



LEADER TOOL

HARNESSING POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY TO LEAD THROUGH CHANGE



This tool was created by one of our senior clinical team members, Kate McPhee, Psychologist & Clinical Associate Coordinator at AccessEAP.

Change. Adapt. Pivot. Respond. If there were invisible cheerleaders who raised their pompoms in early 2020, they are now probably a little tired of doing backflips and cartwheels to get through to 2021 and beyond. Every single person in the world has got the memo that for the foreseeable future change is not just an optional extra. As people leaders, we must figure out the strategies that will enable it to happen in ways that benefit our people and organisations. Change can be scary, hard, and painful and sometimes feels like a valley that we walk through to get through the messiness and away from the rubbish. Other times it is as exhilarating as riding on the rollercoaster rides we find at the amusement parks. Either way, positively responding to change calls for us to be courageous and lead ourselves and others through it.

As leaders, it is like a double-barrel of management. There is your own emotional reactions and then those of the people around you that you need to deal with. In times of change, how we present ourselves helps our people manage their own responses. We can exude a sense of calmness that helps others feel better equipped to ride the waves of change, much like the captain of a ship standing serenely at the wheel as the ship goes up and down with the waves. Positive Psychology teaches us that those things we avoid, or the “bad things”, do not end up impacting us as intensely as we may fear. Similarly, Brene Brown tells us that leaders must invest in reasonable amounts of time attending to the fears and feelings of employees or risk squandering an unreasonable amount of time trying to manage ineffective and unproductive behaviour.

So what can you do to improve how you lead through change? Here's five essential leadership skills to support your people teams and organisation:

Communication – Focus on “why” the change is occurring and how you see it happening now and in the future. Break down silos in the organisation to create buy-in for the change for all.

Creativity – Learn to try “non-traditional” solutions or look at things through a lens that is new. Embrace new opinions and start to step back and identify patterns.

Motivation – Find a reason for the change to work. Recognise and reward others who are doing well in your space. Publicly thank staff and make a big song and dance around projects that come in on time or under budget (or both!).

Feedback – give feedback in a clear and empathetic way. Receive feedback that is appropriate, kind, and clear.

Positivity – a positive attitude can go a long way in any organisation. Elegantly simple steps like asking people about their weekend at the start of a meeting and not being in too much of a rush to get to the agenda will raise some morale.

Leadership, like any other skill, can be learnt, polished and enhanced. A leader is anyone who takes responsibility for finding the potential in people and processes and who has the courage to develop that potential (Brene Brown). If you need assistance with developing your own leadership skills or would like to grow the skills of one of your people – give us a call at AccessEAP on **1800 818 728**. We are here to help.

