



A GUIDE FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Leading Change with the **A.R.R.T. Model™**

Why change fails in the brain before it fails on the plan, and
four steps to lead people through it.

A.R.R.T.

ACCEPT · REFRAME · REWIRE · TRANSFORM

Leadership development for the human side of work.
eleadershipacademy.com

Most change fails because the brain reads it as a threat.

The plan is rarely the problem. People understand what is changing and usually why. What derails change is the resistance: a threat response that starts before reasoning does and surfaces as hesitation, quiet non-compliance, and teams that revert the moment attention moves on. Leaders are trained to plan change. Few are taught how the brain responds to it.

The brain resists change.

A threat response begins before reasoning does, so leading through change starts with understanding that reaction, in yourself and in your team.

Managing isn't leading.

Plans and timelines move tasks. People move when someone leads them through the uncertainty.

New habits fade fast.

Without deliberate rewiring, teams go back to the old way. Change holds only once the new way becomes the norm.

43%

of employees were willing to support enterprise change in 2022, down from 74% in 2016.

SOURCE: GARTNER, 2023

7x

more likely to meet objectives: projects with excellent change management compared to those with poor change management.

SOURCE: PROSCI, BEST PRACTICES IN CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Change fatigue compounds. Every change led badly makes the next one harder, because the threat response learns. Every change led well does the opposite.

Four steps, grounded in neuroscience.

Each step builds on the last. A leader who skips Accept and goes straight to the new plan is asking people to adopt something their brains are still defending against.

1 Accept Understand the resistance

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE BRAIN

Change registers as a threat before anyone has weighed it. The brain protects the status quo because the status quo is known. Resistance is not a character flaw or a sign of a bad team. It is the default, and it is happening in the leader too.

WHAT THE LEADER DOES

Name the change plainly and name what people are losing as well as what they are gaining. Give the threat response somewhere to go: information, time, and a say in how it lands. Accept your own resistance before you expect others to move past theirs.

Ask your team: **"What does this change ask you to give up?"**

2 Reframe Turn threat into possibility

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE BRAIN

The meaning people assign to a change decides whether they lead through it or wait it out. The same change can be read as loss or as possibility, and the brain treats the two very differently. Meaning is not fixed, and it can be reworked.

WHAT THE LEADER DOES

Tell the story of the change in terms of what becomes possible, then ask people to find their own version of it. Reframing done to people doesn't hold. Reframing people do for themselves, with a leader's help, does.

Ask your team: **"What could this make possible for you, or for us?"**

Build the new habits, then make them **the norm**.

Acceptance and a new frame get people willing. The last two steps are what most change efforts skip, and they are where change either holds or quietly reverses.

3 **Rewire** Build new habits deliberately

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE BRAIN

Neuroplasticity means new habits can form at any age, but only with repetition and attention. Under pressure, the brain falls back to the old pathway because it is faster. Expect clumsiness; it is the sign that rewiring is underway.

WHAT THE LEADER DOES

Pick the two or three behaviors the change depends on and practice them visibly. Build repetition into routines that already exist: meetings, check-ins, one-on-ones. Support the team in doing the same, and notice the attempts, not just the results.

Ask your team: **"What's one thing you'll do differently this week?"**

4 **Transform** Make the new way the norm

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE BRAIN

A change has held when the new way runs without conscious effort. Until then it needs scaffolding, because any gap in attention lets the old pathway back in. Sustainable change is new thinking that has become part of how the day works.

WHAT THE LEADER DOES

Embed the change in systems: how work is reviewed, what gets recognized, how new people are onboarded. Retire the old way explicitly rather than letting it linger. Mark the moment "the new way" becomes "the way we work."

Ask your team: **"What would tell us this is now just how we work?"**

One framework, **every level.**

Change training usually stops at the people announcing the change. The people experiencing it get the announcement. When leaders and employees learn the same four steps, change stops being something done to one group by another and becomes a shared experience with a shared language.

Leaders learn to guide and model adaptability

Four modules, each applied to a change the leader is already in the middle of. They finish with a personal Leading Change plan and the vocabulary to talk about resistance without blaming anyone for it.

Employees build confidence and flexibility

A shorter, all-employee version of the same model. People understand why change feels the way it does and have practical tools for their own response, so the language their leaders are using makes sense when they hear it.

What changes when everyone shares the model

- **Resistance becomes discussable.** "I think I'm still at Accept" is a sentence a team can work with. "They're being difficult" is not.
- **Leaders stop carrying it alone.** When employees can reframe for themselves, the leader's job is to help, not to persuade.
- **The culture moves from resistance to renewal.** Each change led this way makes the organization better at the next one.

"We've had all of our employees complete the inclusive leadership and change management courses. The key, when we're designing these programs, is making sure leadership training is offered to all employees at all levels."

Joe Aspden, Manager, Learning & Development

Before the **next change**.

Most organizations have a change coming that they already know about: a system, a structure, a merger, a new way of working. That is the one to lead differently. Five moves, in order.

1 Name the change and what it costs people.

Before the announcement, write down what each group stands to lose. If the list is empty, you haven't looked hard enough, and the resistance will find it for you.

2 Put leaders through the model first.

Leaders who have worked through their own resistance lead the change. Leaders who haven't announce it. Run the four modules with the leadership group before the change goes wider.

3 Give employees the same model.

The all-employee version takes about 90 minutes. Roll it out as the change is announced, so people have a way to understand their own reaction while it is happening.

4 Bring leaders together between steps.

A facilitated leader discussion by module, or one capstone session, turns individual learning into shared accountability for applying it.

5 Measure acceptance, not just milestones.

A project plan tells you whether the system went live. It doesn't tell you whether people are using it the new way. Ask, at each step, where people are in the model.

Change management moves the tasks. Leading change moves the people. You need both, and most organizations are only equipped for the first. The A.R.R.T. Model™ is about how the brain responds to change, so it deepens whatever change-management approach you already follow rather than replacing it.

Two programs. **One model**, at every level.

The A.R.R.T. of Leading Change runs as a facilitated program, in-person or online. Add the all-employee version so the people experiencing the change understand it too.

FOR PEOPLE LEADERS

Leading Change

On-demand. Four modules, about 2 hours each, with workplace activities, reflection prompts, and a workbook. Applied to a change in the leader's own work.

Finishes with a personal Leading Change plan and a digital credential that counts toward the Certificate in Applied Leadership (CAL) as an eFOCUS elective.

FOR ALL EMPLOYEES

EVOLVE Change

A 90-minute course that helps employees understand and adapt to change with confidence, using the same A.R.R.T. Model™ their leaders are learning.

Part of the EVOLVE Series with Inclusion and Resilience, so one rollout can bring all three to the whole organization.

Options for rollout

Facilitated leader discussions by module or as a capstone session. Group enrollment with templates and tracking. Rollout planning with our team. Inclusive Leadership and Resilient Leadership are available on the same terms.

"It's the pathway I wished had existed, built for leaders who are still becoming."

Sandra McDowell, Founder & CEO

100,000+

hours of leadership learning

5,000+

credentials earned

1,000+

10/10 reviews

A change on the horizon? We'll help you plan the rollout for leaders and employees. Program details at eleadershipacademy.com.

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