

## **Managing Cybersecurity Change:**

### **Using Tactical Empathy to Overcome Resistance**

Carl Lochstampfor Jr.

Department of Cybersecurity, Old Dominion University,

CYSE 300 – Introduction to Cybersecurity

October 26, 2025

#### **Instructions:**

Imagine you are a manager responsible for implementing a significant cybersecurity-related technology change within an organization. What are the potential reactions to this change? Indicate one way in which you would minimize the impact of adverse reactions within the change management process. Provide support for your recommendation.

**Managing Cybersecurity Change: Using Tactical Empathy to Overcome Resistance**

Employees' reactions can vary widely when implementing a significant cybersecurity-related technology change, such as adopting multi-factor authentication (MFA) or a new intrusion detection system. Some people may view the change as a positive step forward, feeling safer within a stronger, protected network and fostering additional trust in leadership decisions. However, others may react with resistance or frustration because the changes are upsetting the 'status quo,' introducing uncertainty that results in fear (Voss, 2023). Those employees may perceive such changes as unnecessary, burdensome, and an additional workload on their already busy schedules and tasks. Those employees may perceive learning new procedures and practices as unnecessary disruptions to their current workflows when they believe their systems/habits may be working just fine (aka, "If it isn't broke, then don't fix it"). Lastly, some may experience fear of being unable to adapt to new systems. Effects from such changes include decreased productivity during transition periods, negative attitudes toward IT staff, and/or attempts to bypass security controls to maintain old habits.

To minimize the impact of these reactions, I would focus on understanding the organization's employees and use tactical empathy with three simple steps. First, before and during the change management process, I would communicate with the employees in an upfront, transparent, and continuous manner (Voss, 2021). Second, I would provide the employees with ample time and resources to navigate the emotional challenges of adjusting to policy and procedural changes. Third, I would implement/deploy the changes in small waves across different portions/sections of each department within the organization to help monitor and adapt to any unexpected issues. For example, the ability to 'rollback' any new changes allows the organization

as a whole to continue normal business operations. At the same time, the IT department can troubleshoot the technological issues.

Lastly, according to Kotter's Change Model and the "5 Stages of Grief", organizations can critically reduce employee and client resistance to sudden changes by building awareness and fostering understanding (Kübler-Ross Change Curve, 2025; Kotter International Inc., 2025). Each person responds differently to change, including the amount of time it takes for them to process and adjust to it. Therefore, before any official or production rollouts, I would conduct informational sessions explaining the reasons behind the change—linking it to concrete threats (e.g., data breaches or phishing attacks), organizational benefits (e.g., compliance, client trust), and employee benefits (e.g., increased personal data protection, enhanced digital literacy and career skills, and reduced long-term work disruptions). Providing training, demonstrations, and a feedback channel can help employees feel supported and included with the changes from their organization, rather than feeling burdened by it. The transparency not only builds trust but also empowers users to see themselves as essential partners in cybersecurity, ultimately leading to a smoother adoption of the changes and stronger long-term compliance.

## References

Kim, D., & Solomon, M. G. (2021). Fundamentals of information systems security (4th ed.).

Jones & Bartlett Learning.

Kotter International Inc. (October, 2025.). *The 8 steps for leading change*. Retrieved [October

22, 2025], from <https://www.kotterinc.com/methodology/8-steps/>

Kübler-Ross Change Curve. (n.d.). *Kübler-Ross Change Curve®* [5 stages of grief / change

curve]. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross Foundation. Retrieved [October 22, 2025], from

<https://www.ekrfoundation.org/5-stages-of-grief/change-curve/>

Voss, C. (2021, July 15). *Former FBI negotiator Chris Voss on how to effectively deliver bad*

*news* [Video]. Crisp, YouTube. Retrieved [October 22, 2025], from

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=izn0plrtNt4>

Voss, C. (2023, August 18). *Why your employees are resistant to change* [Video]. YouTube.

Retrieved [October 22, 2025], from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=de3qrMBTjSI>