

The Change Curve – How do we react to change?

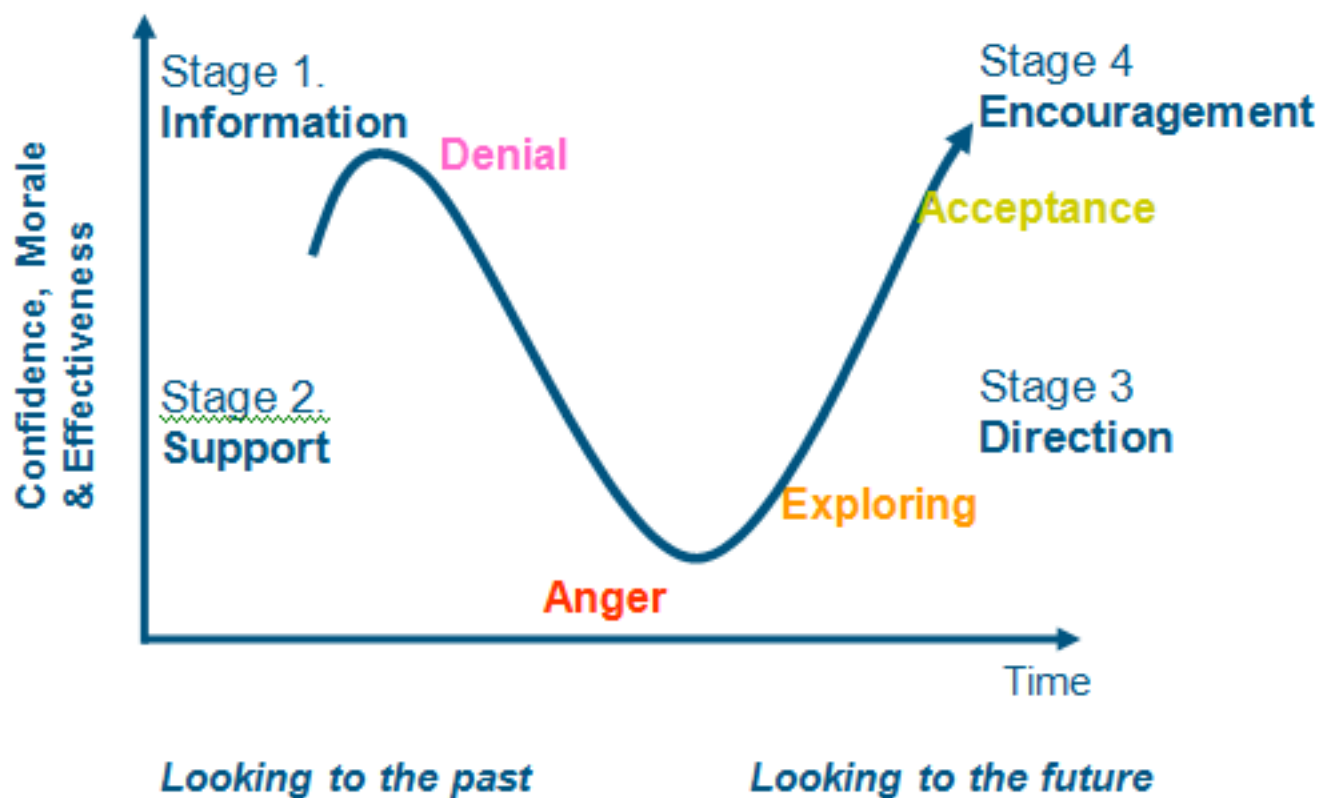
The change curve was Originally created by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross in 1969 to illustrate how people deal with the news that they have a terminal illness.

Nowadays this same model is used for any crisis that we as individuals or as a collective go through. Just as important, it can be used to gauge change and the effect this has on us all as individuals in organisational change management.

As with all models and ideas, it has its challengers and debaters, but nevertheless, it is a respectable tool to use to understand where people are in their journey through change.

In turn this insight can help leaders or managers tailor approaches and effective communication to those individuals dealing with the change, helping them through the transition successfully. Individuals vary hugely on the amount of time it takes to successfully go through this curve. Some can go through quickly, others can take much longer. The challenge is to help bring people through their own change curve, by understanding which phase they are in and also what support tools they need to transition through and embrace the new change.

The Change Curve



The General Phases of the Change Curve:

Shock/Denial– The first stage: Once information has been received as to the ideals of change, this natural reaction is to deny that there is a need for change and in fact it is not happening.

Stage 1 needs from leaders: Information

Fear/Anger – After learning that this change is not going away, the next natural step towards change is to go through the anger or fear phase. At this point, people affected often can't see a way out of the situation, often resorting to anger, fear and anxiety.

Stage 2 needs from leaders: Support:

Exploration – Maintaining the commitment to Working with individuals, facilitating them through the change curve, it will eventually become clear that the change is here to stay. It is no fad and big changes in their lives may need to happen. At this point, people will often try to compromise a favourable outcome to the change. Comments like, “what if we do this”, or “Can I fit here?” or “can we just do this..”.

Stage 3 needs from leaders: Direction

Acceptance – The individual comes through the change curve. Acceptance as to the need to change is understood and now the person, in this phase, is learning to live with the change, getting involved in change and dealing directly with it.

Stage 4 needs from leaders: Encouragement.