

Resistance to change: Four barriers, four answers

Adaptive module

~20 min

70% of change projects fail, and in nearly three quarters of cases the cause is not the project but how people are supported; willingness to support a change has fallen from 74% to 43% (Gartner). This module decodes resistance instead of fighting it: three brain reactions to accept, then four feelings to recognize (cornered, losing out, incapable, overwhelmed), each with the action that answers it.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 01 Understand the three reactions to change (survival, connection, analysis) and identify the dominant one.
- 02 Recognize the four feelings that block change: cornered, losing out, incapable, or overwhelmed.
- 03 Answer each barrier with the right action: time to take ownership, transparency on gains, explicit support, change in stages.
- 04 Accept your own resistance as a predictable reaction, the first step toward change that's owned.

WHO IT'S FOR

Anyone experiencing or leading change who wants to understand the barriers to deal with them better.

- **Prerequisite:** none

HOW THE MODULE WORKS

Self-paced, with practice tailored to each learner.

- 1 **Self-assessment:** on 9 dimensions, to gauge current habits and guide the practice.
- 2 **Expert video:** 10 minutes, with 3 pauses for reflection.
- 3 **Practice scenarios:** the first 2 chosen from the self-assessment, then 16 optional ones. Every answer gets feedback: what it leads to, and one way to improve.
- 4 **Dated commitment:** one action to try, written by the learner or picked from the suggestions.
- 5 **Memo to download:** key takeaways, questions, commitment, personal notes and checklists.

ASSESSMENT AND COMPLETION

Pass mark: 80%

The score takes into account your answers to the practice scenarios, your commitment and, where relevant, any additional learning activities. Passing requires a commitment and a score of at least 80%.

METHODS & MODELS

- SCARF model (Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, Fairness) – David Rock (neuroscientist)
- Four barriers/feelings (cornered / losing out / incapable / overwhelmed) – Afthonios method
- Change fatigue – documented concept (notably by Gartner)

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- Harvard Business Review – Beer & Nohria, "Cracking the Code of Change" (2000): about 70% of change initiatives fail
- McKinsey, "The State of Organizations" – 39% of transformation failures stem from employee resistance and 33% from a lack of management support
- Gartner (reported by Harvard Business Review) – employees' willingness to support change fell from 74% in 2016 to 43% in 2022
- David Rock – SCARF model (Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, Fairness); social losses activate brain circuits shared with physical pain