

DIFFERENT STROKES

BEHAVIOR STYLES AFFECT HOW PEOPLE RESPOND TO CHANGE

WHY DO EMPLOYEES RESPOND TO CHANGE IN DIFFERENT WAYS? Why do some of them welcome the opportunity to try something new, while others are hesitant?

As a leader, it's important to be flexible and to consider each employee's feelings about change. "In highly successful change efforts, people find ways to help others see the problems or solutions in ways that influence emotions, not just thought," said John Kotter, a Harvard Business School professor and author of several books and articles about change. People have different behavior styles—and this means they respond differently to change.

Directive/Controller. Leaders with "directive" or "controller" styles often have high expectations of themselves and others. They typically make quick decisions, and are self-reliant, usually comfortable taking risks, and results-oriented. They are usually comfortable with change, as long as it yields the best results. Directive leaders sometimes aren't the best change-initiators. Plus, they run the risk of being seen as pushing change too forcefully, or not understanding that others are uncomfortable with the speed of change.

Analytic/Logical. Leaders with "analytic" or "logical" styles like to examine data, and refer to set guidelines. They're accurate, conscientious, precise, and deliberate in their approach. Often, they react to change well if given time to evaluate the impact that the change will bring. But they don't respond well to immediate change or change that doesn't seem to serve a purpose. Analytic leaders approach change in a more methodical way than other types. People who are more comfortable with immediate results might find this approach frustrating.

Creative/Persuader. "Creative" or "persuader" leaders are typically motivating, energizing, outgoing people who inspire those around them. People with this style usually want to understand the big picture, and once they grasp the benefits of the change, they're often enthusiastic. Creative leaders might describe a change in enthusiastic language, painting a colorful picture of what will result by embracing the change. If you have a different style and are initiating change, creative leaders are valuable supporters to have on your side.

Empathetic/Stabilizer. "Empathetic" or "stabilizer" leaders focus on making sure the right people are involved. Leaders with this style react to change by talking with others and using those conversations to gain perspective. Empathetic leaders bring about change by building consensus and helping others understand how the change affects them and the organization.

MAXIMIZE STRENGTHS

What does all this mean for you as a leader? Consider the style or combination of styles that seem most natural for you when dealing with change. Realizing that the people you work with handle change in different ways can help you vary the tack you use. It's important to remember that there's no "correct" style, and that some people might operate using a combination of styles. When there's an atmosphere of respect in your office for the variety of behavior styles, you can make the most of each person's strengths.



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