



With the economy headed towards recovery, organisations are determined to translate the learnings derived out of the turbulent 2009 into lucrative actions, in order to ensure a promising, productive year ahead. This means HR will introduce changes in policies, processes and procedures. And employees will have to move out of their comfort zones and embrace change, even if you are resistant to it. After all, there is nothing wrong with change, if it's in the right direction, right?



## change, the only constant

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Didn't you find the new environment of your school very intimidating as a kid on the very first day? You must have encountered a lot of adjustment issues when you had to shift to a completely new city to pursue further education? You ought to have cribbed after moving to a new country for a job when you didn't get the food of your choice? How amazed were you when after a five-year long courtship, you had your very first major fight? And how disappointed were you when you received a deducted salary slip last year? What is that one common factor in the above cited instances that binds all of them together? The answer: change! Last year, we all dreaded the "R" word, didn't we? Recession? Retrenchment? Restructuring? Redeployment? The transition we made from 2008 (a rewarding year in terms of increments) to 2009 (a rather challenging year) and now to 2010 (that seems relatively promising and optimistic) is daunting and we had to and we continue to adapt to 'change'. Is it a pleasant process? Certainly not; after all, nobody wants to leave one's comfort zone, right? But as experts say, change is constant! So, as companies try to implement the lessons learnt from 2009 to practice in 2010, how can you, as employees embrace change?

"If we take into account the last decade, India Inc. witnessed a period where employees saw fast growth, fancy designations and huge increments. However, last year, when we were hit by tough economic conditions, companies resorted to

quick fixes and took some strong measures – layoffs, pay revisions, rationalisation and cost cuts. With the economy reviving, we may take a sigh of relief, however, as employees, we need to shed the entitlement mentality that was created as a result of fast growth and double digit increments through the decade. Going forward, organisations will continue to control costs, regulate and rationalise resources and continue to play safe. As employees, we need to be realistic in our expectations given the market conditions into account," says Arjun Singh, Asia MD for outsourcing, GBS, technology, Hewitt Associates.

Nina Chatrath, practice head-leadership and talent consulting, Korn/Ferry International adds, "Keeping employees appraised positively, by sharing the real challenges the organisation faces in the work environment, providing them with the motivation to ride the tough wave and remain above choppy waters, equipping them with the tools to deal with the rough

environment, are a few tasks the company ought to be doing. This will build the 'fighting spirit' and would lead to a sense of accountability and ownership to steer the organisation out of the rough weather and thereby, create a heightened sense of belongingness in employees." It is, therefore, evident that organisations are implementing changes, but are you ready to accept it?

"Employees often first respond to change from a 'what's in it for me?' perspective. Uncertainty on emotionally charged subjects like pay, work schedules, training, reporting relationships and reductions in force should therefore be addressed as early and tactfully as possible," says Chatrath. What kind of an employee are you? Do you resist any form of change? Do you willingly welcome it as a challenge? Or are you open to change that is only absolutely necessary? Or do you prefer change to be implemented gradually? Rajesh Padmanabhan, EVP and global head – HR, Patni who points out the above few categories of employees says, "Different

people react to change differently. For a change management program to be effectively implemented, it is imperative that employees understand why the change is necessary, what it comprises of and what is required of them."

Singh feels that employees need to be catalysts of change as he enlists three key ways through which employees can be more willing to embrace change: 1) be sensitive and realistic about the situation and circumstances governing an industry or market. Once there is acceptance of change amongst employees, the process becomes successful and fruitful for all, 2) for long-term sustainability of any change initiative, you need to understand the key rationale along with the benefits and consequences and 3) be it H1N1, political/economic polarisation, recession or any other major event, employees need to be well-equipped to quickly navigate and manage these challenges. Manatosh Bandopadhyay, executive director, HR, Mawana Sugars Ltd adds that there is a need to sharpen your existing skills, acquire new skills and remain on continuous learning mode as this will facilitate the change acceptance process. Employees will have increased work load, both horizontal and vertical and thereby, have to quickly acquire competencies required for the enlargement/enrichment of the roles.

Change is inevitable! And there is no way through which you can escape it. The key, therefore, is to make it work towards your advantage. After all, isn't it the only thing permanent in life?

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**Prithvi Shergill, HR lead, Accenture India feels that employees need to be resilient towards adapting their competencies and mindsets to operate in tomorrow's world of work. Here, he suggests a few tips you could adopt to embrace change at the workplace:**

- Employees need to ensure that they are partners in the change journey by ensuring it is well-planned, directed, measured and managed.
- You can provide the leadership to help colleagues by setting the change agenda for their teams, gain commitment to the change goals and prevent distraction.
- The focus needs to be on acquiring the critical knowledge, skills, processes and tools that enable you to succeed in the new environment.
- Supporting widespread acceptance by taking personal responsibility for change in the business such that the organisation's change goals and action plans are "owned" by each employee will multiply accountability for delivering the value the change promises.