

Adapt to Change

**5 Self-Coaching
Questions**

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As a leader, your ability to adjust to new and shifting situations has a significant bearing on success for you and your team. Fortunately, adaptability isn't something you either have or don't have. Like any other skill, you can cultivate it over time.

These questions are designed to help you identify your current approach to change and adopt a productive mindset that enables you to take action to thrive in new circumstances. Bonus: You can use them to coach your team, too.



1. What's my typical approach to change?

We all have our sticking points when it comes to change.

If you typically prefer the status quo, you may get stressed out at the very idea of change and resist letting go of your tried-and-true routines. If you tend to dive enthusiastically headfirst into new endeavors, you might grow bored and lose momentum when executing all the details.

There is no 'best' mindset when approaching change. Whether you resist it, thrive on it, or are somewhere in between—being aware of your mindset will help you proactively manage your reactions before they negatively affect your work or team.

To reflect on your approach, ask yourself:

How can I practice noticing and mitigating my typical sticking points around change?

It may help to start in smaller-stakes or nonwork situations so that you're better prepared when big changes hit. For example, let's say you tend to resist new ideas and think first of all the reasons why they won't work. In project meetings, you might listen specifically for new ideas, then notice your reaction. To avoid dismissing (or embracing) an idea prematurely, give yourself a quota of asking at least two questions to learn more before deciding what you think about the idea.

Also consider what you can do outside of work to cultivate adaptability, whether it's signing up for something new like a knitting class or a 10K run.

How do I handle the change styles of my direct reports, peers, and boss?

When you're the one responsible for enacting a change, you'll need to adjust your approach depending on how those around you deal with new and uncertain situations. For example, if you're implementing a new process with your team, you may need to slow down to help a direct report feel more comfortable. And, if you prefer starting new things, you may need to be vigilant to stick with the process to ensure that your team fully embraces the new way, rather than to race ahead to the next iteration.

2. What does a situation I'm facing have in common with my previous experiences?

What's different this time?

Thinking about how you've adapted in similar past situations can give you a lot of insight into how to—and how not to—adapt to something you're going through now and help you put things in perspective.

Analyze the whole range of experiences you've had—not just the conditions of your most recent experience (which may have been a fluke).

If you haven't had much experience with the situation you face now, seek advice from others who have.

As you reflect, ask yourself:

How might a previous situation be influencing how I feel now?

For example, say your boss just announced a major shift in priorities for your department. The last time your team got pulled off a project to work on another, you got really frustrated and vented to your direct reports, who then

resisted the change every step of the way. Will this time be as hard, especially if you change your approach?

Or, if things went really well previously, could you be overconfident or complacent, figuring this time will go just like the last time?

What is at least one new approach I'd like to try this time?

You may determine that a lot should change this time around, from how you manage your emotions to how you involve your team in planning the way forward—great! Push yourself to find at least one tweak you could make this time, even if things went well previously. Adaptable leaders know there's always room to improve.

Change happens all the time, whether we choose it or it chooses us.

3. What parts of this situation am I most curious about?

Instead of “Oh no!” your approach becomes “Oh interesting!”

When people face new situations, they tell themselves all kinds of stories—about why it’s bad and won’t end well, or why it’s the best thing ever and will solve all their problems.

Usually, these stories are based on partial information, so our brains fill in the blanks with blind optimism, self-doubt, or other tricky assumptions.

Curiosity is a superpower that can help you pause, understand more about what’s going on, and avoid making rash decisions. Plus, curiosity can help you break through any resistance you feel by inviting you to learn more about your circumstances.

As you reflect, ask yourself:

What would I like to learn more about? What resources are available to me to do so?

If you don’t feel naturally curious because you’re preoccupied with worry or other emotions about the situation, try getting analytical: What don’t you know about the situation that you would benefit from exploring in order to succeed? Write down possibilities and then brainstorm how you could go about gaining additional insight.

What actions could I take based on what I learn?

Your curious mindset and information-seeking can help you get started on something hard. But the benefit doesn’t stop there. They can also motivate you to regularly seek input from a variety of sources at every stage of your work so you can course-correct during a project.

4. What are the best and worst possible outcomes that can result from this situation?

It's natural to fear worst-case scenarios, especially when you're facing a big change or high-stakes situation with a lot of uncertainty.

But when you overfocus on what could go wrong, you close yourself off to more likely outcomes (including what could go right) and hinder your ability to see yourself as part of a successful future.

On the other hand, if you're overly optimistic about an uncertain situation, you might not consider potential costly pitfalls. Considering a whole range of possibilities can help you take a more balanced view of your situation and prepare for any eventuality.

As you reflect, ask yourself:

What's the likelihood of each outcome?

For example, let's say your boss volunteers you to lead a task force on a critical company initiative. The project is unpopular, and you're worried the project is doomed to fail. But how often does the worst possible outcome

really happen? Or, for that matter, let's say the project is popular, and you're confident it will be a wild success. How often does the best possible outcome happen? The reality is that the likely outcome almost always falls somewhere in the middle.

What kinds of decisions could lead to the worst outcome and what can I do to increase my chances of achieving the best outcome?

For example, maybe you fail to interview an important vice president about what they want from the task force and, as a result, take it in the wrong direction. Imagine potential pitfalls and failure points ahead of time, and you can adjust your approach to avoid them.

To surface additional ideas, consider the situation from different angles: What might you need to do in order to achieve your best outcome?

Successful change doesn't happen through processes alone—it's the people who ultimately make change happen.

5. What is one action I can take now to help this situation go smoothly?

It's easy to feel powerless in a constantly shifting environment. But you have more control than you might think.

You don't have to figure everything out at once or find some way to be all smiles in the face of adversity. But you do need to figure out—and then take—one small step toward addressing your situation productively, not only for yourself but also for your team to move forward, too.

For example, let's say your department is going through a difficult reorganization, and your direct reports are feeling frustrated and demotivated. You can't change the conditions of the reorganization, but you can change the way you show up for your team by setting aside time in your 1-on-1s to discuss the situation, answer the questions you can, and get answers to the questions you can't.

While the situation is still difficult, you can be confident that you're reducing negativity and helping people see a path forward.

As you reflect, ask yourself:

What kind of help or support could help with this situation? Whom can I ask?

You don't have to go it alone. Instead, enlist a colleague or friend outside of work to serve as a sounding board or accountability partner to help you forge ahead.

Lead Your Team Through Change

As a leader, your role in change is to get results—and that happens through other people. To achieve success, your actions need to support their needs.

Leaders are the linchpins to change success. They have influence over how the people in your organization think and what those people do in response to change.

Being aware of team members' reactions to change helps leaders reduce their uncertainty. Helping teams stay highly engaged through change is different than looking for them to get work done. Change success requires more than simply doing as told—it requires a team's best thinking and efforts.

See how FranklinCovey can help your organization navigate change and turn uncertainty into opportunity with our latest solution: ***Change: How to Turn Uncertainty Into Opportunity™***

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