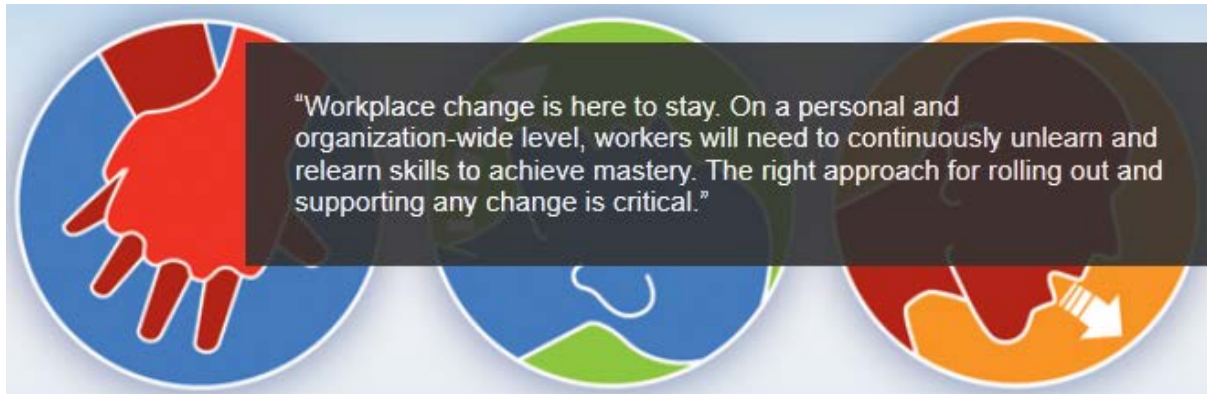


# Designing Learning for “When Things Change” (Dec 12)

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After more than 50 years, the American Heart Association changed the CPR guidelines. Instead of A-B-C (airway and breathing first, followed by chest compressions), rescuers should practice C-A-B: chest compressions first, then airway and breathing.

This is a great example of the need to learn “when things change,” the least explored of the five “need to learn” moments. (See [this article](#) by Conrad Gottfredson and Bob Mosher.)

In the CPR example, as in many others, we need to unlearn the old way of doing CPR (ABC), and relearn the new way (CAB). As Gottfredson and Mosher put it, learners need to “change skills that are deeply ingrained in their performance practices.”

The unlearning/relearning process requires a lot of time and patience. The amount of effort required, rather than the change itself, may result in resistance. In this article, I provide tips and guidelines for learning solutions and communication strategies to overcome resistance and to facilitate change.

## **Communicate the “why”**

Change often fails because learners don’t understand why it is necessary or needed. This prevents the unlearning necessary for change.

The American Heart Association provides a life-saving reason for the guideline change: “By changing the sequence to C-A-B, chest compressions will be initiated sooner and ventilation only minimally delayed until completion of the first cycle of chest compressions.”

Let’s look at another example: a new IT system implementation. Before, during, and after a rollout, the change management team needs to communicate how the new system will benefit the company AND the individual. Is this system faster than the old one? Can correct use of the system save money? Is there a future state the change will help achieve?

This is not to say that everyone will immediately embrace the change. A small percentage—early adopters—will be eager to embrace the change, and there will be those who are late adopters, or laggards. The majority will lie somewhere in between. The implementation plan should encourage early adopters to advocate and reinforce the change throughout the organization.

## **Provide adequate support**

Change is hard, so handholding, or support, is critical. When there is not enough support, the learner feels isolated, resistance builds, the unlearning/relearning process is blocked, and, ultimately, the change does not take place.

A blended learning initiative, including formal training and performance support, is an effective way to support change.

- Formal training, including eLearning or mobile learning nuggets, can start the relearning process by introducing new knowledge or building on existing knowledge.
- Equally important, performance support tools facilitate relearning on the job with a mentor, help desk, job aids, or social media tools. Some systems also include built-in help, which is integrated with the workflow.

## **The “teach-back”**

An effective method to build a knowledge base and reinforce change is the “teach-back” method.

The Cheesecake Factory recently implemented a new inventory system. The system rolled out with eLearning modules and a dedicated support staff. By carefully monitoring system use, management realized that employees were not maximizing the system to save costs.

The professional development department followed these steps to implement a teach-back approach:

- Core users completed online quizzes to identify their key knowledge gaps.
- System experts trained a group of high-level managers to become subject matter experts or mentors.
- A yearly gathering of employees was a perfect opportunity to get everyone on the same page. The session started with a reminder of the reason for adopting the new system. Then, using tutorials, reference manuals, and guided discussions, mentors closed the key knowledge gaps for the core user group.
- The core user group is now using the same resources to teach-back to those employees who did not attend the conference. They can contact their mentor with any questions.

## **Assess the change and take action**

Barriers often block a change. Learners may go through formal training, but have little opportunity to implement the change. They may still be using legacy systems or their own work-around. Perhaps they don't have access to the tools, or don't have the opportunity or motivation to take action.

Part of any change cycle is assessing the results. It may be necessary to track system use or, in the case of soft skills, check in during personal action planning or performance reviews.

## **Summary of Key Points**

- Communicate *why* the change is necessary before, during, and after the rollout
- Leverage the support and expertise of early adopters
- Before any change initiative, ensure there is an adequate number of knowledge experts who are available to answer questions
- Provide performance support tools, including print-based job aids, and facilitate the use of social media (blogs, wikis, micro-blogging) within the organization and from outside experts (hi-tech)
- Provide phone or virtual support (hi-touch)
- Use the teach-back method to increase the application of the change and the number of experts
- Ensure there is no overlap with other tools, processes, or procedures

- Monitor the use of the tool during personal development meetings or by using a tracking system
- Address skills gaps with a blended-learning solution, including formal learning events and performance support

### **Change is here to stay**

Workplace change is here to stay. On personal and organization-wide levels, workers will need to continuously unlearn and relearn skills to achieve mastery. The right approach for rolling out and supporting any change is critical. Always explain the “why,” provide hi-touch and hi-tech support, and assess how employees are using their new knowledge and skills. Also remember to throw time and patience into the mix.

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