



Why are so many teams resistant to being on board with change?

Overview

Organisational change too often falters not because the idea itself lacks merit but because people don't feel heard, guided or motivated. This report tackles that very challenge: How can leaders craft and deliver messages that genuinely engage every member of their team, build trust and spark commitment? By focusing on the interplay between communication style and personality, we provide a roadmap for making change not just accepted, but embraced.

The Research

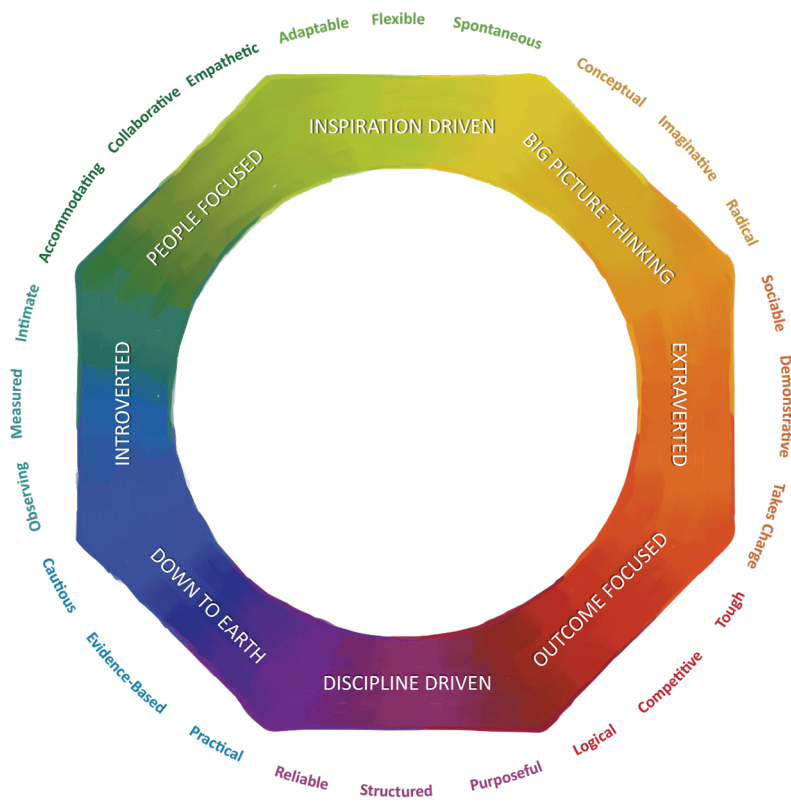
A cohort of 171 UK-based professional staff shared their experience of organisational change and reflected on how their leaders' communication style influenced their openness to the initiative, their motivation and their trust in leadership. Crucially, this research also considered how the leader's and the staff's personality shaped the success of the communication.

Our top finding was that unclear leadership (highlighted by 47% of staff) and unclear communication (mentioned by 44% of staff) were the top two blockers to teams being on board with change. The research dug into this to find out if leaders were showing enough self-awareness in communicating change beyond the perfect PowerPoint. We also explored, "Are organisations connecting their communication behaviours with change management outcomes?"

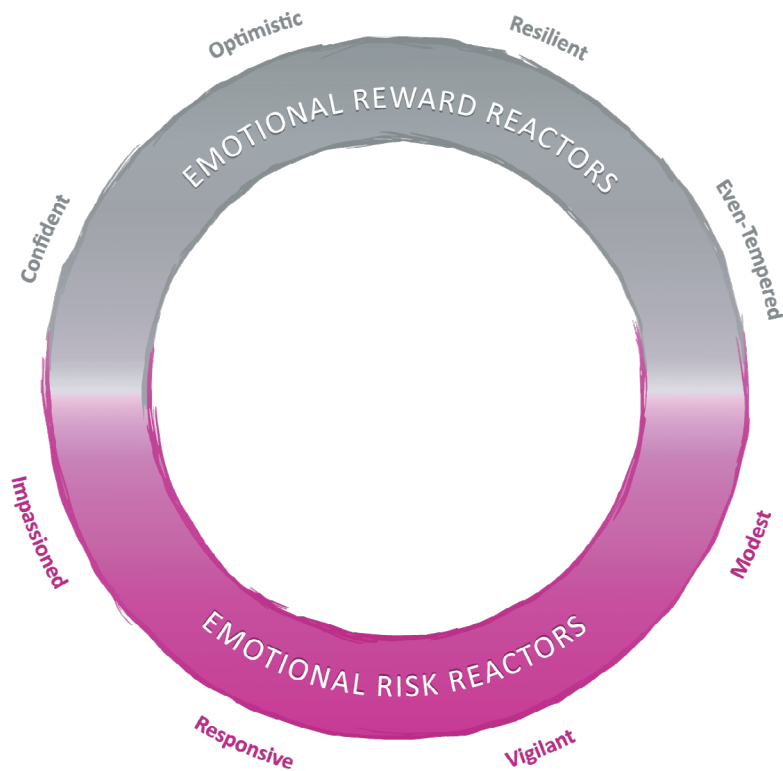
To bring this to life, we tested ten versions of an organisation's message communicating a change plan that employees needed to engage with. For each of these ten, we looked at their impact on trust, clarity, motivation, engagement and much more, from the staff perspective.

The 10 Aspect Communication Styles

The 10 versions were based on the 8 Aspects of personality, including the Qualities/behaviours that make it up, shown on the next page.



A further two Aspects are the two lenses of emotion that interplay with those behaviours:



Each of us has our own 'default' or authentic way of communicating. Our individual qualities impact how we explain change to others and how we can be perceived by others. Here are the common behaviours we often observe in times of change and how they can be beneficial, but also how they might be unproductive when we're Overextended.

Inspiration Driven (Adaptable, Flexible, Spontaneous)



Encourages creativity, adaptability, and responsiveness to change, helping the team navigate challenges and seize opportunities. It fosters a dynamic and innovative work environment.



Overextension may result in a lack of focus, inconsistency, and chaotic work processes, leading to confusion and instability. It can cause conflicts over priorities, deadlines, and perceived lack of discipline.

Discipline Driven (Purposeful, Structured, Reliable)



Brings organisation, reliability, and clear expectations to the team, ensuring tasks are completed on time and to a high standard. It supports a structured and predictable work environment.



When overextended, it can become inflexible and resistant to change, causing frustration and conflict with more adaptable team members. It can lead to conflicts over rigidity and micromanagement.

Big Picture Thinking (Conceptual, Imaginative, Radical)



Effective Big Picture Thinking promotes innovative solutions and visionary ideas, fostering unity and shared goals within the team. It encourages a forward-thinking approach, which can pre-empt potential issues.



When overextended, it can lead to impractical or overly complex ideas, neglecting practical details and immediate concerns. This can cause frustration and misunderstandings among team members focused on execution.

Down to Earth (Practical, Evidence-Based, Cautious)



Grounded in reality, this Aspect ensures decisions are practical and based on evidence, providing clear direction and stability. It helps avoid conflicts by mitigating risks and uncertainties.



Overextension may result in excessive caution and resistance to new ideas, stifling creativity and causing friction with more innovative team members. It can lead to conflicts over missed opportunities and rigidity.

Extraverted (Sociable, Demonstrative, Takes Charge)



Promotes open communication, enthusiastic engagement, and effective leadership, fostering an inclusive and dynamic team environment. It helps prevent misunderstandings and builds strong relationships.



When overextended, it can become overwhelming, dominate conversations, and impose ideas, causing feelings of being unheard or undervalued among introverted team members. This can lead to power struggles and resentment.

Introverted (Observing, Measured, Intimate)



Provides thoughtful and well-considered input, ensuring decisions are made with care and attention to detail. It supports deep, meaningful relationships and reflective problem-solving.



Overextension can result in withdrawal, lack of communication, and perceived detachment, causing misunderstandings and a sense of isolation. It can lead to conflicts due to unvoiced opinions and disengagement.

Outcome Focused (Tough, Competitive, Logical)



Drives the team towards achieving goals efficiently, ensuring high performance and accountability. It promotes clarity and directness in communication.



When overextended, it can lead to overuse which can appear insensitive or overly critical, creating a hostile environment where team members feel pressured and undervalued. It can lead to conflicts over perceived harshness and lack of empathy.

People Focused (Accommodating, Collaborative, Empathetic)



Builds strong relationships, promotes a supportive team culture, and ensures everyone feels valued and heard. It reduces interpersonal conflicts and fosters cooperation.



When overextended, it may lead to neglecting personal needs, avoiding necessary conflicts, and passive-aggressive behaviour. This can cause unaddressed issues to fester and create long-term resentment.

Reward Reactor (Confident, Optimistic, Resilient, Even-tempered)



Individuals are naturally upbeat in their communication and assume positive intent from everyone. They radiate confidence and remain unruffled.



Overextension can lead to overoptimism and create anxiety in more cautious staff, as they may ignore stress in themselves and others until burnout occurs.

Risk Reactor (Impassioned, Responsive, Vigilant, Modest)



Individuals communicate with instinctive modesty and sensitivity. They perceive risks and downsides in every message and aim to mitigate potential harm.



Overextension can lead to negativity and pessimism, with caution coming across as doom and gloom. When triggered, they can become unexpectedly fiery.

The Findings

What follows are the highest/lowest scores across different staff outcomes, based on the average response to the ten styles. First, we start with a measure of the Overall Message Quality before breaking down seven derivative impacts on motivation, trust, and more.

Overall Rating: The overall quality of this communication message

Communication Style	Quality Mean	Quality Std. Deviation
Extraverted	4.05	0.91
Introverted	3.71	0.99
Down to Earth	3.70	0.95
Discipline Driven	3.66	1.01
Reward Reactor	3.64	1.03
People Focused	3.62	0.98
Risk Reactor	3.46	1.16
Big Picture Thinking	3.44	1.01
Inspiration Driven	3.03	1.15
Outcome Focused	2.61	1.05

Highest-rated style: **Extraverted** (M = 4.05)

Lowest-rated style: **Outcome Focused** (M = 2.61)

Overall Message Summary

Extraverted communication style consistently performed at the top of all outcomes and scored best on overall quality rating (M = 4.05). The vignette itself was lively and enthusiastic, with a clear lead-in from the manager and a direct invitation for the team to get involved. This suggests that tone,

energy, and a sense of approachability can significantly elevate how people judge the effectiveness of organisational change communication.

Outcome Focused style scored the lowest (M = 2.61) on overall quality. The vignette was directive, results-oriented, with little space for emotional engagement or team participation. It might potentially appeal to some in high-performance settings, but it likely came across as too impersonal or forceful for most participants.

Motivation - How motivated would you feel to support this change based on the message?

Communication Style	Motivation Mean	Motivation Std. Deviation
Extraverted	4.18	0.88
Reward Reactor	3.87	0.96
Down to Earth	3.78	0.91
People Focused	3.78	0.94
Big Picture Thinking	3.77	0.95
Introverted	3.73	0.99
Risk Reactor	3.57	1.11
Discipline Driven	3.50	0.98
Inspiration Driven	3.32	1.06
Outcome Focused	2.79	1.09

Highest-rated style: **Extraverted** (M = 4.18)

Lowest-rated style: **Outcome Focused** (M = 2.79)

Motivation Ratings Summary

Among ten communication styles, messages framed in an **Extraverted** (M = 4.18) or **Reward Reactor** (M = 3.87) style received the highest average motivation ratings, suggesting that energetic, upbeat language and a sociable tone strongly encourage engagement. Similarly, framing the change as an opportunity and showing confidence in the team appears to inspire action and buy-in. Extraverted also had the lowest standard deviation, suggesting consistently high motivation across participants.

In contrast, the **Outcome Focused** style scored the lowest for motivation (M = 2.79), and showed high variability (SD = 1.09), suggesting that while some responded to its urgency, many participants found the tone too forceful or lacking in encouragement.

Trust in Leadership - How much would you trust the leadership to implement this change effectively?

Communication Style	Trust Mean	Trust Std. Deviation
Extraverted	3.96	0.91
Introverted	3.85	0.94
Down to Earth	3.81	0.90
Discipline Driven	3.80	0.96
Reward Reactor	3.69	1.06
People Focused	3.61	0.99
Risk Reactor	3.60	1.15
Big Picture Thinking	3.53	0.98
Inspiration Driven	2.97	1.18
Outcome Focused	2.85	1.09

Highest-rated style: **Extraverted** (M = 3.96)

Lowest-rated style: **Outcome Focused** (M = 2.85)

Trust Ratings Summary

The **Extraverted** communication style received the highest trust score (M = 3.96), suggesting that an energised, confident tone may enhance perceptions of leadership credibility. Interestingly, the **Introverted** style followed closely behind (M = 3.85), indicating that a calm, private approach might be equally successful when it feels sincere.

Outcome Focused (M = 2.85) and **Inspiration Driven** (M = 2.97) were rated lowest for trust in leadership. It could imply that a results-driven tone might come across as overly impersonal or transactional, and that spontaneity without sufficient framework could damage credibility. Additionally, **Inspiration Driven** style had the highest variability (SD = 1.18), suggesting its informal or spontaneous tone may divide opinion (could be seen as either authentic and trustworthy or lacking credibility depending on the audience).

Communication Clarity - How clearly does the message communicate what is expected of you?

Communication Style	Clarity Mean	Clarity Std. Deviation
Discipline Driven	3.87	1.03
Down to Earth	3.70	0.92
Introverted	3.57	1.17
Extraverted	3.55	1.09
Risk Reactor	3.33	1.07
People Focused	3.01	1.16
Reward Reactor	2.99	1.10
Big Picture Thinking	2.85	1.18
Outcome Focused	2.83	1.12
Inspiration Driven	2.77	1.13

Highest-rated style: **Discipline Driven** (M = 3.87)

Lowest-rated style: **Inspiration Driven** (M = 2.77)

Clarity Ratings Summary

Discipline Driven (M = 3.87) received the highest clarity score, suggesting that structured, formal communication helps employees clearly understand what's expected of them. **Down to Earth** (M = 3.70) also scored highly, reinforcing that simple, practical language is effective in communicating expectations.

Inspiration Driven (M = 2.77) scored lowest for clarity, meaning that informal and unstructured communication may not be the most effective way to convey organisational change expectations.

Positivity Towards Change - How positive do you feel about the change after reading the message?

Communication Style	Positivity Mean	Positivity Std. Deviation
Extraverted	4.04	0.97
Reward Reactor	3.74	1.00
Down to Earth	3.60	0.89
People Focused	3.59	0.95
Big Picture Thinking	3.56	1.02
Introverted	3.55	0.95
Discipline Driven	3.46	0.90
Risk Reactor	3.32	1.18
Inspiration Driven	3.14	1.07
Outcome Focused	2.54	1.07

Highest-rated style: **Extraverted** (M = 4.04)

Lowest-rated style: **Outcome Focused** (M = 2.54)

Positivity Ratings Summary

Extraverted (M = 4.04) communication style scored the highest (when a leader sounds upbeat and confident, people are more likely to feel optimistic and engaged). **Reward Reactor** was the second strongest rating (M = 3.74) and reinforces that positivity about change can be built through encouragement and framing change as an opportunity.

Outcome Focused (M = 2.54) style once again scored the lowest (directive and task-heavy tone decreasing people's positivity).

Openness to Change - How open would you feel to engaging with this change?

Communication Style	Openness Mean	Openness Std. Deviation
Extraverted	4.12	0.90
People Focused	3.79	0.91
Reward Reactor	3.76	0.92
Down to Earth	3.75	0.87
Introverted	3.75	1.00
Big Picture Thinking	3.68	0.98
Discipline Driven	3.64	0.92
Risk Reactor	3.56	1.09
Inspiration Driven	3.36	1.03
Outcome Focused	2.87	1.01

Highest-rated style: **Extraverted** (M = 4.12)

Lowest-rated style: **Outcome Focused** (M = 2.87)

Openness Ratings Summary

Participants reported the highest levels of openness to change when it was communicated in a high-energy, social, and confident tone - with the **Extraverted** message rated highest (M = 4.12). This suggests that enthusiasm and momentum may play a key role in encouraging engagement. Notably, this vignette took the form of a verbal team meeting announcement, hinting that spoken communication might be more effective than written formats (e.g., email) when aiming to inspire openness during change.

Outcome Focused (M = 2.87) scored the lowest, indicating that when change is framed purely around results or accountability, it may reduce people’s willingness to engage by coming off as impersonal or pressure-heavy.

Behavioural Agility - How confident would you feel in your ability to adjust your working style? (i.e. change how you work to accommodate the new system and processes)

Communication Style	Agility Mean	Agility Std. Deviation
Extraverted	3.87	0.97
Down to Earth	3.84	0.92
Discipline Driven	3.75	0.93
Introverted	3.70	0.89
People Focused	3.62	0.90
Big Picture Thinking	3.60	0.93
Reward Reactor	3.51	0.97
Risk Reactor	3.50	1.03
Inspiration Driven	3.33	1.07
Outcome Focused	3.02	1.07

Highest-rated style: **Extraverted** (M = 3.87)

Lowest-rated style: **Outcome Focused** (M = 3.02)

Behavioural Agility Ratings Summary

Extraverted scored the highest again (M = 3.87), though the difference from **Down to Earth** (M = 3.84) was small. This suggests both styles can be effective in boosting people’s confidence to adjust their working style. The high score for **Extraverted** may also reflect the power of a demonstrative tone, where leaders visibly take charge, model adaptive behaviour, and actively encourage others to do the same. Meanwhile, a **Down to Earth** approach likely benefits from offering clear instructions and a practical framing of the change initiative, helping people understand exactly what needs to shift and how to go about it.

Again, an **Outcome Focused** (M = 3.02) tone scored the lowest. It appears that this approach makes people feel less informed to alter their working methods and might increase expectations without giving the impression that success is attainable.

Level of Support - How supported would you feel by the organisation during this change?

Communication Style	Support Mean	Support Std. Deviation
Extraverted	3.96	0.97
Introverted	3.83	1.04
People Focused	3.70	1.04
Risk Reactor	3.68	1.03
Down to Earth	3.66	0.95
Discipline Driven	3.59	1.09
Reward Reactor	3.57	1.03
Big Picture Thinking	3.37	0.99
Inspiration Driven	3.00	1.11
Outcome Focused	2.53	1.10

Highest-rated style: **Extraverted** (M = 3.96)

Lowest-rated style: **Outcome Focused** (M = 2.53)

Support Ratings Summary

Extraverted communication again came out on top (M = 3.96). It might suggest that when leaders speak with visible commitment and enthusiasm, it likely signals that support will be action-oriented and ongoing. **Introverted** (M = 3.83) and **People Focused** (M = 3.70) styles also scored highly, suggesting that more calm, reflective tones and relational reassurance both contribute meaningfully to a sense of being supported. People may feel seen and understood through these approaches, even if the tone is quieter. All those three Aspects highlight that feeling supported during change is less about the volume of communication and more about its emotional resonance and perceived sincerity.

An **Outcome Focused** style (again) had the lowest rating (M = 2.53). Messaging focused on performance without a clear support structure may lead people to feel they will be expected to deliver without being helped along the way. High standard deviation (SD = 1.10) also indicates polarised reactions among participants.

Top tips for leaders, what staff want and the Change Equation

Why Paradox Wins

Opposites can attract, and our data show that paradoxical communication often works best. For instance, while the **Extraverted** style topped overall message quality (mean score 4.05), the **Introverted** style was not far behind (mean score 3.71), suggesting that both high-energy and reflective tones can equally engage staff. In practice, this means a leader might open with an upbeat team huddle to ignite enthusiasm, then follow up with thoughtful one-to-one conversations that allow quieter individuals to process information in their own way. By intentionally weaving together seemingly opposite approaches—lively interaction and calm reflection—leaders meet the full spectrum of staff preferences and strengthen overall impact.

Embracing Paradox

Inspiration Driven

Adaptable
Flexible
Spontaneous

Discipline Driven

Purposeful
Structured
Reliable

Big Picture Thinking

Conceptual
Imaginative
Radical

Down to Earth

Practical
Evidence-Based
Cautious

Extraverted

Sociable
Demonstrative
Takes Charge

Introverted

Observing
Measured
Intimate

Outcome Focused

Tough
Competitive
Logical

People Focused

Accommodating
Collaborative
Empathetic



Room for growth when
we value different ways
of being

Walking the Fine Line

It is notable in the data that any of the eight Aspects or the two emotional reactors can be overplayed, tipping from effective into unproductive territory. For example, an **Extraverted** message that becomes too loud or relentless can overwhelm, just as an **Introverted** approach that drifts into excessive quietude can leave people feeling unsupported. That's why discerning the boundary between the effective and the overextended is crucial. Our overextended tables lay out exactly how each style can veer into excess—whether Reward Reactor turns into empty cheerleading or Risk Reactor devolves into paralysing caution—so leaders can spot when a strength has become a liability.

Inspiration Driven

Adaptable
Flexible
Spontaneous

Big Picture Thinking

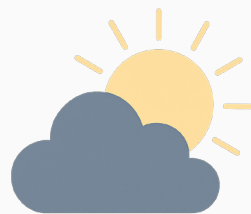
Conceptual
Imaginative
Radical

Extraverted

Sociable
Demonstrative
Takes Charge

Outcome Focused

Tough
Competitive
Logical



Space to notice your
triggers and stay
composed

Unfocused
Chaotic
Impulsive

Unfeasible
Fantasist
Change for the Sake
of Change

Can't be Alone
Overbearing
Controlling

Seeks Conflict
Win at All Costs
Argumentative

Valuing Every Voice

Above all, valuing different ways of being means embracing these paradoxes and knowing where each style's sweet spot lies. A robust behavioural framework helps leaders appreciate the full palette of communication possibilities, ensuring no one is left out by a one-dimensional message.

Top Tip: The Ten-Point Check

In summary: Whenever you build a message, schedule a call or draft a plan, run it through your checklist of all ten Aspects—this simple step guarantees you've touched on every behavioural preference and maximised resonance across your entire team.

Further correlating the above analysis with the personality of the staff, produced further key findings:

Leaders must explain clearly why change is happening and what it will achieve

When leaders clearly explain why a change is happening and what it aims to achieve with candid transparency, staff response is overwhelmingly positive. Conversely, inconsistent or unclear direction during change is the single biggest drain on appetite for change.

Staff need opportunities to ask questions and be consulted

Inviting questions and feedback in a timely way and fostering open team discussions also serve to motivate staff through periods of change. By contrast, a lack of consultation, ambiguity over role impact and uncertainty about job security are the greatest killers of engagement.

Preferred communication channels

Staff most appreciate a blend of open discussion in team meetings, backed up by clear electronic communication, yet this must be backed up with the opportunity for one-to-one meetings with their leaders. Less formal updates via digital platforms, and the use of e-learning modules and explainer videos tended to generate less enthusiasm.

Does authenticity help?

These broad findings are, however, moderated by the personality preferences of both leader and staff. Despite a call for more authentic leadership in many organisations, when leaders communicated authentically using their most natural style, they tended to engage those whose personalities are similar, while inadvertently creating resistance in those whose preferences lie at the opposite end of the spectrum. So, authenticity does not necessarily win out if it's one-dimensional. In summary, an authentic style only works when it matches staff preferences.

Adapting only to the majority still leaves some people behind

If a leader strives to adopt the communication style that is most valued by the majority of their team, they will motivate most people most of the time but still leave a vital minority unmoved and potentially resistant to change.

The case for individualised communication

The optimal approach, albeit the most demanding, requires leaders to read their audience and communicate in multiple styles across different media. The key is ensuring each individual receives coherent, clear messaging in a style that suits them. This highly personalised approach calls for leaders to be self-aware, value psychological diversity, and deploy strong rapport-building strategies, whatever the team's varied preferences. In summary, leaders should personalise communication for every individual.

Yes, but how? “Choose Your Attitude”

Change begins when leaders cultivate deep self-awareness and consciously choose their attitude towards the journey ahead. Their communication must be steady and unburdened by undue stress, embodying both purpose and genuine willingness. Only with that inner clarity can a leader step fully into the world of their people, empathising with each individual’s experience of the status quo and understanding the true nature of the change sought.

True advocacy for change only follows a rich, empathetic connection. When resistance emerges, the leader’s task is not to press harder but to return to empathy: to listen, acknowledge concerns, and deepen their understanding. As Stephen Covey wisely put it, “Seek first to understand and then to be understood.”

At the pinnacle of this process lies co-creation. With maximum empathy and a clear, shared plan of action, the leader and the team forge the change together, pooling ideas and innovations until everyone is fully enrolled in making the vision real.



Between stimulus and response, there is a space.

In that space is our power to choose our response.

In our response lies our growth and our freedom

– Viktor E. Frankl



Staff Want:

Clear, transparent communication at every stage

Nearly half of the participants identified inconsistent leadership or unclear direction from management as a primary challenge during organisational change, with 47 per cent selecting this option, closely followed by 44 per cent reporting lack of clear or consistent communication as a key obstacle. When asked what support would most help them adapt, 67 per cent of respondents highlighted clear, transparent communication from leadership, and 45 per cent emphasised the need for clarity on why the change is happening and what it aims to achieve. These findings underline that without visible, unified direction and an explicit rationale, employees struggle to trust leadership and commit to change.

To be invited into dialogue and receive timely feedback

Opportunities for two-way dialogue emerged as vital for maintaining engagement during change. 25 per cent of staff reported that not being consulted about change was a significant challenge, and 23 per cent cited uncertainty about job security or team structure as a demotivating factor.

Correspondingly, 42 per cent of participants indicated that having opportunities to give feedback or ask questions would help them adapt more effectively. This suggests that timely invitations to participate and open team discussions serve to reduce anxiety and foster active involvement in the change process.

Channels that combine open discussion, email and one-to-ones

When considering communication methods, most respondents favoured interpersonal, synchronous formats. Verbal team meetings were preferred by 51 per cent, one-to-one conversations with managers by 45 per cent, and email updates by 42 per cent. Less formal digital platforms, such as messaging tools, were chosen by only 18 per cent, while visual guides or short explainer videos appealed to 16 per cent and e-learning modules to just 9 per cent. These patterns indicate that although clear written information is valued, face-to-face and direct manager interactions are essential for fostering understanding and trust.

Advance notice, practical support and coordinated messaging

Beyond communication style and channels, staff highlighted several practical supports that underpin successful change. Advance notice and time to prepare were deemed necessary by 25 per cent, team discussions to make sense of the change were also favoured by 25 per cent, and 18 per cent sought consistent and coordinated messaging across teams and departments. Training or demonstrations to build confidence in new systems were selected by 17 per cent, and written guides or FAQs by 13 per cent. These preferences reinforce the argument for a tailored, multi-modal approach whereby leaders combine transparent messaging with structured opportunities for learning, feedback and reassurance, ensuring that each individual receives the style and level of support they need.

Final Advice to Leaders:

Embrace live, high-energy dialogue

The **Extraverted** leadership communication style achieved the highest average ratings for motivation (avg = 4.18/5.00), openness (avg = 4.12/5.00) and positivity (avg = 4.04/5.00), and consistently topped measures of trust, clarity and perceived support. This demonstrates that a confident, sociable tone, delivered in person, powerfully reinforces engagement during change.

Sociable and collaborative staff rated **Extraverted** messages even more favourably ($r \approx 0.31$), reinforcing the power of energetic, interactive dialogue for those who thrive on connection.

Avoid a purely **Outcome Focused** tone without relational context

An **Outcome Focused** leader, with an overemphasis on results without relational context, undermined staff confidence. The **Outcome Focused** style scored lowest across virtually every outcome. Motivation (avg = 2.79/5.00), clarity (avg = 2.83/5.00) and overall message quality (avg = 2.61/5.00).

When people are already anxious and directive, performance-only tones tend to undermine their sense of capability ($r = -0.30$). Although some staff did like this **Outcome Focused** approach, overall, it elicited high variability in responses. This suggests that directive, task-driven messages can alienate those who value interpersonal connection or those who need a clear “what’s in it for me” rationale.

Temper visionary or high-energy messages for anxious staff

Staff who are naturally ‘Optimistic’ rated **Big Picture Thinking** messages unusually high ($r = 0.46$). In other words, people who naturally look for the upside find visionary, future-focused leaders the most believable and engaging. However, correlational analyses revealed that staff with naturally higher levels of anxiety and/or stress levels felt less motivated ($r = -.18$) and less open ($r = -.21$) when exposed to high-energy (**Extraverted**) or visionary (**Big Picture Thinking**) messages. **Vigilant** (risk-aware) staff members rated **Big Picture Thinking** leadership messages poorly ($r = -0.29$), implying that highly cautious people perceive visionary framing as too uncertain or ‘risky’.

Leaders need to tailor communication to temper **Extraversion** and **Big Picture Thinking**, so they also come over as grounded, detailed and empathetic. This will be more effective at reducing anxiety and fostering buy-in.

Leverage behavioural agility and show diversity in communication style

Those staff who self-identified as behaviourally agile responded more positively across a spectrum of leadership communication styles. They liked structured **Discipline Driven** approaches ($r = .18$), as well as **Reward Reactor** ($r = .18$) approaches. This suggests that deploying multiple styles in parallel can capture the engagement of adaptable staff. Leaders need to deploy highly personalised, multi-modal communication.

What this means in practice

These extremes show us that no one style ever 'wins' across the board. **Optimistic** and confident team members will light up at bold, future-focused narratives, whereas those under stress or who naturally anticipate risk need grounded, structured messages that acknowledge potential pitfalls. The bigger the personality difference, the more crucial it becomes for leaders to flex their tone, deploying inspiring vision when it will land, and anchoring communications with clarity and risk-mitigation when anxiety or caution is high.

Bring in the Change Equation

Beckhard and Harris's Change Equation (1987) proposes that lasting organisational change only occurs when three factors combine to overcome resistance:

- Dissatisfaction with the current state (D)
- A compelling vision of the future (V)
- Practical next steps that people can take immediately (P)

Change crystallises only when the product of these three elements exceeds the organisation's natural resistance ($D \times V \times P > \text{Resistance}$). If any one factor is missing or poorly communicated—no sense of urgency, no clear destination or no roadmap—resistance remains unchallenged and change stalls.

Finding the Goldilocks 'Just Right' Change Equation

Picture staff navigating a dense forest of uncertainty. They encounter three separate messages:

1. A critique of the status quo so powerful it ignites dissatisfaction, yet leaves them unsure where to head next.
2. A grand, visionary panorama that fills them with hope but offers no firm ground on which to step.
3. A detailed checklist of actions that is so exhaustive, it saps their enthusiasm.

None alone will carry the group forward. The 'just right' message blends all three:

- It clearly shows why the old way can't continue, creating genuine urgency
- It paints a believable, motivating picture of what better looks like
- It lays out immediate, practical actions—simple, concrete steps that staff can take from day one

By weaving dissatisfaction, vision and practical guidance into a single, balanced message, leaders provide both the rocket fuel for momentum and the solid launchpad for action. This Goldilocks approach ensures that every individual understands why change matters, sees where it's heading.

Academic Reference

Beckhard, R. & Harris, R. T. (1987). *Organizational Transitions: Managing Complex Change*. Addison-Wesley.

The Data

Table 1: Challenges

What do you personally find most challenging about Organisational Change?	% selected (n = 171)
Inconsistent leadership or unclear direction from management	47%
Lack of clear or consistent communication	44%
Not knowing how the change will affect my role or responsibilities	39%
Not being consulted about the change	25%
Uncertainty about job security or team structure	23%
Too much change happening at once, without enough time to adjust	19%
Resistance or negativity from colleagues	19%
Feeling disconnected or not included in the change journey	17%
I don't usually find change at work particularly challenging	12%
Disruption to established routines or habits	11%
Conflict among team members as a result of the change	11%
Difficulty adapting to new systems, tools, or ways of working	6%
Feeling emotionally drained or stressed by the change	5%

Note: % of people who selected each challenge. Participants could select up to 3 options.

Table 2: Communication Method

How do you prefer to be communicated with during workplace changes?	% selected (n = 171)
Verbal team meetings	51%
One-to-one conversations with my manager	45%
Email updates	42%
Company-wide announcements or newsletters	23%
Informal check-ins or chats in person	19%
Written documents or PDFs to review in my own time	19%
Live Q&A or drop-in sessions	18%
Messaging platforms (e.g. Slack, Microsoft Teams)	18%
Visual guides or short explainer videos	16%
Informal check-ins or chats online	12%
E-learning modules or short self-led learning experiences	9%
I don't have a strong preference	5%

Note: % of people who selected each communication method. Participants could select up to 3 options.

Table 3: Support Preference

What kind of support from your organisation would help you adapt to change more effectively?	% selected (n = 171)
Clear, transparent communication from leadership	67%
Clarity on why the change is happening and what it aims to achieve	45%
Opportunities to give feedback or ask questions	42%
Advance notice and time to prepare for the change	25%
Team discussions to make sense of the change together	25%
Consistent and coordinated messaging across teams and departments	18%
Training or demonstrations to help build confidence in new tools or systems	17%
Written guides, FAQs, or materials I can refer to on my own	13%
One-to-one support or check-ins from my manager	12%
Practical help with managing workload while adapting to the change	9%
Recognition and encouragement for progress during the transition	7%
Emotional wellbeing support or space to process the change	4%

Note: % of people who selected each support preference. Participants could select up to 3 options.

More on the Research Method

In this within-subjects vignette study, each of the 171 participants read ten brief workplace messages about the same organisational change: the launch of a new project management system. Although the change remained constant, every message was crafted to reflect a distinct leadership communication style, each one derived from one of the ten Lumina Spark Aspects.

Once a participant had read a message, they rated their response across several dimensions: motivation, trust in leadership, clarity, emotional reaction, openness to the change, behavioural agility, perceived support, and overall message quality. This approach directly compared how varying tones and framing strategies influenced staff reactions to the same underlying change.

Participants provided their ratings on a five-point behaviourally anchored scale, with each anchor defined by concrete reactions. For example, 1 = “I would be unsure how to adapt and would need a lot of support”, and 5 = “I would adjust easily and be fully capable of navigating the change.” By combining attitudinal assessment with an indication of expected behavioural commitment, this measurement strategy captured both how participants felt and how prepared they believed they would be to act on the information presented.

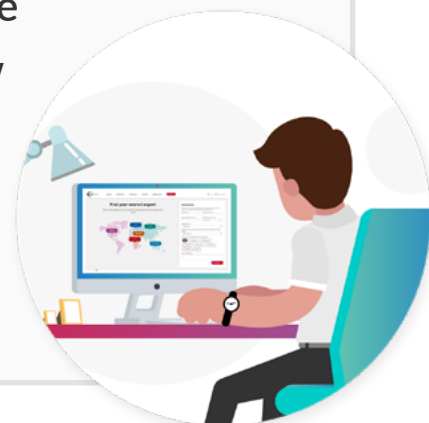
The staff’s personalities were then assessed to examine how their views were coloured by their personalities, as measured by Lumina Spark.

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