Managing Change

by

The Travel Institute
Overview
Change is a constant factor in the travel industry. What you knew to be true yesterday may be inaccurate today. Prices, policies, people, and products can literally change overnight, so the ability to embrace and effectively manage change is of great benefit to today’s travel professionals. This paper will introduce you to some basic skills in managing change. First among these skills is planning for change, and you will explore some key elements to consider as you anticipate change within your organization. Once you know that change will occur, you must know how to effectively communicate the expected changes to coworkers and clients. While change may not always come easily, you can be sure that it will indeed come.

Planning for Change
Plan for change? Impossible, some travel professionals may say. Changes in this business sneak up on you, they might argue, and it is all you can do simply to manage what has occurred. While it is true that you may not be able to predict the future, there are some useful issues to consider to help prepare you for change. A great way to start is by taking a close look at how you view changing situations.

Paradigms
Just as opinions and attitudes differ among people, feelings and reactions about change range broadly from positive to negative. Depending on an individual’s background, job position, or life perspective, change can be viewed as frustrating and frightening—or as exciting and challenging.

Those who view change in a positive light are more apt to benefit from it and manage it effectively. They see how change can improve a present situation and create new opportunities in the future. They therefore learn to embrace, rather than fear, change. What is their secret?

The concept of paradigms can help you embrace change and plan for the future. A paradigm, as defined by futurist Joel Arthur Barker, is a set of rules and regulations (written or unwritten) that establishes boundaries and tells you how to behave inside the boundaries in order to be successful. A paradigm, in other words, is a way of thinking that influences your actions.

In a travel agency, examples of paradigms could include the following:

- The way agents greet walk-in clients.
- The agency’s policy for issuing refunds.
• The division of staff between corporate and leisure responsibilities.

• The agency’s current product portfolio (or mixture of types of products sold).

Each of these examples is based on a set of formal or informal rules that have been established at your agency over time, or by executive decision. Perhaps front-line agents have been conditioned to avoid direct eye contact with walk-in clients until they are free to speak with them. Or maybe the owner of the agency sends all corporate bookings to one agent and instructs the leisure agents to focus their sales efforts on cruises. All of these behaviors are a result of established rules, or paradigms.

Paradigms are useful because they help us organize data and provide some structure that fulfills our security needs. However, when current situations change, paradigms can keep us from seeing the new opportunities that change can bring. We become bound by our sets of rules, and consequently we fear the change that challenges our paradigms.

When an established set of rules undergoes a change, a paradigm shift occurs. Paradigm shifts are behind much of the turbulence that normally accompanies change. We had sets of rules we knew well; then someone (or something) changed the rules. We understood our old boundaries, and now we have to learn new ones. These changes dramatically upset our well-organized, structured world.

In the case of the shipping industry, the jet plane initiated a paradigm shift. Some people resisted the change, letting the shift occur without shifting with it, thus accepting a fate that they believed meant doom for their industry. They became victims of paradigm paralysis, an inflexible commitment to the status quo in the face of great change.

People who resist change and become paralyzed by paradigm shifts are often those who use phrases such as these when they hear of a new idea:

“That’s impossible.”

“We don’t do things that way around here.”

“It’s too radical a change for us.”

“We tried something like that before and it didn’t work.”

“I wish it were that easy.”

“It’s against policy to do it that way.”

“When you’ve been around a little longer, you’ll understand.”
“Who gave you permission to change the rules?”

“Let’s get real, okay?”

“How dare you suggest that what we’re doing is wrong!”

In contrast, some people embrace change and respond positively to paradigm shifts. These are the change masters, the ones who see opportunity in the face of change. They assess the present situation and look toward the future; they listen to new ideas and act on the good ones. The people who rescued the ocean liners from certain doom and created a booming industry saw their paradigms shift, and either extended their old paradigms or created new ones. They found success in change and embraced the paradigm shift.

What can you do to prepare yourself to be positive and action-oriented the next time you are faced with change? That is, how can you plan to overcome paradigm paralysis? Here are some guiding principles to consider the next time you encounter a paradigm shift.

1. Realize that paradigms are common. Paradigms are all around you, in your business life and your personal life. Some are great; some are small. And all are subject to shifts. Be prepared.

2. Realize that paradigms are necessary and useful. Paradigms help us locate problems and provide rules to help us solve them; without rules, we would live in a constant state of confusion. View paradigms, then, not as undesirable entities, but as highly functional elements of your day-to-day life.

3. While appreciating paradigms, also realize that they can be detrimental when they block you from new ideas or solutions. Paradigms are harmful only if you let them paralyze you in a state of uncertainty or dismay. Stay open to new ideas.

4. Recognize your current paradigms—and be willing to go beyond them.

5. Realize that there is almost always more than one right answer. Different paradigms allow you to see problems from a variety of perspectives. Because your paradigm may not be the same as your colleague’s, you are both accessing disparate sets of information to solve a particular problem. Therefore, you may end up with different, but equally correct, solutions. Respect and utilize these differences.

6. Realize that you can choose to change your own set of rules and regulations by altering your paradigms. Be optimistic about the future and embrace new opportunities.
Leading Versus Managing Change

As you plan for change by exploring your attitude toward paradigm shifts, you should also consider how your leadership and management skills work together in changing situations. Years ago, leadership and management tended to be used as synonyms. The only degree of differentiation was in the level of the organization’s hierarchy; that is, the further you climbed, the more “leadership” skills you supposedly used.

Thinking on this subject has advanced in recent years, especially with regard to change. Leading and managing are now viewed as two separate functions, requiring different sets of skills depending on the situation rather than on hierarchical level. Leaders and managers, then, are differentiated by their skills, primarily in three general areas—technical, human, and conceptual.

Technical skills are those skills needed to accomplish the mechanics of a particular job, such as building and maintaining a website.

Human skills deal with working with others to be an effective group member and to be able to build cooperative effort within a team.

Conceptual skills are the skills that involve recognizing how the interrelationships of the various factors involved in a given situation influence actions that are likely to achieve the maximum good for the total organization.

The general assumption is that at lower levels in an organization, the major need is for technical and human skills. At higher levels, effectiveness largely depends on human and conceptual skills. At the top, conceptual skill becomes the most important of all for successful administration.

While it may not be accurate to say that only people at top levels in an organization use conceptual skill, most people would agree that for a person to function well as a leader in an organization, he or she must possess conceptual skill. Whether leaders in an agency are owners or front-line counselors, it is their ability to analyze a situation and respond in a way that benefits the entire organization that most markedly distinguishes them from managers, especially during times of change.

In the face of change, leaders are those who conceptualize the changing nature of a situation and initiate the shift from paradigm to paradigm. Managers, using primarily technical and human skills, organize operations within the paradigm. Successful organizational change is a result of a dynamic interplay of the technical, human, and conceptual skills that accompany both leadership and management.
Because both leadership and management abilities are necessary throughout organizational change, it is not entirely accurate to speak only of “managing” change. True success occurs from “leading” change as well, by altering the status quo, creating a new vision, communicating that vision widely, getting people to believe in it, and then empowering them to act.

It is beyond the scope of this course to teach the conceptual skills necessary for “leading” change. (In fact, there is an ongoing debate about whether conceptual ability is a learned skill or an innate quality of effective leaders.)

Without delving further into this “nature versus nurture” leadership debate, we’ll simply remind you that the purpose of this course is to provide some instruction for “managing” change. While it is important for you to understand the nature of change leadership, in this course you will merely explore basic guidelines to help you develop the technical and human skills that can lead to effective change management.

Before you practice these skills, however, remember to invest some time and effort in planning for change. By taking a fresh, positive look at paradigms, paradigm shifts, and the dynamic relationships between leading and managing change, you will build a more solid foundation on which to apply the skills described in the remainder of this course.

**Communicating Change**

While planning for change requires you to assess your own skills and perspectives, communicating change requires you to think of others involved in the change process. An important part of managing change is making sure those who will be affected know what to expect. This paper addresses the steps necessary to effectively communicate anticipated changes throughout your organization.

**Taking Stock**

For any type of change, you need to know exactly what the change involves before you can explain it to others. You can take stock of a changing situation first by examining what type of change is involved, and then by exploring who is affected by it and how they might react.

**Types of Change**

The type of change that occurs will often determine people’s response to it. There are three major types of change—developmental, transitional, and transformational.

**Developmental change** generally entails improving an existing state or way of doing things. Because it usually requires only minor changes within an existing paradigm, this type of change is the least threatening and easiest to manage.
An example of this type of change in a travel agency might be a new directive to immediately greet every client who walks in the agency with a personal greeting and friendly smile, no matter how busy the agents are. Though they may initially resist it, the agents who are used to having clients wait until they are free to greet them will probably adjust rather quickly to this developmental change, since it is basically an extension of the rules they already observe.

**Transitional change** is a bit more threatening because it requires dismantling current procedures and replacing them with new ones. An example of this might be a corporate agency that, in the face of commission cuts, decides to adopt a leisure focus. The corporate agents need to learn entirely new procedures and techniques for selling to a leisure market, and would need sufficient time to adapt to these changes and make an effective transition.

The third type of change, **transformational change**, is profound and traumatic, and therefore the most threatening. Transformational change requires managing ambiguity and implementing an evolutionary new state. It often involves ongoing paradigm shifts, as organizational strategies and visions undergo continued revisions.

For example, a small travel agency that merges with a larger agency for increased solvency and buying power would experience transformational change. The employees of the agency can expect to encounter a period during which their future is largely unknown; they are likely to be unsure about the security of their jobs or their new responsibilities. Not only does the agency undergo a complete transformation, but the employees do as well, struggling to cope with their uncertain futures.

**Resistance to Change**

Once you know what type of change you’re dealing with, you can start to think about how people will react to it.

In general, people either accept or resist change. Change becomes less acceptable as it increases in impact from developmental to transitional to transformational. People tend to respond most favorably to developmental change because it is viewed as an improvement to an existing state. Transformational change, on the other hand, is usually the most difficult to accept because it is evolutionary by nature, leaving people unsure of the final result.

Regardless of the type of change, it is useful to remember that because of our reliance on paradigms, we have a natural tendency to resist change. Among reasons that people resist or resent change are because they

- Fear losing their jobs, status, business contacts, or favorable working conditions.
- Don’t see a need for change.
• Don’t like or respect the person or department that introduced the change.

• Don’t like the way the change was introduced.

• Weren’t consulted or personally informed about the change.

• Don’t understand the reasons for the change or feel it will do more harm than good.

• Consider the change a personal criticism.

• Think that the change requires too much effort or comes at a bad time.

• Think the change creates more responsibility and work.

• Want to test the organization to see if they can avoid implementing the change.

• Have negative feelings about the organization or their jobs.

• Have been negatively influenced by their peers or the leaders of their peer groups.

An important part of communicating change is anticipating and managing resistance. The following suggested techniques can help turn resistance into acceptance:

1. Empathize with the people affected by change. Empathy is your ability to feel what others feel. Ask yourself who will be affected by the change. Then consider their individual work environments, jobs, work histories, and anticipated feelings or reactions to the change before you try to implement any changes.

2. Involve people in change decisions. After you’ve explained in detail why the change is needed, ask for each person’s reaction, both for and against. Create an open, responsive atmosphere for people to voice concerns and offer ideas. People are much less likely to resist their own ideas. Finally, gain their commitment by asking them to support the change, even if they disagree with it.

3. Explain the benefits of the anticipated changes. If possible, tell employees how they can expect more favorable working conditions or an increase in income, status, authority, or business contacts. Perhaps the change will provide more opportunities for growth, recognition, and promotion, or offer new challenges and lessen boredom. Try to remain optimistic, even if employees are negative or defensive.

4. Communicate clearly and frequently. Provide enough information and time to allow people to go through incremental stages of awareness, understanding, acceptance, and
finally the change itself. The process described in the next section will help you communicate effectively to manage people through the transition.

**Step-by-Step Communication**

As you should have already realized, communicating change is a gradual process, one that requires not only time to carefully analyze the change and how it will affect people, but also a thoughtful process of communication. To communicate effectively, you must plan your message in a series of small steps to help reassure people of the positive outcomes of the proposed change.

These small steps work together and comprise a single communication strategy that you can use the next time you must manage change within your organization.

**Step 1: Describe the change.**

This step increases awareness and provides reasons why the change is necessary.

Example: “As you are aware, commission cuts have forced us to reevaluate our staffing needs. We will be downsizing the agency over the next six months.”

**Step 2: Explain the impact of the change.**

This step adds to employees’ personal awareness about the impact of the change.

Example: “We will accomplish this by placing a hiring freeze on our current openings and through natural attrition. If you wish to remain in your current position, you may do so. The reduction in staff, however, will affect your workload. Besides your regular responsibilities, I will be asking you to cross-train less-experienced agents and assume some management responsibilities to help fill the gap. Unfortunately, we cannot offer you additional money at this time due to financial constraints.”

**Step 3: Encourage questions and allow for concerns.**

This step helps employees understand the change by providing an opportunity to clarify and express feelings.

Example: “Do you have any questions so far?”

**Step 4: Respond to questions and concerns.**

This step helps ease initial fears and lays the foundation for acceptance.
Example: “I understand your concern about the additional responsibilities involved. I can’t tell you at this time exactly what they will entail, but I can assure you that I will provide any training necessary, and even work with you personally to enable you to continue doing a good job. During this difficult time, I’m asking for everyone’s commitment to be patient with each other and go the extra mile for the good of the agency and our clients.”

**Step 5: Restate the anticipated impact.**

This step clarifies what you will expect throughout the transition.

Example: “As I’ve mentioned, I’ll expect you and the others in the agency to take on a little more work to fill the gap. Training and time to learn new skills will be provided as needed.”

**Step 6: Gain commitment.**

This step ensures that the employee is committed to accepting the change.

Example: “Can I count on your support?”

**Step 7: Confirm plans and create a follow-through process.**

This step clarifies what is required to implement the change.

Example: “I’ll be identifying additional job responsibilities for you and the other staff members during the coming week. We’ll all meet next Tuesday to discuss the new duties and the types of training that will be required. During the meeting I will ask for any suggestions you and the others might have to make this transition as smooth as possible. In the meantime, please feel free to come directly to me with any problems, concerns, or suggestions.”

While this step-by-step communication process may seem idealistic, try to think of it as a framework for actual discussions you will have with people in the process of managing change. By dividing the message into well-planned, manageable bits of information, you are more likely to communicate confidently and empathetically, and your employees are more likely to make a smooth transition.

**Implementing Change**

With preliminary planning considerations complete and a thorough analysis and well-planned communication strategy utilized, it’s now time to begin implementing the necessary changes. Like communication, implementation should be completed in several phases—or what we’ll call the implementation process.
The Implementation Process

Implementing change effectively takes strategic effort and thoughtful planning. Studies of organizations that have implemented changes successfully indicate a general pattern of activities used to introduce the change. We'll describe this pattern as a process consisting of five progressive phases.

Keep in mind that, like any process, the phases of the implementation process may not necessarily follow in strict chronological order or be performed in isolation from each other. The path toward successful change implementation weaves among and between the various steps, resulting in a dynamic, fluid change process. The five phases described below provide a general road map to guide your implementation efforts.

Phase 1: Clarify plans.
This part of the process actually begins during your preliminary communication efforts in managing change. In fact, communication should be paramount throughout the entire change process, as free-flowing information and opportunities to voice questions and concerns help everyone keep a clear picture of what is happening. Clarification reduces the amount of incorrect information being used as fodder for the rumor mill.

Key Considerations:
- Appoint one person to implement the planned change or changes.
- Select someone who is viewed as a leader within the organization; keen conceptual ability and the ability to communicate a shared vision are crucial for successful change implementation.
- Formulate clear, simple goals, with designated times for accomplishing each goal.
- Make specific plans with clearly marked milestones and desired final outcomes.
- Give and solicit frequent face-to-face feedback.

Phase 2: Integrate new practices.
In this phase, new elements are gradually introduced into the old structure. This strategy enables people to shift more comfortably from their existing paradigm into the new paradigm. A gradual transition can help overcome paradigm paralysis.

Key Considerations:
- Limit the amount of change introduced at any one time.
- Help those who resist the change to gradually accept it by slowing the change process.
- Introduce the change to receptive individuals first, or those who accept the change.
- Ensure that the reasons and procedures for the change are well known throughout the organization.
Phase 3: Provide education.
In times of change, people often need additional training to boost their confidence or develop their skills. They need to feel as if they are doing as good a job, or better, than they were when they were operating within their old paradigm. Internal training, in the form of coaching or mentoring, and external training, in the form of professional education courses or independent seminars, can provide just the motivation and information needed to develop a skilled, motivated, and confident workforce.

Key Considerations:
- Allow the people who are affected by the change to incorporate their experience and knowledge as they undergo training.
- Provide hands-on training whenever possible.
- Select or design training from the perspective of the people who need it.
- Train the people who accept the change first, letting their motivation gradually affect those who resist the change.
- Evaluate the effects of training on work practices and employees’ attitudes.

Phase 4: Foster ownership.
This is a crucial phase that actually has its roots in the very early stages of your communication efforts. From the time that people first learn of the upcoming changes, it’s important for them to assume some responsibility for the change. With each additional effort or thought they invest in making the change happen, a sense of ownership increases. This phase is positioned here because at this point in the implementation process most employees should feel committed to the change.

Key Considerations:
- Ensure that the change truly does improve employees’ ability to accomplish work; if the change makes work more difficult or ineffective, it is not fair to expect employees to develop a sense of ownership.
- Provide incentives for employees who successfully apply the change.
- Set periodic milestones for soliciting and responding to employee feedback.
- Incorporate new suggestions and ideas from employees in the ongoing implementation plans.
- Publicize suggestions that are successfully put into effect, as well as the names of the people who made the suggestions.
Phase 5: Give feedback.
Feedback, like communication, is an ongoing element in planning and implementing change. It is included as the final phase in the implementation process to remind you of the importance of sharing the results of your change efforts, continuously and consistently. To remain positive and motivated, employees need to know what effect their efforts are having. Feedback is the best tool that change implementers have to give employees some insight about the outcomes of their performance.

Key Considerations:
• Document and frequently communicate the expected outcomes of the change, on both an organizational and a personal level.
• Provide frequent face-to-face feedback.
• Identify when established milestones have been met, and explain the significance of having achieved them.
• Make sure feedback includes the entire organization, not just those who are affected by the change.
• Acknowledge and celebrate key organizational—and individual—successes.

Barriers to Implementation
Successful implementation strategies must take into consideration barriers that currently exist or may arise during a change effort, and the consequences of these anticipated barriers. To help you imagine what some of these barriers might be, take a look at the following list of common barriers and their consequences.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of shared vision.</td>
<td>Misinterpretation of change efforts.</td>
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<td>Lack of resources to support the change.</td>
<td>Frustration and inefficient work processes .</td>
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<td>Lack of planning.</td>
<td>Change is implemented ineffectively, leading to negative results.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of communication.</td>
<td>Messages are vague and left open to interpretation, feeding the “rumor mill.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>No support from those affected by the change.</td>
<td>The change is not carried through to completion.</td>
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Failure to assess and overcome resistance.
Increased resistance.

Lack of leadership ability.
No trust is established; orders are ignored or not taken seriously.

Lack of involvement.
Missed opportunities for better ideas and sense of ownership.

Past failures at change efforts.
Limited faith in or support of current change efforts.

Not enough time for communication and implementation.
Low morale and high turnover.

Once you’ve identified anticipated and/or actual barriers, you must find ways to prevent them or at least limit their negative consequences. A delicate mixture of management skills, leadership ability, and common sense is the best way to accomplish this important task.

Since this paper cannot teach you how to achieve this desirable balance, we will instead offer some ideas to help you prevent or overcome barriers to implementing change successfully.

• Continually educate people about the change. Depending on the situation, this could include clients as well as employees.
• Give yourself and others sufficient time to plan for the change.
• Manage change as a process—from planning to communication to implementation to dealing with the effects of change.
• Assess the change situation in advance, considering the type of change you’re dealing with, who will be affected, and how they will react.
• Anticipate resistance and plan accordingly.
• Demonstrate your commitment to the change by being actively involved in the change process and modeling desired performance or attitudes.
• Communicate clearly, regularly, and openly.
• Follow through on the plans you communicate.
Dealing with Change
Whether you’re the person responsible for communicating and implementing change or one of the people experiencing change, you will have to learn to deal with the nuances and effects of a changing environment.

Many of the skills involved in dealing with change are related to your understanding of change and your willingness to adapt. In this unit, you will explore a few words of wisdom from noted change experts to enhance your understanding and adaptability.

The Nature of Change
In Paradox of Change organizational change expert Barry Sheehy identified several paradoxical themes about change that he has surmised from his observations and studies of great breakthroughs and comebacks throughout history. They are summarized below for your improved understanding about the nature of change.

Those who should change very often don’t. The people who most need to make a paradigm shift are often the first to suffer paradigm paralysis.

We usually don’t undertake change until we have to. As long as we can survive comfortably within our existing paradigms, we are not likely to pursue new opportunities. We make excuses and rely on our existing resources until a crisis occurs. Only exceptional leaders undertake large-scale change in advance of a crisis.

The real threat to our future success comes not from outside the organization, but from inside. Changes in the travel industry are bound to happen, but it’s not the changes themselves that will destroy you. It’s how you choose to adapt.

Our own past success is the biggest obstacle to change. In other words, we tend to “rest on our laurels,” assuming a successful past somehow guarantees future success. It usually takes failure, or being on the brink of it, to lead us down a different future path.

The most successful changes happen when old paradigms are abandoned while they still work. Fixing something that “ain’t broke” takes foresight, courage, and a high degree of risk. Only true change leaders successfully tackle and accomplish this feat.

Perceived threats often turn out to be opportunities. This is the foundation of positive thinking that leads to acceptance of change. The willingness to recognize and renew what is becoming old or outdated is one of the key characteristics of the people who are most successful at dealing with change.
10 Ground Rules in Changing Times

Organizational change expert, Price Pritchett, Ph.D., offers several guiding principles for dealing with change in his influential publication *New Work Habits for a Radically Changing World*. Some of his suggestions have been adapted here as simple ground rules for dealing with change in the travel industry.

1. **Become a quick-change artist.**
   Today’s travel organizations need people who adapt quickly, not those who psychologically resist change or remove themselves from the process. A situation that you think you fully understand today could have already changed without you even realizing it. Being able to adapt quickly will build your reputation, while resisting change can ruin it.

2. **Speed up.**
   To survive and gain competitive advantage in the travel industry’s environment of fierce competition and fleeting opportunities, you need to operate with an emphasis on action. If you’ve spent months preparing just the right marketing plan for your new niche specialty, and you find your well-planned message is simply not attracting new clients, admit the error, fix it, and move on. Devise a new strategy, choose a new specialty, or change your market base—and do it quickly. Indecisiveness, resistance, inaction, and excessive analysis are obstacles to successful change and are often at the root of lost opportunity.

3. **Accept ambiguity and uncertainty.**
   If you’re one of those people who loves structure and detests fluid job roles and shifting priorities, try to loosen up. Uncertainty is part of working in the travel industry. Take responsibility for seeking clarity in moments of uncertainty, and point yourself in the right direction. Learn to feel your way into the future, rather than relying on other people to provide the rules that frame your existence. Though you work alongside others, your future success rests largely on your own ability to deal effectively with the ambiguity of changing situations.

4. **Stay in school.**
   The lesson is simple (one that you’ve already learned, judging from your participation in this certification program)—either you keep learning, or you end up without the skills and knowledge you need to protect your career. Read trade publications, attend supplier seminars, discover virtual classrooms on the Internet, enroll in continuing education courses. If your employer helps cover the expense of your education and gives you the time you need to pursue it, great. If not, pursue learning opportunities anyway. The more you know, the better you are able to adapt when your job takes an unexpected turn.
5. **Hold yourself accountable for outcomes.**
When faced with change, focus on the big picture. What is the change intended to accomplish? What can you do to make it happen? If you accept responsibility for the final outcome, you will find it easier to deal with the challenges of reaching that goal. Rather than letting yourself get stuck on the little obstacles you encounter along the way, think positively and convince yourself that you’re moving in the right direction toward an improved state. Be responsible for every action you make in pursuit of that goal.

6. **Add value.**
Don’t assume that simply because you’re doing your job, you have a right to keep it. Your positive contributions to the success of your organization add far more value than your mere presence in the workplace. Think of ways that you can contribute positively to your organization, which means doing your part in implementing or supporting necessary changes. Focus on ways that you can make a worthwhile difference in changing times—thereby increasing your value in the workplace.

7. **Manage your own morale.**
Don’t blame others—managers, owners, suppliers, or coworkers—for your feelings of resistance, insecurity, and fear during times of change. Harboring resentments toward others inhibits your gradual and necessary acceptance of change. If you let other people be the scapegoats for your emotions, you are less able to gain control of your feelings and move forward in a positive direction. Remember, dealing with change successfully requires you to move forward.

8. **Practice kaizen.**
Kaizen (pronounced ky’zen) is the Japanese term for continuous improvement, or the relentless quest for a better way. Kaizen forces you to look forward, always reaching for higher levels of quality that can add up to a valuable competitive advantage. It forces you to examine existing paradigms daily and be open to paradigm shifts before a crisis occurs. If you assume personal responsibility for these increasing degrees of success and improvement, then dealing with change will become as natural as your commitment to higher quality.

9. **Be a fixer, not a finger pointer.**
Even if you’re not personally responsible for planning and implementing change, become a problem solver. Problems are a natural offspring of change. Rather than blaming others for causing the problems, assume ownership for fixing them. Concentrating on solutions rather than accusations will help you deal positively with change.
10. Alter your expectations.
People have three general expectations about change: (1) I can change before I have to; (2) I will change only when absolutely necessary; or (3) I will not change. People in the first group thrive; those in the second group, if they’re lucky, survive; those in the third group, however, usually die. Which group do you belong to? To thrive in today’s travel industry, do you need to change your expectations about change? If so, do it—and do it quickly.

Summary
In the travel industry, it’s very difficult to predict the changes that lie ahead, but there are some useful issues to consider to help prepare you for change. You can start by examining your existing paradigms, and then exploring opportunities to expand or go beyond them. A major shift to an entirely new set of rules is called a paradigm shift, and those who are unwilling or unable to shift are often victims of paradigm paralysis. Developing a willingness to explore new opportunities is one way to prepare for change.

You can also strive to achieve a balance among your technical, human, and conceptual skills as you prepare to initiate and eventually manage change. Conceptualizing change is difficult and one of the primary skills of change leaders; this course focuses on the human and technical skills that can help you manage change.

One of the first steps in managing change is being able to communicate anticipated changes. You can do this by first taking stock of the situation. This means analyzing the type of change you’re dealing with—developmental, transitional, or transformational—and then determining who will be affected by the change and how they might react. Anticipating and overcoming resistance to change are crucial elements in successfully communicating change throughout your organization.

Communicating and implementing change should occur gradually, in a logical pattern of steps or phases. To communicate effectively, you must plan your message in a series of small steps to help reassure people of the positive outcomes of the proposed change. The implementation process consists of five interrelated phases that result in a dynamic, fluid change process. Successful implementation strategies must take into consideration barriers that presently exist or may arise during a change effort, and the consequences of these anticipated barriers.

Whether you’re the person responsible for communicating and implementing change, or one of the people experiencing change, you will have to learn to deal with the nuances and effects of a changing environment. Many of the skills involved in dealing with change are related to your understanding of change and your willingness to adapt.

Learning about change and about the skills involved in managing it is a crucial part of being a travel professional today. The time you take to develop these skills is a small, but
important, investment in your career. After all, failing to change in a changing industry could mean paying the ultimate price—your future.