

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Managing a successful restructuring

Most employees are able to remain flexible when new products, services or processes are introduced but struggle when a major organizational change, such as a restructuring or merger, is announced. Fear of the unknown makes everyone anxious but some people react with negative behaviors such as angry outbursts, apathy, negativity, lack of cooperation, resistance and even sabotage. Unless managed effectively, these behaviors can spread, damaging productivity and morale and hindering the transitional process.

Preparing for change

Dealing with the many emotions and behaviors that may arise as a result of a significant organizational change will be easier if you know how each person on your team is likely to react. However, the most important reactions to deal with are your own. You may not personally like or approve of the changes but employees need to see you being optimistic and focusing on the opportunities the change will bring. Any negativity on your part will increase employee resistance and further hurt morale and productivity.

Managing change

Some major organizational changes, like restructurings, may have resulted in layoffs or job changes, so asking employees to embrace the process may not be realistic. However, you can help their teams cope and remain productive through the process with support and reassurance, openness and honesty, clarity and discussion.

To do this, try the following:

- **Talk and listen to as many of your staff as you can**. Don’t disregard their feelings. Give them the chance to vent their frustrations, anxieties, grief, and anger.
- **Give people time to adjust**. Be prepared for productivity to dip and stress to increase during the transition process.
- **Communicate.** Poor or delayed communication causes the rumor mill to go into overdrive and it becomes harder for managers to undo the misconceptions and regain control of the process. Don’t worry about knowing all the details, your staff will initially want to know the rationale behind the changes and how it will affect them.
- **Focus your people on short-term objectives, deadlines and assignments**. Long-term strategies can come later.
- **Make sure your team members are informed of the resources available to them**, including those through their Employee and Family Assistance Program.

Coping with change

Restructurings are extremely stressful for everyone, but especially for managers who are often caught between the needs of senior management and those of their team. It is therefore important for team leaders to find healthy ways to remain resilient.

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Try the following:

- **Have a support system.** Getting through tough times, professionally and personally, is easier when you have people around you with whom you can share feelings, discuss problems and receive advice.
- **Find healthy ways to deal with stress**. Avoid over use of alcohol, food, nicotine or other substances. Instead, go to the gym, take a walk, meditate, have a massage or simply take some time to read a book or listen to music.
- **Take care of yourself.** A healthy diet, regular exercise, plenty of sleep and time for relaxation and fun helps keep both your mind and body ready to deal with stressful situations and events.
- **Continue doing what you do best**. Organizational changes are disruptive, distracting and draining. Try to remain focused on your job and the goals of your team.
- **Seek professional help if you are having difficulty coping with change**. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can provide you with resources and support.

Lastly, stay positive. Focus on the advantages of the change and transition could provide for both your and members of your team.