



Fresh Air
Fridays

Thriving through change

A guide to supporting staff to embrace change, become more engaged and create resilient, successful organisations

Change is inevitable

In today's world, change in organisations is inevitable. Whether it is external factors or technological advances, every business and organisation needs to evolve. The challenge is that as humans we are designed to resist change.

Many people find change difficult and it can lead to stress, anxiety, and absenteeism. The additional workload that change can bring exacerbates the situation, leading to low morale and a lack of engagement. A workforce resisting change can be detrimental - both to the organisation and the individuals concerned.

The whole process can be exhausting and costly.

The truth is it doesn't have to be this way. This guide will give you simple tools to support your staff to embrace change, become more resilient and more engaged. The things we share here will act as a bedrock for staff wellbeing that can transform your organisation.

Why we resist change

As human beings, what we know feels so much safer than what we don't know. Staying in an unhappy relationship can feel more comfortable than leaving. We don't know how we would cope or what it would look like on the other side. We know it would be good to lose weight, but we are used to the way we eat now. Our dislike of change is not rational, but it is real.

If we want changes to run smoothly in our organisations we need people to feel safe and supported and a huge part of this is about effective communication. When we work with people we have them look at both their internal and external communication. Both are vitally important. What we are going to talk about here are things within your control now.

When change happens that feels out of our control, it can feel very stressful as it threatens our security. For people to feel comfortable they need good relationships with colleagues and leaders and to feel that they will be heard in the organisation.

Simple ways to help everyone embrace change

In this guide we will share simple and practical steps you can take that have the potential to transform the way your staff feel, allowing you all to cope with change in a way that works for everyone. The key to managing change is based on the relationships you build with staff. By embracing just a couple of these strategies you will start to see your people feel more empowered, more resilient and happier, which has to be a good thing!



Communication is King!

Effective communication is at the heart of any good relationship and the quality of your relationship with your staff will be the make or break in terms of resilience, engagement and managing change. Staff that feel valued, heard, supported and aligned with your company purpose will want to be part of any changes coming over the horizon.

Treat your staff as customers

Companies that treat their staff as the lifeblood of their organisation prioritise effective communication and, as a result, have a much better chance of supporting them and keeping them happy and secure. Remember, your staff are instrumental in every aspect of your business.

If people feel demotivated or disengaged this inevitably has an impact and can affect productivity and the service they provide to customers. In our experience, when you see your employees as your first customers you are able to create a thriving environment that allows each individual to flourish and be the best they can be. Building and maintaining great customer relationships starts with doing this in your organisation.

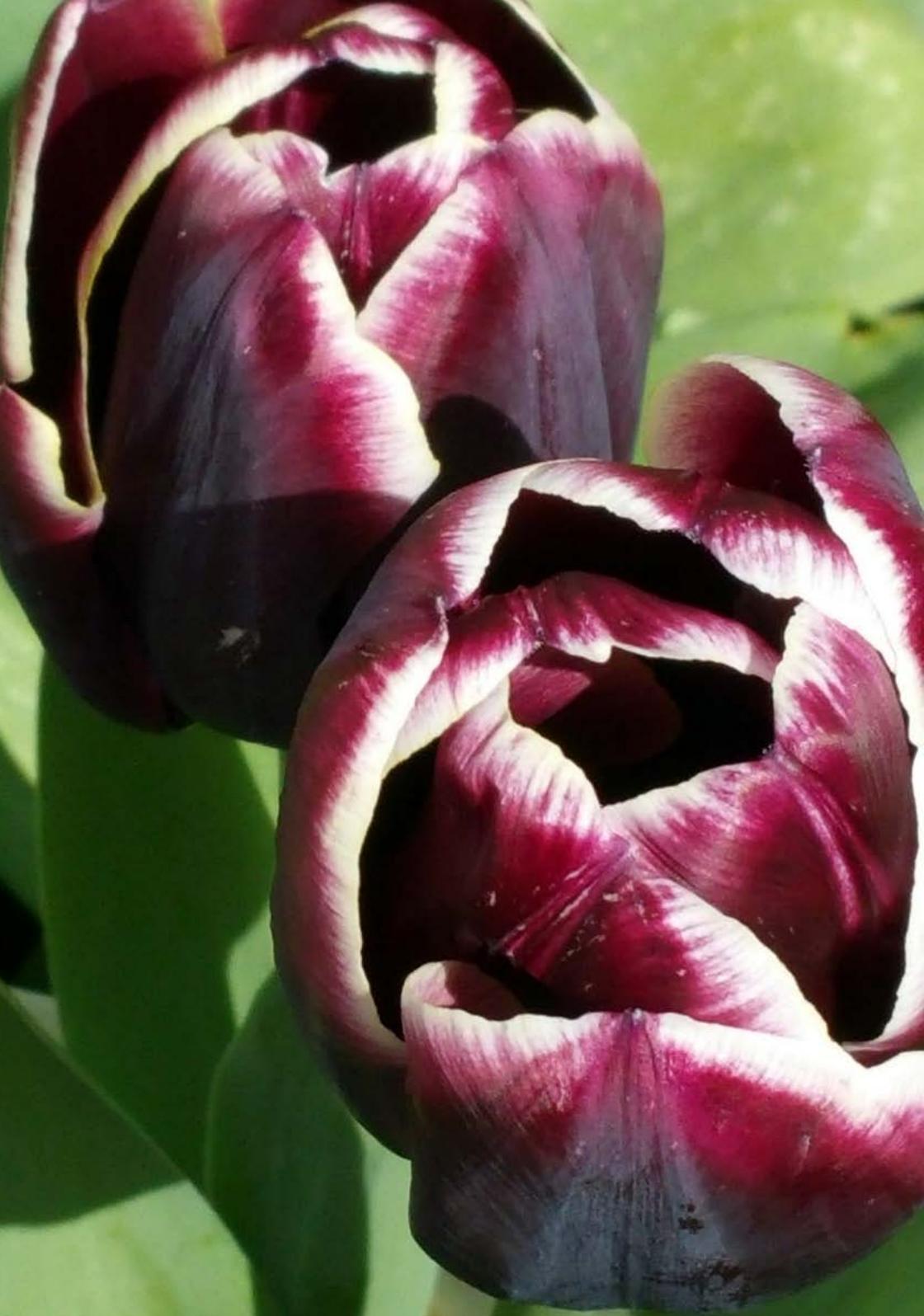
6 pillars of effective communication

Here we are going to share with you six pillars that are key to effective communication. Whilst some leaders have traditionally shied away from building strong relationships at work, today's workforce want meaningful relationships at work as well as in their personal lives. It is these relationships that will have your people happy to work with change, helping both them and the business to thrive.

The six aspects are:

- R - Real
- E - Environment
- L - Listening
- A - Appreciation
- T - Trust
- E - Ego





Real

Keeping it real will help - while you look at the pillars we invite you to consider what you can take on. In essence, these pillars are simple and they may take some practice. In all our work we invite you to take things one step at a time rather than trying to do everything at once.

Being real is also about being who you are. Human beings have an authenticity radar - they may not know exactly what is 'off' but will pick up a variety of non-verbal clues to intuit that what is being said is not actually what is meant. Engaging with the pillars will help to build authentic communication.



Environment

Communication is more than just words; it starts from the moment you walk into your workplace. As human beings, our environment has a significant impact on our wellbeing. Considering how you can provide a comfortable and calm working environment, especially in times of change, can be helpful.

Questions to consider:

- Does the workplace feel inviting?
- Does it feel calm, supportive and clean?
- Do you make the most of available natural light?
- Are the stairs easily accessible and are the stairwells pleasant to use?
- Do people have somewhere away from their desks to eat that they're encouraged to use?
- Is any artwork inspiring and refreshing?
- Are there living plants in the space?

If current challenges include physical change of the environment then some of this may be out of your control in the short term; in this case, consider how you can create some stability during this time. If that is not practical around environmental factors the other aspects of communication become all the more important.

In essence, consider what your workplace is communicating to your employees. Does it tell your staff you care?

Listening

ACTUALLY listening

This sounds so simple there is a danger you won't hear it! However, let's be real - most of us don't listen enough. Much of the time we are simply waiting for the other person to stop talking so we can have our say. This is not effective communication.

When you're busy, unplanned conversations can feel frustrating but, when handled appropriately, they can be a real gift. People want to be heard. When your people know they can talk to you and you will really listen, that could be all that's needed. Having the opportunity to talk through the challenges they are facing often allows people to find their own resolution.

Learn to listen as a matter of course. On every meeting agenda, try writing in two or three minutes for EVERY attendee to voice whatever it is they need to say. When people know they will have dedicated time to have a say, free from judgement, comment or recrimination, they can relax and really hear what everyone else is saying. This creates a space where everyone feels heard and can lead to greater team cohesion.

The next time an employee approaches you and wants to talk, we invite you to be open. Consider the following:

- When they are speaking, show you are listening by giving them your complete attention
- If you cannot give your attention in that moment, arrange a time when you can and as soon as you can
- Allow them to speak without interruption
- Remember, there is often no need to find an immediate solution
- Ask them what they they think they need to move their situation or challenge forward - you may find what they want or need is different from what you anticipate.

Appreciation

Feeling valued and appreciated is instrumental to our wellbeing and performance. Human nature can often quickly identify when something is not working as opposed to when something is going well.

In the workplace it is often assumed that pointing out errors and failures will improve work outputs. However, typically, it can serve to disempower and demotivate. An alternative is to highlight what's working and gone well - encouraging more of the same behaviour.

Consider how you can make simple, specific appreciation a regular part of what you, your team and colleagues do. Don't make assumptions that a person knows they are appreciated or doing a good job. People need to be told.

For some people it may be a habit they need to practice. You may have some people who don't think it is important. Our experience is that when it becomes a regular habit it is transformational. When you frequently communicate your appreciation, people feel valued and empowered.

Appreciation can easily be brought into everyday conversations. When someone tells you something, appreciate something about the conversation. "I really appreciate that you took the time to come and tell me that Jane, thank you."

It's appropriate even if the content could be construed as negative, for example, "I hear that you are frustrated that the the change you asked for hasn't been actioned yet, I really appreciate you highlighting your frustration to me."

At the end of every meeting ask everyone to appreciate one thing about the person sitting to their left. "I really appreciated how concise John was in delivering that report."

Have you ever heard the saying "what we focus on grows?" When you are intentionally appreciative of your employees you create a shift that will impact on all the relationships within the workplace.

When people feel valued they feel they can contribute and feel more in control.

A workforce that feels valued will feel that they are making a difference. This can give people a sense of having some control; which is important in the change process. When we know we are valued we feel more secure. This is important in reducing stress and anxiety, leading to staff being more engaged and ultimately happier. Valuing people will give them the confidence to contribute and propose their own ideas which supports a culture of innovation that your business needs to grow.

Trust

Trusting people is another way for them to feel valued. Trust both empowers and engages people.

Trusting environments feel good to work in, change is much more palatable when it happens in a space like this. When you trust people, they tend to trust you. When you trust that people will do a good job, they are more inclined to do so. It is important that people know what outcomes are required, but most people have a good sense of the ways in which they work best. When you allow staff to use their initiative and work in the way that best suits them you are likely to get the best results.

Regularly ask for their opinion. Ask what they need and how they think things should be done. This will allow for creativity and autonomy, both helpful to effective communication and people's desire to stay in an organisation. It is important to check out that people have what they need in order to get a job done but micromanaging people is soul-destroying for everyone and communicates "I don't trust you" loud and clear.





Ego

One of the things that can stand in the way of effective communication and building relationships is our ego. We know that when we are feeling insecure, frustrated, anxious or in judgement, it is very hard to be with the other person.

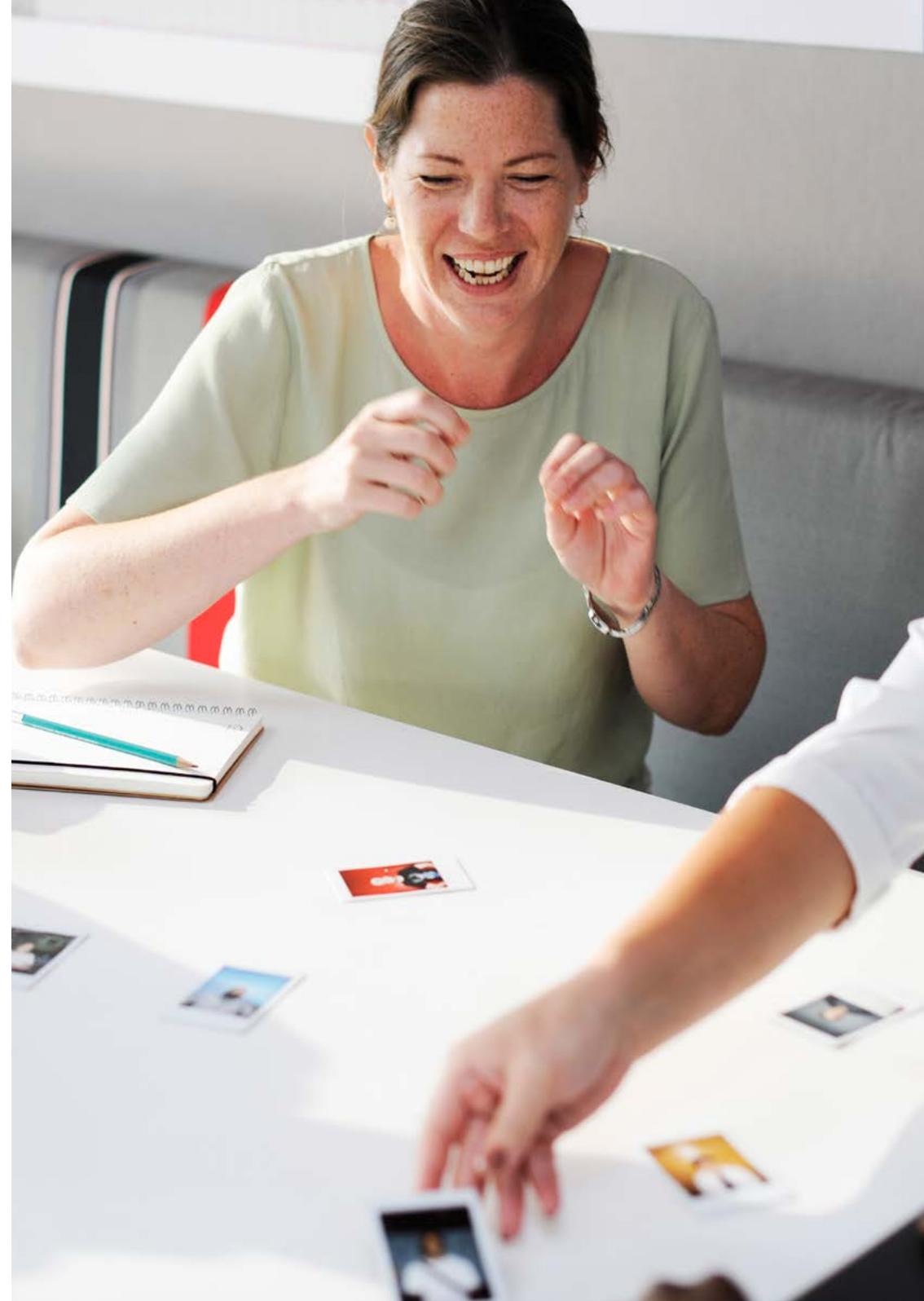
Our experience is that when you are able to put your own opinions, worries and concerns down and just be with the other person, your connection and communication is much more effective. This can take practice, and noticing that you have these feelings and concerns is the first step in the process of putting them aside in your communication.

Start today

Here we have shared with you six pillars of effective communication that will help you and your staff to **RELATE**: Real, Environment, Listening, Appreciation, Trust and Ego. Starting to implement these today will support your people in a way that will help them through any change process.

Good communication will have staff feel more engaged and less stressed or anxious. Make a commitment to listen more frequently and appreciate your people as a habit. In time these small steps will have a tremendous impact. The benefits of cultivating a nurturing culture reach further than the staff on your payroll right now, the work you do here will positively impact the company long term and allow both the organisation and the people within it to flourish.

We trust that you have found these six pillars of communication useful and we value your time and commitment to making a change in your organisation. Here at Fresh Air Fridays we are passionate about enabling people to thrive and we would love to help you.



We would like to take this opportunity to offer you a completely **FREE** and no obligation consultation with one of our directors. We can provide practical tools to help you manage change, reduce stress and build happy and engaged teams.

Call 02920892783

email info@freshairfridays.co.uk



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