



# Understanding Change and Transition

## The difference between change and transition:

To be effective in times of change, it is important to understand the difference between change and transition and to pay attention to both these elements.

“Effective organisational change is rooted in a healthy, realistic perspective on personal change”  
- David Firth

**Change** is an **external event**, a shift in the external situation - something ends and there is a new beginning. Change can happen fast. The change could be a change of career; the closing of a department; the end of a project; or a change in personal circumstances.

**Transition** is an **internal process** – it’s the process we go through when dealing with the external event. It is the reorientation people need to make in response to the change – our cognitive, emotional, psychological, social, cultural and behavioural responses to the change. It’s how we come to terms with the new reality at a human level. This can take time. Transition occurs gradually, in phases and is highly personal and not easy to predict.

*Change is an event in our external world that happens **to** us. Transition is the psychological process that happens **within** us in response to the change.*

*The way we manage the transition is even more important than the specific change.* To be successful in both the change implementation and in helping people we need to understand and manage both the external elements of the change implementation as well as the internal requirements needed to make a personal transition.

<http://teressagriffin.com/2014/08/26/difference-between-change-and-transition/>

## Some insights into typical organisational change challenges:

In a study conducted in 2008 by IBM, CEOs identified the top challenges to successfully implementing strategic change as:

- 1 . Changing mind-sets and attitudes (58%)
- 2 . Corporate culture (49%)
- 3 . Underestimation of complexity (35%)
- 4 . Shortage of resources (33%)
- 5 . Lack of higher management commitment (32%)
- 6 . Lack of change know-how (20%)
- 7 . Lack of motivation of involved employees (16%)

Combe, M. *Change Agility – Readiness for Strategy Implementation. Project Management Institute White Paper, May 3, 2014*

