

The Four A's of Coping with Workplace Change

Change evokes fear in most people because of the uncertainty it presents. People wonder: Will I be able to get along with my new boss or team member? Will I be adequate for this new position or be able to learn a new system?



Workplace

When you have a routine, you know what to expect, and even if it's difficult or boring, it's consistent and reliable. You have learned how to do your work and deal with the people who work with you. But when something changes, suddenly your routine is broken and you no longer know what to expect.

Even if the change is for the better, a transformation can be bumpy. For example, when one company installed a new phone system, a frustrated employee exclaimed, "I know it will be so much better once I get used to it, but right now the phones are driving me crazy."

With any kind of change, there is an adjustment period. During this time, you may feel frustrated, angry and powerless. As you work through it, you will begin to feel the consistency that builds trust and confidence.

The best time to prepare for any change is when things are running smoothly. That way, you'll have time to plan ahead. Practice the following four A's of coping with change:

Awareness

Since uncertainty about the future creates the most fear and stress during a change, try to find as much information as you can about your situation. Whom can you ask? What can you learn? What research can you do? The more you learn, the less uncertainty you'll experience. Behaviors, thoughts and actions that can be learned and developed will help you cope with change.

Acceptance

You may not like the change, but if you accept the fact that it is the way it is, instead of fighting it or complaining about it, you'll feel less frustrated. Accept change with grace and embrace a new experience.

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Attitude

Are you being fearful or are you thinking about the possibilities for improvement change might bring? To focus on the positive aspects of your change, write a list of all the possible positive outcomes.

Even though minor changes can cause stress and frustration, the good news is that any change can be an opportunity for something positive to happen. What's more, when you learn how to cope effectively with minor changes at work, you'll develop the skills and positive outlook necessary to help you deal with a major change.

Action

This is where you do have some control over the situation. It's how you prepare and respond to change. The following positive actions can help you cope.

- Ask action questions. Whom can you talk to if a situation is getting more difficult to cope with? How can you get to know a new boss or coworker? What ideas can you present to your company that will help with the change?
- Learn new skills. Learn a new computer program. Take a class in communication skills. Learn to make presentations. Ongoing training will add skills to your professional tool kit.
- Change your surroundings. Do what you can to make your work area pleasant and comfortable.
- Develop a network. Stay connected with others in your line of work and colleagues from former jobs. Your network will be a valuable resource in times of change.

The key to coping with change is resilience. Learn how to get through your day and make the best of change in spite of setbacks, barriers or limited resources.

