

Surviving the Stress of Organizational Change

A Survival Guide to The Stress of Organizational Change, by Price Pritchett and Ron Pound

1. Don't count on anyone else coming along to relieve your stress.

Put yourself in charge of managing the pressure. There's a good chance you're the only one in your work situation who will, or even can, do much to lighten your psychological load.

2. The organization is going to change - it must - if it is to survive and prosper.

Rather than banging your head against the wall of hard reality and bruising your spirit, invest your energy in making quick adjustments. Turn when the organization turns. Practice instant alignment. Your own decisions may do more to determine your stress level than anything the organization decides to do.

3. Accept fate, and move on.

Don't yield to the seductive pull of self-pity, at least for any extended period of time. Acting like a victim threatens your future. You're better off if you appear resilient and remain productive. Just stand proud, pick up the pieces, and start putting your career back together.

4. Study the situation intently.

Figure out how the game has changed, how priorities have been reordered. Decide which aspects of your job you should focus on to leverage up your effectiveness the most.

5. Don't fall into the trap of believing there's such a thing as a low-stress organization that's on track to survive.

In fact, just the opposite is true. You serve your best interests by aligning with an outfit that's got the guts to endure the pains of change and by avoiding those organizations destined to go belly-up because of their desire for short-term comfort.

6. Ask yourself if the struggle makes sense.

Are you really in a position to control the situation, or will you just get emotionally tired trying? Sometimes the most mature, most dignified, and most sensible move is to nobly accept what we can't change.

7. Keep in step with the organization's intended rate of change.

March to the cadence that's being called by the people in charge, instead of allowing yourself to take whatever amount of time you want or feel you need. Don't lag behind - there's little chance a lull will come along and give you a chance to play catch-up.

8. Reengineer your job.

Eliminate unnecessary steps, get rid of busywork, and unload activities that don't contribute enough to the organization's current goals. Focus your efforts on doing the right things, and ditch those duties that don't count much, even if you can do them magnificently right.

9. Speed up.

Cover more ground. Put your faith in action, in mobility, and maximize your personal productivity.

10. Now's the time for some serious mind control.

Instead of worrying about bad things that might happen, get busy trying to create the kind of future you want. The best insurance policy for tomorrow is to make the most productive use of today.

11. Pick battles big enough to matter, small enough to win.

12. Fall in love with your job, and keep the romance alive.

Don't let the stress of change drive a wedge between you and your work. Sure your employer will benefit if you are committed, but not as much as you will. High job commitment is a gift you should give to yourself.

13. Stretch yourself today so you will be in better shape tomorrow.

Reach for new assignments that broaden your experience base. Remember that one of the best techniques for stress prevention is to keep updating your skills so you're highly employable.

14. Develop a greater tolerance for constant changes in the game plan, for mid-course corrections, and for raw surprise.

Allow a little more confusion in your life. Be willing to feel your way along, to wing it. Think of your job as having movable walls - flex to fit the immediate demands of the situation instead of struggling to make the job adapt to you.

15. Be careful in what you use as evidence to evaluate how much the organization cares about people.

High stress and heavy pressure may provide the best proof that management's heart is in the right place. All things considered, trying to keep you comfortable could be the most cold-blooded management move of all.