“Managing Transitions”
by William Bridges

Brief summary of key points
Change vs. Transition (pg. 4)

- **Change** is situational and happens without people transitioning.
- **Transition** is psychological and is a 3 phase process where people gradually accept the details of the new situation and the changes that come with it.

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Ending

Neutral Zone

New Beginning

Denial
Shock
Anger
Frustration/Stress
Ambivalence

Neutral Zone

Enthusiasm
Hope
Importance
Acceptance
Skepticism

CHANGE IS FAST

TRANSITION IS SLOW
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Interventions to Help Transition (pg.15)

- Communicate individual behavior change
- Identify & understand who will lose what
- Sell the problem
- Get employees in touch with clients
- Talk to employees and ask what problems they have with the change
- Talk about the transition and let people know it's human to feel
- Hold regular team meetings even before the change
Do’s and Don’ts of Managing Transitions (pg.15)

DO:
• Rewards/Compensation
• Implement temporary systems until cutover
• Use ambiguity to continuously improve
• Make group space changes
• Use symbolic logo
• Benchmark 1st hand
• Offer a comprehensive training plan with a motivational speaker
• Develop a change manager role

DON’T:
• Explain change through a memo or org chart
• Turn change over to an individual contributor and ask them to develop the whole plan
• Break change into smaller stages
• Pull a model team together to show others how
• Make threats
Communicating During Transition (pg.32)

• Don’t rationalize not communicating
• The grapevine already has the news
• You told them once but it won’t sink in
• Supervisors are in transition themselves- don’t rely on trickle-down communication

Say what you know, say what you don’t know and commit to a time to give them more information
Considering Endings

• Consider what they are letting go of:
  – How happy are they with the way things are?
  – What behaviors are being rewarded now that will change or need to change?
  – How can we get employees to embrace the change, eliminate their fear and develop a new identity and sense of purpose in it?
  – What communication and strategies are needed to get them there?
When encouraging people to “let go”:

- Describe change in as much detail as possible
- Identify the ripple effects of change
- Identify who has to let go of what
- Notice intangible losses
- Notice whether there’s something over for everyone
Acknowledge losses openly and sympathetically!

- If you don’t it will stop open dialogue and you won’t learn more from them
- Loss is subjective, your point of view is irrelevant
- They’ll think you don’t care about what they think or feel if you force your opinion
The last thing a company needs is an incomplete ending that requires a whole new round of losses to finish the job before people have had time to heal!

This is the first task of transition management
Endings- Respect the Past (pg.34)

• Don’t ridicule the past. It negates people’s self worth.
• Position the past as a positive legacy that paved the way for the new
• Don’t stamp out the past like an infection
• Let people take something with them
Dangers of Neutral Zones (pg.40-43)

• Anxiety rises & motivation falls. People become:
  – Resentful and protective
  – Self-doubting
  – Less productive
  – Absent more often
• People are overloaded, mixed signals and confusion are high, important tasks go undone, turnover is high
• People become polarized- some rush forward, others stay back and hang on
• Old weaknesses re-emerge
• The organization becomes vulnerable to competition
People can deal with understandable change if its part of the bigger one. Unrelated, unexpected changes may be the straw that will break the camel’s back.

- Review policies and procedures
- Develop temporary roles
- Set short term goals so people feel achievement
- Don’t overpromise output during this time
- Set the bar low and celebrate small wins
- Provide training on teamwork, problem solving, etc.

What can consultants and leaders to do spark creativity in the Neutral Zone?
New Beginnings (pg.58-60)

4 P's

Purpose- explain why
Picture- share vision of how it will look and feel
Plan- lay out a detailed, step-by-step plan
Part- give people a part to play in the transition and the new beginning

Starts involve new situations, beginnings involve new understandings.
Managing the New Beginning (pg.69)

• Be consistent
• Ensure quick successes
• Symbolize new identity
• Celebrate successes
Organizational Life Cycle (pg.78)

Laws of Organization Development:
- The people most comfortable in one phase experience the most setbacks in the next phase.
- The things that made one phase the most successful are usually those that have to be let go in the next phase.
- When you see pain in an organization people are probably going through an organization transition.
- Don’t go half way.
Organization Renewal (pg.89-91)

“Every status quo is just a temporary way until a better way to do things has been discovered.”

“There is really nothing developmental about most OD, it’s really just organizational repair.”

- Redream the dream
- Recapture the venture spirit
- Get reorganized
Managing Non-Stop Change (pg. 103)

Help people stay ahead of change and balance all the plates by:

- Postponing additional unneeded change
- Conducting environmental scanning
- Forecasting
- Making change the norm
- Planning contingencies
- Rebuilding trust
- Healing old wounds
- Selling the problem, not the solution
- Challenging & responding

“It’s not by competing but by capitalizing on the rapid pace of change that today’s organizations thrive.”
## The Leader’s Role in Managing Transitions

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<tr>
<th>Endings</th>
<th>Neutral Zones</th>
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(During all Stages) Check in with employees and ask:
How are you doing? What are you thinking? What are you feeling? How can I help?

Leaders Can Help By: | Leaders Can Help By: | Leaders Can Help By:
The Consultant’s Role in Managing Transitions (pg. 115)

Transition able companies have in place…

- Policies
- Roles
- Culture
- Leadership
- Structure
- Resources
- Histories

that provide an environment for successful transitions.