Basics of Embracing Change

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
1. Define change
2. Describe why change is necessary
3. Understand reactions to change
4. Identify ways to embrace change

CHANGE IS A CONSTANT IN TODAY’S SOCIETY, AND CERTAINLY IN today’s healthcare arena. Change can prove challenging because it often means taking one out of their comfort zone. This lesson plan will explore why change is necessary, how individuals might react to change, and identify ways individuals can embrace changes that will inevitably happen in the workplace.

OBJECTIVE 1: DEFINE CHANGE
Change is an act or instance of making someone or something different. Change is experienced by everyone; it is a constant occurrence, not an isolated or occasional event. Most changes are not as sudden as they may appear; there is typically a great deal of thought put into a suggested change before it is announced or implemented.

It is important to recognize that our personal and professional lives are in a constant state of flux. It is better to remain fluid and move with that change rather than try to resist and keep things “the way they have always been.” Changes routinely occur within the Central Service (CS) department because industry standards, best practices, technologies and leaderships evolve. Some areas of common change within CS include:
• Process flow – This type of change can occur on a daily basis, based on the surgery schedule. While the main principle of process flow stays intact, emergency cases or surgery types with limited instrumentation may change the order in which items are processed. Process flow may also change when new processing equipment is received or if a department has a limited amount of equipment to process items.
• Priorities – Changes in surgery schedules and staffing may have a daily impact on both the Operating Room (OR) and CS department priorities.

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OBJECTIVE 2: DESCRIBE WHY CHANGE IS NECESSARY

Change is necessary for both personal and professional growth. Without change, advancement will not occur. In healthcare, CS has seen many changes in the way the department functions due to procedural innovations, such as endoscopy advancements and the use of minimally invasive surgery in many surgical areas, as well as with the advancement of processing equipment. Without such advancements, patients would require extended hospital stays and recovery times following surgery, and processing of complex lumened devices would still be performed manually.

There are many forces that drive change, and some of these forces are personal. Wanting a promotion or a shift in responsibilities may drive one’s desire to go back to school or learn new skills. The economy also impacts change in today’s healthcare operations. Reduced budgets affect the way departments operate, which may cause a change in work hours, shifts and perhaps even the equipment being used. The reverse is also true; if a facility is experiencing growth, new equipment may be purchased, new surgical specialties may be adopted, and more employees may be hired. Although these changes prompted by growth may be largely positive, they nonetheless impact staff and the way the department functions and operates.

OBJECTIVE 3: UNDERSTAND REACTIONS TO CHANGE

There is nothing wrong with having an initial negative reaction to change; in fact, this may be quite normal. When an individual has been an active participant in the change process, however, they will be more likely to quickly move through the phases and adopt the change in an effective, productive way than if a change has been dictated without their input.
water into a bucket; everything we do causes ripples and, sometimes, they may be unintended or unseen. When undergoing change, it is important that CS technicians not only understand how it affects them and their area, but also how it affects others within the system. It is important to identify customers impacted by the CS department’s processes and try to view processes and proposed changes from the customers’ perspective. Doing so will often help CS technicians better understand and appreciate why a certain change is necessary and beneficial.

The pursuit of quality often requires continual change. Ideally, all changes should be selected and adopted with the patient in mind. Change also requires continual adaptation to new situations, processes and information. CS professionals will benefit by recognizing the process improvements, technological advancements and efficiencies that have been spurred by change. Change is not to be feared and it often equates to positive outcomes.

OBJECTIVE 4: IDENTIFY WAYS TO EMBRACE CHANGE

If a CS professional identifies him or herself as being among those who automatically bristle with change, it is beneficial to be more mindful of one’s reactions and recognize and acknowledge one’s personal resistance. Is there a valid reason for this resistance or is it in one’s nature to wish to keep things status quo? It is essential that change be viewed objectively, so the benefits of change can be recognized and realized.

Even when employees see a change as positive, it can still be an uncomfortable process; this may also lead to some resistance. Changes may trigger an emotional response that clouds objectivity. It may be normal for an employee to feel sad when a favorite coworker leaves the facility, for example; however, it is also helpful to view this development as an opportunity for growth and positive change.

People go through the process of change differently; only 2.5% of the population readily accepts change and is willing to help others adjust to the change. Sixteen percent of the population actively resist change and strive for status quo. The majority tend to understand and accept change, but would rather watch others adapt to the change first. A few will resist any change until forced to commit to the change. The speed in which one adapts to change varies with how the change is accepted.

Tips for accepting change:
• Understand change will happen – The healthcare industry has evolved and CS departments and staff must evolve as well to accept new technology, standards and corporate goals.
• Ask questions - An important part of accepting change is to understand it. Employees need to know why and how the change will take place. They should understand how the change will impact them personally, as well as the impact the change will have on the hospital, department and patient.
• Separate facts from assumptions. Once a change is announced, CS professionals will undoubtedly have assumptions about its impact. Speaking with others who have undergone similar changes can be an effective approach to gain perspective.
• Accept the change – It is important that employees embrace the change, rather than fight it. Working through the new process will make change much easier and the experience more positive.
• Volunteer to become more involved - Change isn't introduced randomly or by accident. CS professionals can offer to be a sounding board for their leadership and become more informed in the process. Learning about the

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change and helping others accept and adapt to the change can help them, as well.

- Foster communication. False information can be a deterrent to the success of the change process; therefore, it is important to challenge unverified information (rumors). Communicating information that has been given as fact and not buying into the rumor will make the change process more enjoyable and less daunting.

- Network – Asking difficult questions that one’s colleagues are afraid to ask can help improve acceptance to change. If one knows an individual from another facility whose department has undergone a similar change, it can be helpful to reach out to them and inquire about the process and what led to successful outcomes.

- Be positive – It is not uncommon for one to believe that a proposed change is unnecessary and won’t be effective in their own department or facility; however, one’s ability to stay positive will go a long way toward helping them and their colleagues through the change process. Professionals typically want to grow in their jobs. Staying positive and thinking about the possibilities the change may bring will aid the acceptance process and help the process move quickly in the right direction.

- Be flexible - Hold off judgment until the change is implemented and has been given a fair chance. Many changes require some adjustment once they are put into action. Accepting the adjustments and maintaining a positive attitude during this process will facilitate a smoother transition and more beneficial outcome.

- Set a goal and work toward it – Having something to work toward is a powerful way for professionals to adapt to change. If the change involves a new way to assemble a complex set, for example, setting a goal for when the CS team will become as proficient at this new process as they were with the former set assembly process will be a powerful way to adapt to the change.

**CONCLUSION**

Change is a continual reality in healthcare and also within the CS department. CS professionals face ongoing changes in regard to technology, standards, regulations and more, and adapting to these changes as effectively and efficiently as possible is necessary for their departments to function optimally. Accepting and working through the change process is an effective way to maintain technical skills, meet customers’ evolving needs, remain a valuable asset to the department, and increase job satisfaction.

**RESOURCES**

- Babers, T. *How to deal with change.* www.positive-changes-coach.com/how-to-deal-with-change.html

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Damien Berg, CRCST
Nicholas Schmitz
Susan Klacik, ACE, FCS, CHL, CIS, CRCST
Anna Clarkson, CHL, CIS, CRCST
Don Williams, CHL, CIS, CRCST
Gwendolyn Byrd, CHL, CIS, CRCST
Deborah Bunn, AE, CHL, CIS, CRCST
Mattie Castro, CHL, CHMMC, CIS, CRCST
Michelle Clark
Christina Poston, CHL, CIS, CRCST
Donna Serra, CHL, CRCST

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