



TriMetrix®HD Flexibility

Flexibility

Agility in adapting to change.

Why is this skill important?

Today's work environment requires that you not only manage change, but that you serve as an active champion of change. The most flexible people seek out opportunities to change and manage the change process. In addition, they are able to make needed changes directed by others or organizational priorities.

You may have noticed how co-workers and managers react to change. They may be anxious, excited or angry at having to make a change. You may have noticed your own reactions to different types of change as well. Change can be difficult. It can require minor adjustments such as new paperwork or major paradigm shifts in how a company is run. Your ability to champion and manage change is key to your success in this job.

Of course, varying amounts and types of change cause varying degrees of emotion. People's lives are filled with alternating periods of stability and change. As humans, we need both to thrive. When you are responsible for initiating a change process on the job, you will need to understand not only how people react to change, but also how to encourage them in understanding and supporting change. In any change situation, it is important that you be aware of your own reactions and attitudes to change as well as those of others.

In general, people support change when they believe it:

- Will result in personal and/or professional gain.
- Is something logical and a correct thing to do.
- May give them new and welcome challenges.
- Was developed and championed by someone they respect.
- Is the result of a collaborative process in which they had a say.

In contrast, people reject or resist change when they believe it:

- Will result in personal and/or professional loss.
- Is unnecessary or possibly harmful.
- May be too much of a challenge, making their jobs more difficult.
- Was developed and championed by someone who doesn't understand the problem or the real world.
- Was kept secret during the planning stages.

Your challenge is to remain flexible during periods of change whether you initiate the change process or whether you are supporting a change made by someone else.

People who succeed at their job don't just learn how to accept change. Rather, they seek new initiatives and look for ways to improve their jobs and the quality of their organization. Once you have learned to manage your own reaction to change and to recognize reactions in others, you can be an advocate for change. You will have mastered the key to your job.

What skills are associated with Flexibility?

Someone who has mastered skills associated with Flexibility has:

- Responds promptly to shifts in direction, priorities and schedules
- Demonstrates agility in accepting new ideas, approaches and/or methods
- Effective in juggling multiple priorities and tasks
- Modifies methods or strategies to fit changing circumstances
- Adapts personal style to work with different people
- Maintains productivity during transitions, even in the midst of chaos
- Embraces and/or champions change

How do you develop your own skills in Flexibility?

- Respond promptly to shifts in direction, priorities and schedules.
- If you don't understand how to implement a new procedure or if it conflicts with previously established priorities, ask for feedback or clarification.
- Re-prioritize your to-do list as often as necessary, but not less than every day.
- If you are having trouble finding a solution to a problem, take a step back, wipe your slate clean and approach it from a new perspective.
- Be mentally flexible in handling new issues that arise in the midst of your routine.
- Maintain your productivity during transitions. Keep an up-to-date priority list and a cool head.
- Research your own ideas for change carefully. Do a cost/benefit analysis of your idea. Is the organization ready for the change? Are people dissatisfied with the status quo? Are your customers satisfied with your products or services? Do the benefits of making the change outweigh the negatives of not making the change?
- Carefully plan for any change that you initiate. Create a timeline of steps needed to make the change and apply enough resources to making it successful.
- Recognize that productivity may lag during a period of change because people take time to accept and master new behaviors. • Recognize that changes you make may affect other parts of your organization. Try to get buy-in from as many affected departments/individuals as possible.
- Allow others to voice their opinions and feelings about the upcoming change and work their feedback into the change process.
- If someone has helped you make a change, show him or her the value of the contributions he or she made to the change.
- Brainstorm! Keep your mind flexible and always be thinking of new possibilities.
- Communicate information about change honestly, clearly and regularly. Have status meetings and send out memos regarding the change so that people feel informed and involved.
- Be attentive to follow-up issues. Be open and available to discuss implementation problems or questions about new procedures.
- Expect continuous improvement from yourself and from others. Encourage re-evaluation of norms and accepted procedures.
- Welcome and encourage improvements and recognize successful changes made by others.
- Serve as a model for the attitudes and behaviors expected as a result of a successful change. Be the first to implement a new technology or follow a new procedure. Be open to new ideas, both your own and others'.

Flexibility

Activities

Activity 1: Reacting to Change

While other people's reactions are key to implementing change successfully, it is important to monitor your own responses to change. List three changes that have occurred in your personal or professional life recently:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

For each of the three changes, try to answer the questions listed below:

- What changed?
- How did you feel during the change?
- For times you felt negative (e.g., anxious, angry or scared), try to identify why you had negative feelings.
- For times you felt positive (e.g., excited, energized or happy), try to identify why your feelings were positive.
- What did you do to manage the change? What thoughts or activities worked well and helped you feel positive about the change? What thoughts or activities did not work well and made you feel negative?

Think of a procedure, policy or organizational structure that you believe needs changing. In this activity, you will first decide what tasks you need to gain support for a change you are proposing. Then design some steps for implementing your proposed change.

Idea for Change _____

Steps to gain support for change:

Task	Due Date	Person Responsible	Resources Needed	Expected Outcome

Activity 3: Long- Range Goals

Obtain a copy of your company's long-range plan and mission statement. In light of those documents, create a hypothetical picture of where you would like to see yourself and what you would like to accomplish in the next three to five years. List at least five new goals or directions you would like to see yourself take:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Activity 3: Learning from Others

List people within your organization who seem particularly flexible when priorities change or the organizational mission requires particular flexibility. Try to think of people both within and outside your department or section.

Make a point of communicating and coordinating with these individuals so you can stay up-to-date on their future plans and inform them of your plans.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

