

# Designing people strategies based on human instincts



## The 9 Essentials For Leading Humans Through Change

In the 100 years since the profession of leadership began, one subject we have not yet solved is “change management”. Generally we continue to repeat the same frustrating experiences in leading change and certainly in the eyes of our people, we continue to repeat the same mistakes. There must be something missing.

Managing change is harder than it needs to be because we have overlooked critical elements of human behaviour – to understand what really happens when people face change. By using a framework of human nature we suddenly think about and lead change differently.

### The Problem With Conventional Thinking

Conventional thinking suggests that “people resist change”. But that can’t be true otherwise we’d be still living in caves. In change situations it looks like people resist change but that’s a misunderstanding of what actually happens and what actually drives people’s response to change. This misreading of what is happening has led to conventional approaches not serving us well.

### Human Instincts

Human nature was formed in a different habitat to that which we find ourselves today. Through the long journey of human history it was only with the Industrial Revolution that we began to move from being hunter-gatherers and villagers and shifted into offices and factories. Those 250 years is too short a time to alter what it means to be human – how our brains work and how we process information (including our response to change). Behaviour that served us well in our ancestral setting is alive and well in today’s offices, corridors and meeting rooms!

### What Really Happens to Humans Facing Change

It appears that people resist change but that’s a misreading of what really happens. When people hear about a change:

- We have a need to make sense of the change
- We do so by *classifying*
- We classify into binary categories of “good” versus “bad”
- We do so in seconds based on how we are feeling
- If we can’t accurately classify then we err on the negative.

Loss Aversion is the primary driver because people are highly attuned to avoid threats and the risk of loss. With this explanation we move from being negative and defeatist about change to being optimistic and practical. For example we can look to *influence the classifying moment* when people are making sense of the change.

We will know the four reasons *why people gossip* and take steps to reduce the need for gossip and to use this natural urge productively. We will know why to *avoid spin* and the consequences if we don’t explain the compelling reason for the change.

We can avoid weeks of anxiety and distraction if we lead the change aligned to human instincts.

### The 9 Essentials

Through human instincts we have a predictive framework for knowing what will work and what won’t. There are 9 Essentials that leaders and project teams apply.

1. Analyse for Loss Aversion
2. Influence the Classifying Moment
3. Focus on the Compelling Reason
4. First 7 Words
5. Gossip and Rumour
6. The Gossip Test
7. Manage to the Individual Level
8. Social Belonging and Bonding
9. Attend to the Common Derailers

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### Making the World of Difference

The framework helps with major change initiatives and helps leaders at every level manage the (almost) everyday changes they get to implement – restructures, downsizing their team, appointing a new manager, implementing new systems, rosters and changing people’s responsibilities.

### Ways to Use Human Instincts to Lead Change

The human instincts framework is a practical tool to help leaders and project managers plan their change. In workshop mode, the 9 Essentials are explained and then applied by a team to the specific change that leaders are facing – to help leaders manage the change with greater harmony and less distraction. Change becomes less of a big deal.