

# 1. Mind the Gap Model

Which challenges do I likely face if I try to implement big changes in my organization?

## Key Definitions

Organizations constantly change, in ways intended and unintended. When managers deliberately intend to alter an organization, shifting it from its current state to a future state, we speak of *implementing change*.

The challenges involved in successfully implementing change depend on how big the intended change is – whether it is a minor adaptation or a major *organizational transformation*. Generally, the wider the scope (the number of aspects being changed) and the larger the scale (the extent of the change), the more challenges that will be encountered.

## Conceptual Model

The model identifies the three main categories of challenges encountered by managers trying to cross the gap between the current state and the intended future state – hence the tongue-in-cheek name, *Mind the Gap Model*. Within each of the three categories, three specific challenges are described that are commonly faced when implementing big changes. The model doesn't suggest that these challenges always occur, but serves as a checklist to warn managers of potential issues they might come up against.



## Key Elements

The nine change challenges, grouped into three sets of three, are:

1. **Change clarity.** Is it truly clear-cut to all stakeholders what the change entails? Managers often think it is clear what they *say*, but that doesn't mean that recipients are clear in their interpretation of what they *hear*. Common forms of ambiguity among stakeholders are:

- A. *Specificity ambiguity*. Often the change itself hasn't been made tangible enough to act upon. It is unclear what needs to be done, when, how and by whom.
  - B. *Credibility ambiguity*. Changes can also sound too unrealistic to take seriously. It is unclear whether there is sufficient drive and commitment to actually make them happen.
  - C. *Consistency ambiguity*. Making changes can also be inconsistent with people's other priorities. It can then be unclear which objectives people should focus on first.
2. **Change ability**. Is the organization actually capable of realizing the intended changes? Even if the required change is clear, people might not have the potential to successfully carry out what needs to be done. Common barriers holding the organization back are:
    - A. *Switching barriers*. Changes can be frustrated by being locked into such things as long-term contracts, legacy systems and fixed investments, making switching very difficult.
    - B. *Resource barriers*. Organizations can also lack the necessary tangible resources, such as money, and/or intangible resources, such as knowledge, skills, relations and mindset.
    - C. *Learning barriers*. Organization can also be lacking in their capability to absorb outside knowledge and adaptively figure things out along the way, making learning very difficult.
  3. **Change willingness**. Do all stakeholders actually want to realize the intended changes? Do they embrace the changes put forward and commit themselves to implementing them as intended, or are they reluctant, or even unwilling? Common reasons for resistance are:
    - A. *Political resistance*. Going along with the changes might not be in people's perceived interest. That makes resistance a rational and calculated response to a potential loss.
    - B. *Cognitive resistance*. Going along might be against people's views on what should be done. They resist because they believe the change doesn't make sense.
    - C. *Emotional resistance*. Needing to go along might trigger people's sense of feeling unsafe. They might fear uncertainty, exclusion or unfairness, leading to resistance.

## Key Insights

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- **Change requires more than a specific plan**. While successful change implementation often starts with having a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Acceptable, Realistic and Time-bound) plan, there are eight more challenges that need to be kept in mind.
- **Change faces three types of challenges**. To deal with change, managers need to distinguish between "I don't get it" (lack of clarity), "I can't do it" (lack of ability) and "I don't want it" (lack of willingness). Each challenge requires a different response.
- **Challenges are situation-specific**. While change clarity, ability and willingness are universal challenges, not all nine issues mentioned in the model are always problematic, depending on the character of the organization and the type of change being implemented.
- **Challenges are difficult to observe**. Most change challenges are not easy to objectively identify at the outset, requiring managers to keep their eyes and ears open for signals along the way, as opposed to assuming that an initial outside analysis will give sufficient insight into the challenges that will be encountered.
- **Challenges need to be managed or downsized**. Managers need to constantly estimate whether, and how, the intended change can be successfully achieved, or whether the scope/scale of the change needs to be reduced to make the challenges surmountable.

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## **Meyer's Management Models**

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#### **Publication Schedule**

<b><i>July 2019</i></b>	<b><i>Mind the Gap Model</i></b>	<b><i>Change Management</i></b>
August 2019	Digital Platform Map	Digital Strategy
September 2019	Confidence Quotient	Trust Building
October 2019	Revenue Model Framework	Revenue Model Typology
November 2019	House of Engagement	Organizational Engagement
December 2019	Pacification-Polarization Model	Interpersonal Interaction
January 2020	Competition Tornado	Competitive Strategy
February 2020	11C Synergy Model	Corporate Synergy Management
March 2020	Leadership Fairness Framework	Leadership-Follower Interaction
April 2020	Strategic Agility Model	Strategy Process Approach
May 2020	The Control Panel	Corporate Control Dimensions
June 2020	Virtuous & Vicious Teams	Team Dynamics