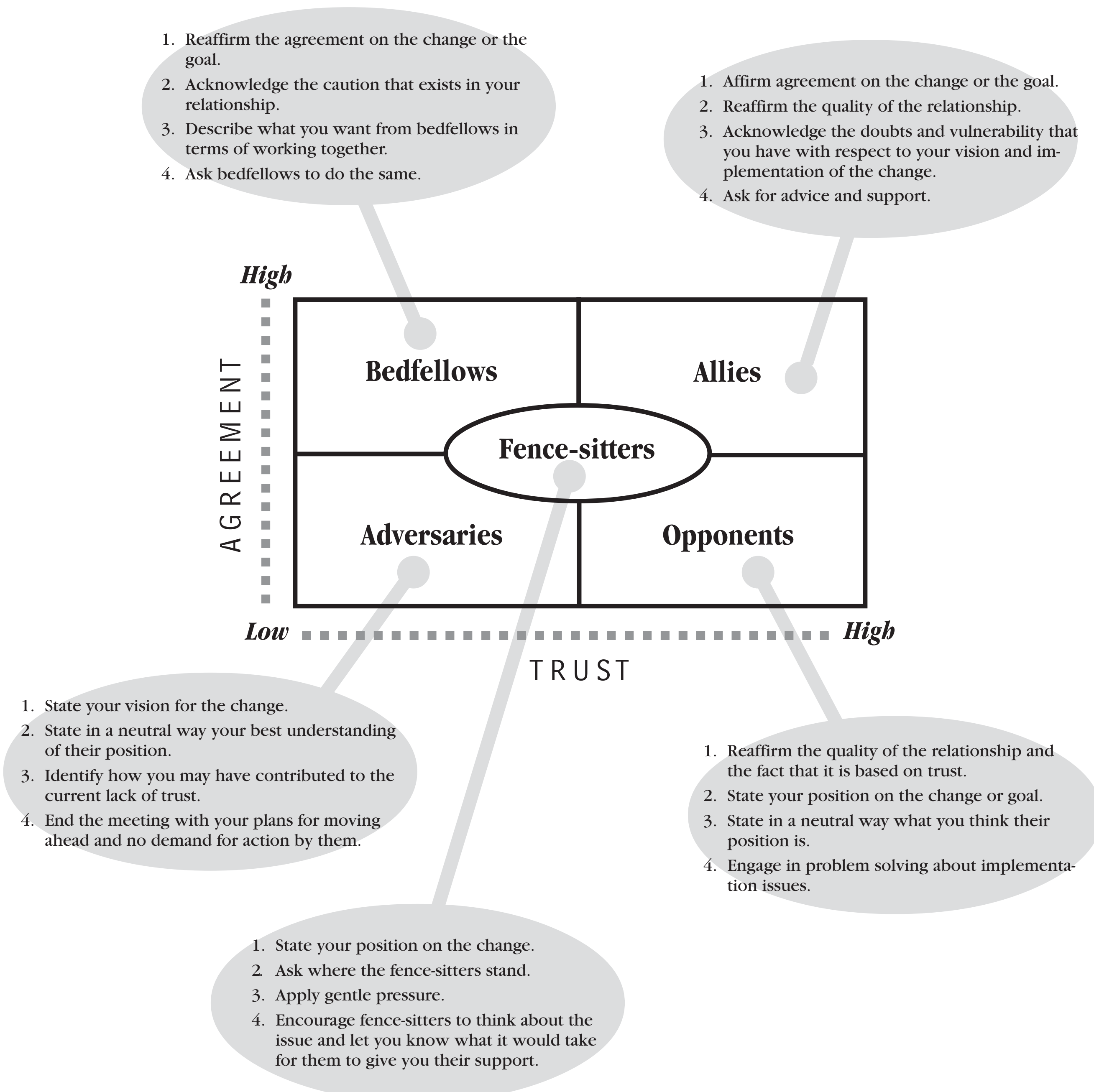
Capitalize on People's Interests

Your analysis of individuals' and groups' stance regarding the change sets the stage for the conversations that will help staff move forward.

As the matrix on page 18 illustrates, you can classify people as bedfellows, allies, opponents, adversaries, or fence-sitters based on the degree to which you agree with each other on the goal of the change and the degree to which you trust each other as you pursue that goal. Bedfellows can be described as people who are in agreement with us on how to proceed but in whom we have a low to moderate amount of trust. Allies are those who share our aims and in whom we have a high degree of trust. Opponents, on the other hand, are individuals with whom we have an honest and trusting relationship but who have conflicting visions, goals, or methods. Adversaries are people whom we do not trust and who do not share our position. Fence-sitters are those who will not take a stand for or against us.

> "**We piloted** scanning of incoming pleadings at the docketing section because we thought that might present a burden for staff if the function was relocated from the records section. We proved with a team of docket clerks that almost all scanning could be completed in an eight-hour day without compromising core duties. Now everyone is docketing and scanning most of their own work. Knowing that peers had tested these scanning procedures made it easier for everyone to accept that change.
>
> **Clarence Maddox, Court Administrator and Clerk of Court, U.S. District Court, Southern District of Florida**

Trust and Agreement Matrix



Adapted from Block, Peter. *The Empowered Manager: Positive Political Skills at Work*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1987.

Once you have decided where the individuals or groups you identified in the previous section lie on the matrix, you can determine the best way to approach them. For example, problem solving is most productive when both sides are willing to work together. On the other hand, when trust is low the best approach may be for you to merely clarify your adversary's position without making demands, in hopes that the goodwill thus demonstrated will foster a shift in position later.

Monitor the Transition

The larger your office, the less likely it is that line staff will voice their concerns to senior management. Some court managers encounter blank stares when they ask, "How are things going?" People may not be accustomed to answering such questions, or during a change they may not know how honest to be. After all, even if the change originated somewhere else, you most likely introduced it. From your staff's perspective, that makes you responsible for the change!

In seeking to gauge your staff's reaction to change, do not assign a monitoring function to an existing group or team. Such groups may filter information because they were part of the old structure or hierarchy. Instead, form what Bridges calls a "transition monitoring team" (TMT).

A TMT has no decision-making power. Rather it gives management extra eyes and ears for gathering information about people's concerns. According to Bridges, the TMT's purpose is three-fold:

1. to demonstrate that the organization wants to know how things are going for people;
2. to serve as a focus group for reviewing plans or communications before they are announced; and
3. to provide ready access to the organization's grapevine so misinformation can be corrected and rumors countered.

> "**WE CONSOLIDATED** criminal and civil docketing in my former district court, assigning these tasks to one person for each judge. The keys to surviving transition anxiety were patience and open communication. For instance, we held regular staff meetings where all issues were open for group discussion."
>
> **Deborah S. Hunt, Clerk of Court, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, District of Connecticut**

Put together a TMT that represents all parts and levels of your organization. You want people who are accepted by their peers—people who have earned the trust and respect of other staff members. Ensure that the group is as diverse as your staff. After selecting team members, introduce the TMT to your staff. Explain the team's purpose, and encourage staff to contact members to discuss the transition. Ask the team for regular reports summarizing staff concerns. Then, take action, and report your actions to the group. Some of these actions should be visible to your staff.

Maximize Training

Provide staff with the necessary resources to complete the transition. Work with your training specialist to set up appropriate training for everyone affected by the change. Pair someone who knows the new process or procedure with someone who understands training, and have them co-design and lead the training program.

Also, set up opportunities for court staff to train one another. For example, have people in a particular unit choose one person to become an expert on a new procedure. Give that person time to learn the procedure, or send the person to a training program. Once the appointed "expert" has mastered the procedure, he or she can introduce it to co-workers.

Be cautious about using motivational videos. As pointed out earlier, telling people to "think positively" can actually undermine morale. The explanation of why the change is important should come from you. A video, no matter how professional, cannot substitute for suggestions specific to your office and your staff.

Involving people in the change by temporarily altering staff structures and providing training slows the pace of change and lets it take root in people's psyches. Taking a few steps back before moving forward allows people to regroup and smoothes the transition to the new beginnings phase. It is equivalent to stopping the car and pulling out the map, maybe even going back to a travel guide, to ensure that you are on course.

Consider Criticism

The neutral zone is the time when criticism of the change will surface. The temptation to challenge change efforts is understandable. People usually criticize to get attention. Calling attention to shortcomings can make them seem more astute than those leading the change. Critics also enjoy a certain popularity—at least in the short term.

Be careful not to overreact to criticism. Get the critic's concerns out in the open. Have the person describe them, and try to understand his or her point of view without defending your actions. Stephen Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, describes this approach as seeking first to understand, then to be understood.

Let people know you are sympahetic to their concerns. If their objections seem irrational, do not correct them. Instead, probe. Say, "Tell me more about what led you to that conclusion," or ask, "Can you help me understand the basis for your concern?" Be patient. And as you help others rethink their ideas, question your own assumptions. You can often learn things if you do not take criticism personally.

At the same time continue to show confidence in your staff. Bridges likens staffs in transition to people learning to swim: They must trust their teacher to move forward. Your staff needs to hear you say, "I won't let you sink."

5. The New Beginnings Phase

New beginnings fail most often because people rushed through the two previous phases of transition. If you do not manage endings, old routines will live on. And if you hurry staff through the neutral zone, they will not acquire the skills or sufficiently explore the creative options that can support the change.

The new beginnings phase of transition starts only when people are psychologically ready. Look for indications that people are out of the neutral zone. One sign is an increase in suggestions about how to move forward. Another is a return to normal operating conditions.

Your primary challenge in the new beginnings phase is to solidify support for the change. There are five strategies that will help you do this: clarifying the purpose of the change, providing a picture of the ultimate goal, developing new standards, creating meaningful roles for staff, and celebrating accomplishments.

Clarify the Purpose of the Change

As Bridges says, "Successful new beginnings are based on a clear and appropriate purpose." Articulating a purpose that makes sense to your staff and that you fully endorse will inspire people to put energy into a change.

Regardless of the source of the change—Judicial Conference policy or Administrative Office directive—you must "sell" the purpose as your own. Blaming change on an external force almost invariably demoralizes staff. If people hear you say that you are doing something "only because you have to," they will assume that there is no good reason for it. Being reminded that the policy comes from "out there" also decreases morale; as Marshall Sashkin notes in *Structured Activities for Management Training in Communication*, most people prefer directives that come from someone they can speak to rather than from someone beyond their sphere of influence.

In explaining the purpose of a change, court leaders are sometimes tempted to borrow popular ideas from other courts, the private sector, or even Federal Judicial Center programs. As

> "**WHEN STAFF LEARN** to anticipate change, efficiency and adaptability increase. There is nothing more harmful to the creativity and productivity of a work environment than for management to advocate the status quo."
>
> **Felicia Cannon, Clerk of Court, U.S. District Court, District of Maryland**

Bridges points out, however, if a purpose is "simply copied from another organization, or . . . belies the real situation in which the organization finds itself, it won't do its job."

> The purpose that you need to launch a new beginning must come from within the organization—from its will, abilities, resources, and character. To be more specific, it must come with how these inherent qualities interact with the situation in which the organization finds itself. It is that interaction that spells opportunity in a changing world.

"**To encourage staff** to undertake their own personal development, I tried to show them how it would benefit our growing court to have individuals who were growing along with it. By emphasizing positive aspects of the change, I generated support from staff, who in the long run will be the key to whether change really takes hold."

Robert Di Trolio, Clerk of Court, U.S. District Court, Western District of Tennessee

Provide a Picture

In addition to a purpose, which can be fairly abstract, people need a clear picture of what the resulting operation will look like. People want to know how a new policy or procedure will affect their work space and how to interact with others. The more compelling a picture you can create for your staff, the more motivated they will be to implement that new policy or procedure.

Analyze aspects of a successful outcome that may excite and engage staff. Then consider how to portray those aspects to your staff—through visual aids or staff field trips, for instance.

Answering the following questions will help you create a picture of the outcome for your staff.

Factors Relevant to Staff

- When the change is successfully implemented, how will people get their work done and interact with each other?
- How will the office be laid out?
- How will a day be organized?
- What will people experience that will be different from the old way of operating?

Visual Aids

- What pictures or diagrams could I use to portray the new way of operating?
- What maps could I use to show the new physical layout?
- What videos could I show to convey how a day will be organized?
- What other media could I use to illustrate the new experiences staff can expect?

Firsthand Observation

- What other courts or court units have successfully implemented this change?
- What local government agencies have successfully implemented this change?
- What local companies have successfully implemented this change?

Establish New Ways of Working

To implement the change fully will require some degree of interdependence among staff. Bring together individuals and groups that will interact in new ways and ask them to discuss what they need from each other and to look for new ways to support each other. Also, suggest that they find at least one thing that they no longer need to do for each other.

While establishing new ways of working together, establish measures to gauge progress. Beware of "report card" methods. Rather, invite management and staff to work together to devise ways to measure success.

You will also want to distribute a plan of events and activities intended to help staff deal with the effects of the change. This plan should specify when staff will receive information and training and when they will have an opportunity to offer input.

Create Meaningful Roles for Staff

During the neutral zone phase, people often demonstrate a renewed interest in the organization and an eagerness to expand their duties. Harness that energy by creating new roles for staff.

Find out what aspects of the change interest people. Provide opportunities for them to exercise leadership. If you have a staff member who has taken the lead on budget decentralization and truly understands the budget cycle, arrange for him or her to brief your unit on the budget process. Perhaps a new procedure will require reconfiguring workstations. Allow people who have previously suggested changing the office layout to spearhead this effort.

Even people who have expressed little enthusiasm for the change can be given meaningful roles to play. See if you can find places for them on a task force or

"**IN OUR CASE** what we really sought to accomplish was to improve our record in case closings. We started by highlighting the problem—not only our standing in statistics, which probably mattered most in Washington, but the fact that we had a limited amount of space. I emphasized that having cases sitting around would impact all of us and our work."

Joseph Simmons, Clerk of Court,
U.S. Bankruptcy Court,
Eastern District of Pennsylvania

on the transition monitoring team. Ask them to conduct surveys. And when the transition is completed, make sure they have a visible part to play in making new procedures or policies work.

Celebrate Accomplishments

If the endings phase was the time to hold a funeral, the new beginnings phase is the time to throw a birthday party. Do not wait until the change is complete, however, to begin recognizing what you and your staff have accomplished. Recognize baby steps. Track progress and let people know when targets are met.

Look for opportunities to celebrate in the course of your day-to-day work. For one group, that may mean bringing in doughnuts in the morning; for another, going out together for lunch. You can also celebrate successes with comments at staff meetings or in your office newsletter. What your staff will appreciate most depends on the individuals themselves.

In one bankruptcy court that broadened case managers' individual responsibilities, individuals who had been poor performers suddenly became enthusiastic about their work. Supervisors helped solidify this newfound energy by recognizing those case managers' accomplishments. For the most part, recognition took the form of personal praise, but a few individuals also received promotions.

Finally, be sure to celebrate your own accomplishments. Managing a transition isn't easy. It requires that you deal with your own internal processes at the same time that you attend to the morale and feelings of co-workers. By taking the time to attend to office dynamics during a change, you reduce stress, head off problems, and accelerate acceptance of the change. Working with your staff during a major change, helping them to move forward, is exciting. Allow yourself to enjoy the excitement. And congratulate yourself for a job well done.

6. Additional Advice

Here is some general advice to keep in mind as you move through the transition phases. You can employ the following techniques at any point during a transition.

Use a variety of communication strategies during the transition

For example, to introduce the new court personnel system, many districts not only issued memoranda but published articles in their newsletters and showed videos to their staffs.

Keep avenues of communication open

You need to maximize staff input during transitions. Often, however, people avoid bringing up concerns in meetings because they don't want to appear critical or don't know how to articulate their thoughts. To overcome reticence, you may need to introduce new discussion techniques. For example, announce that you're going to leave the room for a few minutes, and ask people to list concerns on a flip chart while you're gone. You can also ask the group to appoint a spokesperson to describe concerns on their behalf. Or you can ask staff to write down their concerns on blank paper without signing their names, then have someone collect the papers for you.

Be "present" for your staff

The manager's physical and emotional presence is particularly important to staff during a transition. Schedule meetings carefully to minimize the chance that you will be called away by a judge when staff are voicing concerns. Making staff concerns an obvious priority speaks more forcefully than anything you can say.

Use humor to lighten a situation, not to make light of a situation

Humor used effectively can make any transition easier. But humor should not be directed at the event or the participants. One danger is that what you say in jest will not come across to some individuals the same way it does to others. Some people may conclude, for instance, that you are not taking their concerns seriously. For a good rule of thumb regarding humor, consider this: If a joke or anecdote would not be funny to you coming from your superiors, don't use it with your own staff.

Take intelligent risks

Try something that has never been tried in your office but that was successful elsewhere. For example:

- Hold breakfast briefings or brown bag lunches for staff to update them on operations.
- Have lunch with your chief judge, describe a plan you have concerning the

transition, and ask the judge to do one thing that would contribute significantly to the success of the plan.

- Bolster an individual's confidence by giving him or her authority to run some aspect of the change. Choose someone who has demonstrated leadership ability and has a good track record in introducing changes.

Manage your own fears privately

In her book *The New Peoplemaking,* Virginia Satir, a pioneer in the field of family therapy, suggests that people tend to "catastrophize," that is, to imagine that events will escalate until the people are in dire circumstances. Satir recommends taking the chain of events to the extreme conclusion and thereby breaking the power of catastrophizing.

For example, if you were worried about how to lay off employees, you might say to yourself, "You know, sometimes I imagine that I will never figure out who to let go, and Washington will send in someone to do the job for me, and then I'll get replaced with some private-sector manager, and I'll lose my job, and we won't be able to pay our mortgage, and then my husband/wife will leave me, and I'll wind up on the streets and die of pneumonia."

At this point, the fear should seem irrational, and you should feel capable of handling whatever challenge faces you.

Appendix: Resources for Managers

Audiotapes, Books, Computer-based Training, Journal Articles, Periodicals, and Videotapes

Court personnel should use the Loan Request Form on the inside back cover to request the items listed below that note an FJC Media Catalog number. All requests must indicate the individual borrower's name as well as the name of the court. Requests lacking complete information will be returned unfilled. Submit requests as far in advance as planning will permit, in any event no less than two weeks in advance of scheduled use. Requests are filled in the order received. Borrowers will be promptly notified in writing if specific items are not available and will automatically be placed on a waiting list. For a complete list of audiovisual resources available from the Center, consult its *Catalog of Audiovisual Media Productions*.

Block, Peter. *The Empowered Manager: Positive Political Skills at Work*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1991. 214 pages.

The author, regarded as one of the leading organizational consultants in the United States, challenges managers to exercise political skills in order to achieve organizational goals. The advice offered can be of particular benefit when you are feeling stymied in your efforts to manage a transition or the change itself.

Bridges, William, and Susan Mitchell. "Leading Transition: A New Model for Change." *Leader to Leader* 16 (Spring 2000): 30–36.

Bridges presented the philosophy on which this article is based in his 1991 book *Managing Transitions.* The article highlights specific techniques applicable to change in court units. It is available on the Drucker Foundation Web site at http://drucker.org/leaderbooks/L2L/spring2000/bridges.html.

Buchanan, James. *Transitioning to Case Management/Electronic Case Files: Managing the People Side of Change*. Washington, D.C.: Federal Judicial Center, 2002. 130 pages.

Based on extensive interviews of court managers and staff who have made the transition to CM/ECF, this training guide describes eight conditions that must be met for a successful transition. Pitfalls and best practices are also discussed. A downloadable copy is available on the Center's DCN site at http://156.132.47.230:8081/newweb/jnetweb.nsf/pages/438. Printed copies can be obtained by contacting Phyllis Drum at 202-502-4134 or pdrum@fjc.gov. *Produced in collaboration with the Administrative Office.*

***Days of Change* (videotape). 1996, six minutes. FJC Media Catalog No. 3237-V/96.**

This video is an effective discussion starter. The narration and images contrast change in the environment—natural change—with change in the workplace. The message is that change is normal. The film also presents the idea that people do better to anticipate change than to react to change when it occurs.

***Discipline of Teams: Teams and Organizational Change* (videotape). 1994, 40 minutes. FJC Media Catalog No. 2964-V/94.**

In this video, Jon R. Katzenback and Douglas K. Smith, authors of *The Wisdom of Teams*, examine how teams work during periods of organizational change and suggest ways in which teams can contribute to an overall change in the office. They explore such questions as what distinguishes teams that succeed from teams that fail and why some teams outperform others. A separate leader's guide suggests various discussion activities.

Duck, Jeanie D. "Managing Change: The Art of Balancing." *Harvard Business Review* (November–December 1993): 109–18.

Managers need a new way to think about managing change in today's "knowledge organization," the author argues. Instead of breaking change into small pieces and then managing those pieces, managers should think in terms of overseeing a dynamic. Managing change requires "balancing"—managing the conversation between the people leading the change effort and those who are expected to implement it, creating an organizational context in which change can occur and managing emotional connections, which have traditionally been banned from the workplace but which are essential for a successful transformation. The author also advocates forming a transition management team composed of internal leaders to oversee the change effort and ensure that management and staff work together.

Filipczak, Bob. "Weathering Change." *Training Magazine* (September 1994): 23–29.

The author cautions against change for change's sake and argues that managers should have clear business reasons for any major changes they seek to implement. Further, providing information is critical to implementation, the author says, and the leader must translate the change into terms that are meaningful to line staff. This advice is especially relevant during the endings phase of a transition.

Kouzes, James M. *Achieving Credibility* (audiotape). 1995, 12 cassettes. FJC Media Catalog No. 3242-A/95.

Kouzes pinpoints credibility as the key attribute of leaders who successfully manage transitions. He explains why this attribute is so important to an organization's ability to survive major and continuing change and suggests how managers can build credi-

bility with their staffs and colleagues. Some clerks of court have recommended this as essential background for managing transitions.

Lucianovic, William M. *Planning Handbook for Federal Courts.* Washington, D.C.: Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, Long Range Planning Office, 1994. 95 pages.

Managers in any court can use this guide to develop and implement a strategic plan. Topics covered include surveying current trends in your district and beyond, assessing operations to determine what works and what needs improvement, and developing a clear picture of what your organization should look like in three to five years.

Luke, Bob Jr. *Planning Workbook for Probation and Pretrial Services Managers.* Washington, D.C.: Federal Judicial Center, 1997. 81 pages.

Adapted from the AO's *Planning Handbook for the Federal Courts* described above, this handbook includes tips on "planning to plan" and instructions on developing mission and vision statements, assessing stakeholders' expectations, and developing goals, strategies, and objectives. For more information, contact Bob Luke at 202-502-4104 or bluke@fjc.gov.

Maurer, Rick. *Beyond the Wall of Resistance: Unconventional Strategies That Build Support for Change.* Austin, Tex.: Bard Press, 1996. 208 pages.

The author, an organizational psychologist, suggests strategies that managers can use with employees during periods of change in an organization. He describes a framework for understanding why managers are often ahead of their staffs in coping with the stresses associated with change.

***Paradigm Pioneers* (videotape). 1993, 33 minutes. FJC Media Catalog No. 2424-V/93.**

Joel Barker, an expert on paradigm shifts, describes the signs of major change and suggests how individuals and organizations can capitalize on change as they shift their ways of thinking about it. The video helps employees identify paradigms that can shape and paralyze an organization.

***Realizing Change* (CD-ROM). 1997. FJC Media Catalog No. 3420-CD/97.**

This eight-step interactive program for learning successful organizational change was developed for the Harvard Business School Interactive Manager.

***Resilience: A Change for the Better* (videotape). 1993, 17 minutes. FJC Media Catalog No. 3737-V/93.**

This video challenges and inspires employees at all levels of an organization to prepare for and embrace change. It argues not only for surviving change but for grasping its opportunities.

Scott, Cynthia D., and Dennis T. Jaffe. *Managing Change at Work: Leading People Through Organizational Transitions*. Menlo Park, Cal.: Crisp Publications, 1995. 82 pages.

Designed for leaders of change efforts, this workbook offers step-by-step instructions and activities to help individuals lead organizational changes. The authors discuss using organizational events to manage transition, dealing with individual and group resistance, negotiating new work arrangements, and spotting common errors.

Strebel, Paul. "Why Do Employees Resist Change?" *Harvard Business Review* (May–June 1996): 86–92.

Major change, according to the author, revises the implicit or explicit personal contract that organizations have with their employees. That is, people join an organization with certain expectations and rapidly develop additional expectations concerning working style and conditions. Because major change affects working style and conditions, managers are wise to revisit initial expectations with employees. Through two case studies, the author examines how managers can make the new personal contract explicit and thereby support the transition.

Wheatley, Margaret J. *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World* (revised). San Francisco: Berret-Koeler, 2001. 182 pages.

This updated edition of Wheatley's classic describes the lessons that the "new science"—discoveries in quantum physics, chaos theory, and biology—offers for organizational design and management. "Nature offers abundant displays of order," Wheatley argues, "and fluctuation and change are essential to the process by which order is created."

***Why Change?* (videotape). 2000, six minutes. FJC Media Catalog No. 4036-V/00.**

Quoting leaders in recent history who have opposed change, this video suggests that in order to survive we must all remain open to change. Recommended as a discussion starter for staff meetings.

People Who Can Help You

You do not have to manage a transition on your own. To supplement advice gleaned from books and periodicals, you can consult with individuals both inside and outside your court unit.

Inside Your Own Court

Think carefully about staff members' experience. There may be people who earlier in their careers handled the type of transition you are currently going through. Don't overlook individuals who may have relevant experience obtained through participation in community organizations. For example, someone who dealt with change in a volunteer organization's leadership may have insights applicable to changes in court leadership.

Other Court Units

Network with other courts that have gone through similar transitions. Invite one or more senior court executives with experience in the type of major change you anticipate to visit you and your management team before you start the transition. Ask your guest to describe the transition in his or her district, and encourage staff to ask questions. Write a summary of the meeting and provide copies to all staff.

Alternately, ask someone from another court—someone whose judgment and experience you respect—to work as your "shadow consultant." This behind-the-scenes coach can answer your questions, point out potential problems, and help you think through your approach before you make a public announcement about the change. And be sure to use on-line information exchanges to collect the wisdom of leaders in other courts. For example, the Court Operations Exchange (http://156.132.47. 230:8081/coe/home.nsf) is an excellent place to search for resources and information about specific changes, such as the move to CM/ECF or new offender-monitoring approaches relevant to cyber crime. For questions about training related to your transition, go to the Court Training Exchange at http://156.132.47.230:8081/training/ctdiscuss.nsf.

Outside the Judiciary

You should be cautious about relying on outsiders; however, if you are unable to locate assistance inside your court or in other court units, you may need to investigate resources outside the federal judiciary. Many managers in other government agencies and in private-sector organizations will have experience coping with the types of changes that you are dealing with. Contact the Chamber of Commerce, Better Business Bureau, a local military installation, or a business reputed for its expertise in implementing major changes (for example, Boeing, Disney, Hallmark, Motorola, or Southwest Airlines). Here are two other places to look for people to assist you:

- Local universities with graduate programs in industrial and organizational psychology and social work or business school programs in organizational behavior. Speak to a professor who has experience consulting to business or government organizations on managing transitions or major organizational change.
- The local chapter of the Organization Development Network (ODN). Phone ODN at 973-763-7337 (fax 973-763-7488) to request contact information for the chapter nearest you. Ask the chapter representative to recommend individuals with experience consulting to leaders during organizational change. Explain that you are seeking coaching on managing transition. ODN also has a Web site listing OD practitioners. ODN's internet address is http://www.odnet.org/index.html.

Ask potential consultants the following questions:

- *What is your academic background?* Experts on managing transitions typically have backgrounds in social, educational, or organizational psychology; organizational development or behavior; or social work.
- *Can you describe your experiences coaching executives leading changes similar to the one our court unit faces?* As when you interview prospective employees, you will want to focus more on what an individual has done in the past than on what he or she proposes to do in the future. Ask for a reference. (Note: Some executives prefer that shadow consulting remain confidential, so you may not be able to obtain references.)
- *What advice did you provide? What was the result?* Transition experts should recommend approaches specific to a particular situation, not standard, off-the-shelf solutions, such as conducting a Myers-Briggs Type Indicator workshop or holding a management retreat. Be skeptical of anyone who counseled use of one technique repeatedly in different situations.
- *Have you published any articles or books on this topic or on related topics?* Authors do not necessarily make good coaches, but someone's writing can provide an idea of his or her knowledge and point of view.

Finally, ask yourself, *How comfortable do I feel with this individual?* It doesn't matter how knowledgeable someone is or how expert in managing a process: If you do not sense that you can work with the individual, choose someone else.

Training Programs Available Through the Federal Judicial Center

The following Federal Judicial Center training programs address organizational change. Use them to increase your and your staff's understanding of the impact change can have on organizations and to help staff deal with change. (Note: A list of current programs is distributed annually to court unit executives and training specialists.)

Advanced Strategic Planning

Part 3 of the Center's strategic planning series for teams of judges and senior court managers, this program covers managing organizational change and sharing best practices between courts. If your court unit has completed *Executive Team Development* and *Strategic Planning*, you may want to explore *Advanced Strategic Planning.* Contact Judy Roberts at 202-502-4122 or jroberts@fjc.gov to request this program.

Dealing with Changes

This unit from the commercially produced *Working* program teaches staff a four-step approach to dealing with change. The *Working* program itself can improve work quality and working relationships. Consider scheduling *Working* before you implement a major change. Or, if your staff has been through *Working*, encourage them to refer back to their materials and discuss with them how they can apply the skills they learned to the transition. Contact Joy Richardson at 202-502-4148 or jrichard@fjc.gov to request this program.

Managing Change

Managing Change is a module of the commercially produced *FrontLine Leadership* program. In general, *FrontLine Leadership* can help supervisors and managers better manage transitions by enhancing their interpersonal skills. Managing Change in particular builds on some of the skills identified in this guide. If your district has already completed *FrontLine Leadership*, you may wish to conduct Managing Change as a refresher course. Contact Joy Richardson at 202-502-4148 or jrichard@fjc.gov to request this program.

Strategic Planning for Information Technology

This one-and-a-half-day program shows court planners how to develop long-range plans for information technology. Participants develop a mission statement for the court's IT function, assess the current situation and forecast IT developments, identify desired goals, and create a detailed action plan. For more information, contact Jim Buchanan at 202-502-4104 or jbuchana@fjc.gov.

Instruments Available Through Commercial Training Organizations

Commercial training organizations offer surveys, training activities, self-directed learning activities, and simulations that you may find helpful in leading your staff through a transition. The following organizations provide free catalogs that describe the materials they offer.

Human Synergistics International
39819 Plymouth Road, C-8020
Plymouth, MI 48170-8020
800-622-7584; fax 734-459-5557

Among other products, Human Synergistics offers a series of survival simulations designed to build decision-making skills. Simulations can be particularly useful in encouraging problem solving during the neutral zone phase. Human Synergistics' activities help groups approach tasks rationally and work together to resolve problems. Current titles include: "Cascades Survival Situation," "Desert I Survival Situation," "Sea Survival Situation," and "Subarctic Survival Situation." These activities require between one hour and two and a half hours to complete.

HRDQ
2002 Renaissance Boulevard #100
King of Prussia, PA 19406-2756
800-633-4533; fax 800-633-3683; e-mail custserv@hrdq.com

HRDQ, formerly Organization Design and Development, offers a wide variety of surveys with which individuals can assess themselves and which can open up discussion among staff. Of particular interest is "Leading Change at Every Level," a diagnostic tool for staff at all levels. Individuals complete and then discuss a self-assessment designed to identify and measure behaviors that contribute to organizational change.

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