Toolkit Page 118   Support for Change Questionnaire

Use the Support for Change questionnaire to begin a dialogue about the degree of support you enjoy for the change. It covers eight major issues: Values and vision, History of change, Cooperation and trust, Culture, Resilience, Rewards, Respect and face, Status quo.

The reliability of the scores depends on who takes part in the discussion. If you limit the survey to the senior management team, you will probably get a skewed view of reality. Better to get data from a cross-section of the organization in order to get a more complete picture.

Responses to the questionnaire will act as a springboard for conversation about change and resistance. The actual scores will be less interesting than the reasons people scored it the way they did. Conversations should focus on the stories that accompany these scores. For example, if the CEO rates everything a seven (high), middle-manager scores range from three to five, and non-management staff rate everything low, you have the makings of a very intriguing conversation.

The purpose of the conversation is to bring opinions and feelings into the open. Obviously, your skill at facilitating dialogue (finding meaning through words) is critical.

A Format for Conversation

Here is a format for working with the Support for Change questionnaire.

1. Give the questionnaire to a cross-section of the organization. (This need not be a large group as long as the scores reflect the range of opinions to whatever change is being considered.) Make certain that you do not overlook individuals or groups who may be critical to the success of the change. (It is easy to dismiss or conveniently forget to include people who continually object to your ideas. Their voices are crucial.)

2. Go over the scores before to showing them to others. This will allow you to react in the privacy of your office before facing others.

3. Convene a meeting of all interested parties. Post scores on large sheets of flip chart paper, slides, or overheads. Ensure anonymity for individuals, but break out the scores by stakeholder groups. For example, use one color to indicate scores made by senior management, another color for middle managers, and so forth.

4. Explore the results. Ask questions based on your review of the "Interpretation" section. However, no matter what the scores are, there are a few questions you should consider asking:

What interests you about the scores?

Where do you see patterns?

Where are the greatest points of agreement?

Where are the points of greatest disagreement?

Encourage people to explain why they scored the way they did. It is important to allow people to remain silent. However, when people do speak, create a non-threatening atmosphere so that they can describe the reasons for their scores. This will be especially important if most scored at one end of the scale and only one or two people scored on the other end. Some may try to convert their colleagues; don't allow this to happen.

5. Act. Once you have explored the reasons behind the scores, ask the following questions:

What are the implications of these scores for this change?

If we proceed with the change, what must we do to begin to build support for it?

How can you get people actively involved in the change process?

How can all individuals and groups be treated with dignity and respect during the planning and implementation of the change?

INTERPRETATION

Here are a few things to consider when interpreting the results of the questionnaire.

Numbers Need Explanation

Even though 1, 2, and 3 should be considered low scores, 4 and 5 mid-range, 6 and 7 high, these are just numbers. One person's 5 is another's 3. The value lies in understanding the meanings people give to their scores.

HIGH SCORES = HIGH SUPPORT FOR CHANGE

LOW SCORES = LOW SUPPORT AND HIGH RESISTANCE

MID-RANGE SCORES = PROBABLE RESISTANCE

Generally low to mid-range scores should be cause for concern. Lower scores indicate fertile soil for the growth of resistance.

Look for Patterns

Are scores clustered together on particular items? If so, this probably indicates that most people agree about support for change on that scale.

Are the scores split? Perhaps non-management staff consistently rate things low while supervisors rate things high.

A pattern of high scores may indicate that the resistance will be Level 1?resistance limited to the change itself. The culture and history are probably such that people probably feel free to speak their minds. Therefore, conversations about the change should be easier to facilitate.

A pattern of low scores indicates deep (probably Level 3) concerns. You must take these concerns seriously. Take a long-range view of change; get people involved, and begin building bridges.

Any low or mid-range scores indicate resistance waiting to happen.

Mid-range scores may indicate that there are concerns deeper than the change itself (Level 2). It will be important to get these issues out on the table for discussion.

There are no right or wrong answers. Scores merely reflect people's perceptions.

Examine each item on the questionnaire. Use the following explanations to form questions to ask during the meeting.

1. Values and vision. Low scores could indicate Level 3 concerns. Values may be in conflict; individuals and groups may not see any common ground. This is serious. It almost guarantees that any major change will be resisted unless people learn how to begin building a shared set of values. On the other hand, low scores may indicate a communication problem. In some organizations, values and visions remain secret. People don-t know where the organization is going. This is a communication problem and may not indicate deeper potential resistance.

2. History of change. Low scores indicate a strong likelihood that this change will be resisted with great force. Those who want the change will need to demonstrate repeatedly that they are serious this time. People are likely to be very skeptical, so persistence will be critically important.

3. Cooperation and trust. Low scores probably indicate Level 3 concerns. This should be taken seriously. It is difficult, if not impossible, to build support for any major change without some degree of trust. The opposite of trust is fear, therefore a low scores is not just the absence of trust but the presence of fear.

4. Culture. Mid-range to low scores indicate that it may be difficult for people to carry out the changes even if they support you. They are saying that the systems and procedures hinder change. The change agents must be willing to examine these deeper systemic issues.

5. Resilience. Low to mid-range scores probably indicate that people are burned out. Even though they may see the need for this change, they may have little strength to give to it. Two important questions: Is this change really necessary at this time? If so, how can you support people so that the change causes minimal disruption?

6. Rewards. Obviously, low scores indicate strong potential resistance. Who in their right mind would support something that they knew would harm them? If their perceptions are accurate, then the change agents have a difficult challenge: How can they move forward with the change and find ways to make it rewarding for others? If the low scores indicate a misperception, then the change agents must let people know why they are misinformed. It is likely that this message will have to be communicated repeatedly (especially if trust is low as well).

7. Respect and face. Low scores probably indicate potential Level 2 concerns. The change agents must find ways to make this a situation in which all can win.

8. Status quo. Low scores indicate that people view this change as very disruptive and stressful. The more people get involved in the change process, the less resistance they are likely to experience. Most often people resist change when they feel a loss of control.

SUPPORT FOR CHANGE QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed to help people understand the level of support or opposition to change within the organization.

1. Values and Vision (Do people throughout the organization share values or vision?)

!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!
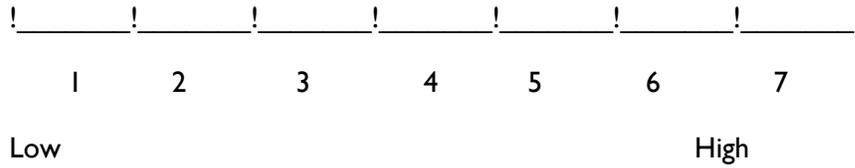
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Low   High

2. History of Change (Does the organization have a good track record handling change?)
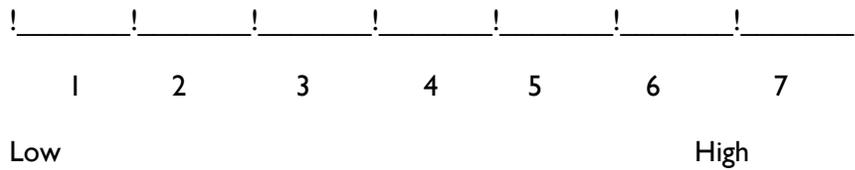
!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Low   High

3. Cooperation and Trust (Do they seem high throughout the organization?)

!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Low   High

4. Culture (Is it one that supports risk taking and change?)

!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Low   High

5. Resilience (Can people handle more?)

!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Low   High

6. Rewards (Will this change be seen as beneficial?)

!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Low   High
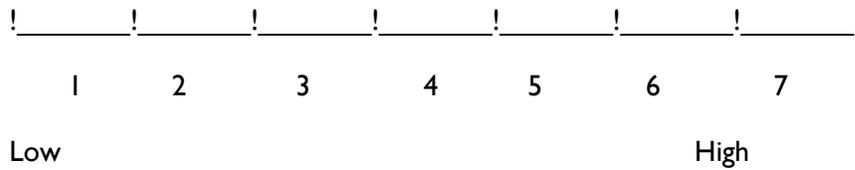
7. Respect and Face (Will people be able to maintain dignity and self-respect?)

!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Low   High
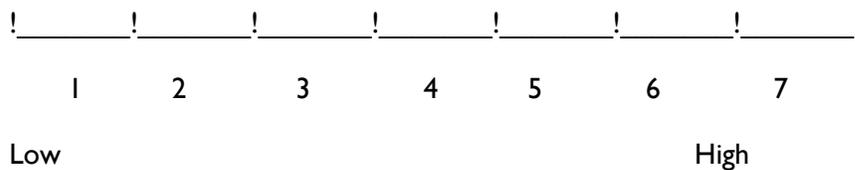
8. Status Quo (Will this change be seen as mild?)

!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!
     1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Low   High