



CHANGE READY THINKING

CHANGE HAPPENS ONE CONVERSATION AT A TIME

● FREE TEAM PACK

Lead your team through change in **six** **conversations**

A six-week plan, one short session a week, in the time you already have together. Everything you need to run each conversation is in here.

Start with the one that's stuck.

www.changereadythinking.com

One conversation a week

Most change doesn't stall in the plan. It stalls in the conversations that never quite happen. This pack helps your team have them, one at a time.

- **Time:** 30 to 45 minutes a week, in a meeting you already have.
- **Who:** you and your team. You don't need a facilitator. Rotate who leads if you like.
- **Ground rule:** say what's true, not what's expected. Nobody gets marked down for a low score.
- **Print it:** the score sheet, the conversation pages and the commitment page are designed to be written on.

The six weeks

Week	Conversation	What you'll come away with
1	Take the Change Readiness Check together Everyone scores the six conversations on their own, then you compare. Use the score sheet in this pack, or take it online.	A shared map of where you're stuck
2	Your lowest-scoring conversation Turn to that conversation in this pack and work through the team questions.	One agreed step
3	Your second lowest Same again, with the next conversation down.	One agreed step
4	Your third lowest Same again.	One agreed step
5	What's really in the way? Always worth revisiting, even if it didn't score lowest.	Anything still unspoken, out in the open
6	Retake the check and agree your commitments Score again, compare with week 1, and fill in the 30-day commitment.	Proof of what's moved, and what's next

The six conversations

1 Where are we really going?

BEFORE IT STARTS

2 What does this mean for me?

ENDINGS

3 What are we letting go of?

ENDINGS

4 What's really in the way?

THE NEUTRAL ZONE

5 What will we try first?

THE NEUTRAL ZONE

6 How do we keep going?

NEW BEGINNINGS

The Conversation Depth Index

Every important conversation sits somewhere on this scale.

Level	What it sounds like	How to move it on
1. We haven't had it	"They probably know how I feel." The topic is avoided, or only discussed in your own head.	Admit it's being avoided, and why. Take one concrete step to raise it.
2. We've talked about it once or twice	"We covered that in the meeting." It came up briefly, or turned into an argument that never resolved.	Go back to it. Ask what stopped it going further, and what you could do differently.
3. We've talked, but there's no real clarity	"We keep talking about this and nothing changes." The same loop, over and over.	Make proper time for it. Find the real issue underneath the one being argued about.
4. We know what to do, but we haven't done it	"We agreed we'd change that." Clarity, but no action.	Name the specific steps, who owns them and by when. Agree who will hold you to it.
5. We acted, and it changed things	"Since we sorted that out, it's been different."	Notice it, name it, and pick the next conversation.

It looks simple. That's the point. Its power isn't in the model. It's in how honestly it shows where a conversation has stalled. And the conversations we avoid most are often the ones we assume we've already had.

The Change Readiness Check: score sheet

On your own first, pick the level that's closest to the truth for each conversation. Write the number (1 to 5) in the **Me** column. Then collect everyone's scores in the blank columns and agree a **Team** score. Where people differ most is often the most useful place to start.

Conversation and its five levels	Me					Team
1. Where are we really going? 1. We haven't had it. 2. We've talked about the future once or twice. 3. We've talked, but we'd each still describe it differently. 4. We have a shared picture, but it isn't shaping decisions yet. 5. We share the picture, and it's changing what we do.						
2. What does this mean for me? 1. We haven't talked about personal impact. 2. It's come up once or twice, mostly in corridors. 3. We've talked, but people still don't know where they stand. 4. We know what's changing for each of us, but haven't acted on the gaps. 5. People know where they stand, and they've moved on to making it work.						
3. What are we letting go of? 1. We haven't talked about what we're losing. 2. It's come up once or twice, usually as complaints. 3. We've talked, but the losses are still unspoken or dismissed. 4. We've named the losses, but haven't marked the ending. 5. We've named them, honoured them, and people are ready to move.						
4. What's really in the way? 1. We haven't had it. 2. We've talked about it once or twice. 3. We've talked about it, but there's no real clarity. 4. We know what's in the way, but we haven't acted on it. 5. We named it, we acted, and it changed things.						
5. What will we try first? 1. We haven't talked about how to start. 2. We've talked about it once or twice, mostly about the plan. 3. We've talked, but we're still waiting for the perfect moment. 4. We've agreed our first experiment, but nobody has started it. 5. We ran the experiment, learned from it, and picked the next one.						
6. How do we keep going? 1. We haven't talked about how we'll get through the hard part. 2. We've talked about it once or twice, usually in a crisis. 3. We've talked, but we haven't agreed how we'll behave under pressure. 4. We've agreed it, but we don't yet live it day to day. 5. When it gets hard, we know how we'll respond, and we do.						

Prefer to do it online? Each person can take the check at <https://www.changereadythinking.com/change-readiness-check/> and get their own map by email.

1 Where are we really going?

Alignment isn't agreeing on a headline. It's sharing a picture specific enough to guide decisions when you're not in the room. You build it by hearing what matters to each person first, then working from what you share, not where you differ.

Try this first: Ask three people, separately: "If this change works, what will be different in two years?" Compare the answers.

Core Truths

Alignment is thinner than it looks. Agreeing on a headline isn't the same as sharing a picture. The gaps sit in the detail.

People look in different directions. Some people are pulled to the future, some to what needs doing today, some to what's worked before. None of these is wrong. But unless you name them, they look like resistance.

People do things for their reasons, not yours. You can't create alignment by explaining your picture more clearly. You create it by understanding theirs.

Start with where you agree. Most teams go straight to the disagreements. Alignment grows faster from the things you already share.

Make it a picture, not a slide. "Improve customer experience" means nothing until you can describe what a customer will actually notice.

The conversation with yourself

- If this change works, what will be different in two years? Be specific. What will I see, hear and notice?
- What would make me proud to have been part of this?
- Of my time, energy and focus, what percentage goes on the past, the present and the future? What might that make me miss?
- What part of the destination am I genuinely unsure about?

The conversation with your team

Allow 45 minutes. Work in pairs first, then come together.

1. **Ask one open question.** "What would make you proud if we achieved it together?" Everyone writes their own answer first, until they've run out of things to say.
2. **One person is fully heard.** In pairs, one speaks while the other listens and writes down what they say, word for word. No comments, no nodding along, no "me too". When they stop, the listener asks: "Is there anything else?"
3. **Play it back.** The listener reads it back. The speaker corrects anything that isn't quite right, until they say: "Yes, you've understood me."
4. **Swap.** Repeat with the roles reversed.
5. **Find what you share.** Each pair circles only what they have in common. Then bring the pairs together and look for the overlaps across the whole team.
6. **Build the shared picture.** From what you share, describe the future in concrete terms: what customers will experience, what people will notice, what you'll stop doing.

To finish, ask everyone to share their past, present and future percentages. It takes two minutes and explains a surprising amount about where friction has been coming from. (There's more on this in [Figure Out Focus](#) on The Big Bold Mindset site.)

This isn't a one-off. Each time you come back to it, another layer comes out.

Depth Check

1. We haven't had it.
2. We've talked about the future once or twice.
3. We've talked, but we'd each still describe it differently.
4. We have a shared picture, but it isn't shaping decisions yet.
5. We share the picture, and it's changing what we do.

What would it take to move one level deeper this week?

Your commitment

The person or team I'll have this conversation with is:

The question I'll open with is:

Full page, story and examples: <https://www.changereadythinking.com/leading-change/>

2 What does this mean for me?

People listen for themselves first. That isn't selfishness, it's how people process change. Say what is changing for each person, what is staying the same, what you don't know yet and when you will.

Try this first: Ask each person on your team: "What's the one question about this change you'd most like answered?" Answer what you can that day.

Core Truths

People listen for themselves first. That isn't selfishness. It's how humans process change. Answer the personal question and people can start to hear the rest.

Not knowing is often harder than bad news. People can adapt to a clear answer, even a hard one. Open-ended uncertainty is what wears them down.

Say what won't change. In change, people hear everything as moving. Naming what stays the same gives them something solid to stand on.

"I don't know yet" is a real answer. Especially if it comes with when you will know. Silence or vague reassurance does far more damage.

The same change looks different from different seats. Someone ten years from retirement, someone in their first job and someone who lived through the last restructure will read the same announcement in three different ways. Their experience shaped how they see it.

The conversation with yourself

Whether you're leading this change or on the receiving end, start here.

- What does this change actually mean for me? My role, my day, my future?
- What am I assuming that I haven't checked?
- What shaped the way I see this? What have I lived through before that colours it?
- What do I need to know, and who can tell me?

The conversation with your team

Allow 30 minutes. The tool is a simple four-column map.

What's changing for me	What's staying the same	What I don't know yet	When we'll know

1. **Fill it in privately.** Each person completes the map for their own role.
2. **Share in turn.** Go round the group. No debate yet, just listening.
3. **Notice the differences.** Ask: "What shaped the way you see this?" You'll often find that people who seem resistant have simply seen this kind of change go badly before.
4. **Answer what you can.** As the leader, answer every question you honestly can, there and then.
5. **Commit on the rest.** For everything in "don't know yet", agree when and how people will hear. Then keep that promise.

If you're not the leader, you can still start this conversation. Ask your manager: "Could we go through what this means for our team? Even the things we don't know yet would help."

Depth Check

1. We haven't talked about personal impact.
2. It's come up once or twice, mostly in corridors.
3. We've talked, but people still don't know where they stand.
4. We know what's changing for each of us, but haven't acted on the gaps.
5. People know where they stand, and they've moved on to making it work.

What would it take to move one level deeper this week?

Your commitment

The question about this change I'll ask, or answer, this week is:

Full page, story and examples: <https://www.changereadythinking.com/managing-change-in-the-workplace/>

3 What are we letting go of?

People rarely resist change itself. They resist losing status, competence, certainty or belonging. Name those losses out loud, honour what the old way achieved, and mark the ending. Then the new way has somewhere to land.

Try this first: Ask your team: “What has this team been proud of in the way we’ve worked?” Let them tell the stories.

Core Truths

People rarely resist change. They resist loss. Find the loss and you’ll understand the resistance.

The biggest losses are often invisible. Status, competence, certainty, belonging, identity. They rarely appear in the change plan, but they’re what people lie awake thinking about.

Every new beginning starts with an ending. [William Bridges](#) made this point decades ago. Before people can embrace the new, they need to let go of the old. You can’t skip that step, only rush it, and rushing it costs you later.

Honour the past. Don’t rubbish it. The old way got you here. When a change is sold by criticising what came before, the people who built it hear that they were wrong.

People let go at different speeds. The [change curve](#) describes the same thing. Some will be ready before you finish the announcement. Others need months. Neither is wrong.

The conversation with yourself

- What am I losing in this change, even if I’m in favour of it?
- What was I proud of in the old way?
- Which loss am I pretending doesn’t bother me?
- What do I want to carry forward into whatever comes next?

The conversation with your team

Allow 30 minutes. Use three columns on a wall or a shared screen.

What we’re letting go of	What we’re keeping	What we’re gaining

1. **Start with the past.** "What has this team been proud of in the way we've worked?" Let people tell the stories. This is not wasted time.
2. **Name the losses.** Everyone adds to the first column, privately on sticky notes if trust is low. Include the invisible ones: "being the expert", "knowing who to call".
3. **Name what stays.** Fill the middle column. It is almost always longer than people expect.
4. **Only then, the gains.** Now the future has somewhere to land.
5. **Mark the ending.** Agree one simple way to close the old chapter: a last team lunch on the old site, a thank you to the people who built the old system, a final retrospective. Endings that are marked are easier to move on from.

Depth Check

1. We haven't talked about what we're losing.
2. It's come up once or twice, usually as complaints.
3. We've talked, but the losses are still unspoken or dismissed.
4. We've named the losses, but haven't marked the ending.
5. We've named them, honoured them, and people are ready to move.

What would it take to move one level deeper this week?

Your commitment

The loss I'll acknowledge out loud this week is:

Full page, story and examples: <https://www.changereadythinking.com/embracing-change/>

4 What's really in the way?

Resistance is information, not disloyalty. It usually means people don't feel safe to say what they think, or don't believe it will make a difference. Ask what's harder than you're saying out loud, listen without fixing, and act on one thing.

Try this first: At your next team meeting, ask: "What's one thing about this change that's harder than we're saying out loud?"

Core Truths

Silence isn't agreement. When people don't raise concerns, it usually means they don't feel safe to, or don't believe it will make a difference.

Resistance is information. The doubts people voice outside the meeting are often the most useful data you have about where the change will fail. Treat them as early warning, not disloyalty.

If the conversation isn't happening, you have a part in that too. It's easy to decide the problem is the people who won't get on board. The shift comes when you ask what you're doing that makes it hard for them to speak.

Waiting doesn't fix it. Unspoken worries don't fade with time. They harden into stories, and the stories spread.

The argument is rarely about the thing on the table. Push-back about the new system is often about competence: "I was good at the old way." Push-back about the timeline is often about trust: "Last time, this landed on us."

"Fine" isn't aligned. A team that says everything is fine is often a team that has stopped saying what it thinks.

The conversation with yourself

Before you ask your team what's in the way, be honest about what's in yours.

- What part of this change am I privately unsure about?
- What am I avoiding saying, to my team or to the people above me?
- When people push back, what's my first reaction? Do I get curious, or do I defend?
- What might I be doing that makes it harder for people to tell me the truth?

The conversation with your team

Allow 30 minutes, in a room or on a call where nobody is rushing to the next thing.

1. **Name the gap.** "I don't think we've talked honestly about what's hard about this change. I'd like to."
2. **Own your part.** "I've probably made that harder by focusing on the plan rather than how it lands for you."
3. **Ask the question.** "What's one thing about this change that's harder than we're saying out loud?" If trust is low, ask people to write answers on cards first, without names, and read them out.
4. **Listen without fixing.** Your only job here is to understand. No defending, no solving. Play back what you hear until people agree you've got it.
5. **Go one layer down.** For the two or three biggest concerns, ask: "What's the worry underneath that?"
6. **Agree one thing.** Pick the obstacle that matters most. Agree one step to tackle it, who owns it and when you'll come back to it.

If the same conversation keeps going badly, change something about it. Have it on a walk instead of in the meeting room. Agree simple rules first: one person speaks at a time, the aim is to understand, not to win. If it gets heated, pause rather than push through.

One conversation won't clear everything. These conversations come in layers, and each one makes the next easier.

If you're not the one leading the change, you can still open this conversation. Try your manager: "Can I share something I'm hearing that I don't think is reaching you?" Often the most useful person in a change is the one willing to say what everyone else is thinking.

Depth Check

1. We haven't had it.
2. We've talked about it once or twice.
3. We've talked about it, but there's no real clarity.
4. We know what's in the way, but we haven't acted on it.
5. We named it, we acted, and it changed things.

What would it take to move one level deeper this week?

Your commitment

The one obstacle I'll bring into the open this week is:

The person or team I'll have that conversation with is:

Full page, story and examples: <https://www.changereadythinking.com/resistance-to-change/>

5 What will we try first?

Change fatigue rarely comes from one change. It comes from adding new things without stopping old ones, and from waiting for a perfect plan. Turn every “why not” into a small experiment, take the first step within 24 hours, and agree what you'll stop doing to make room.

Try this first: Ask your team: “To make room for this change, what will we stop doing?” Agree one thing.

Core Truths

A plan isn't progress. You can have a perfectly drawn chart in front of you, but if you're not moving, you're going nowhere.

Waiting for perfect is hesitation dressed up as responsibility. “Let's wait until we have more information” sounds sensible. Often it's just fear in a suit.

Small beats big. A good experiment is small, quick and cheap to get wrong. The aim isn't to be right first time. It's to learn faster than the situation changes.

Every yes is a no to something else. Change fatigue rarely comes from one change. It comes from adding new things without ever stopping old ones.

Tell someone. A step you've shared with someone else is far more likely to happen than one you've only promised yourself.

The conversation with yourself

- What's the next step I already know I need to take?
- What's really stopping me? Be honest: is it time, or is it fear of getting it wrong?
- If fear weren't a factor, what would I do next?
- What am I still doing that I could stop, to make room for this?

The conversation with your team

Allow 40 minutes. Use two tools, in this order.

Why / Why Not (20 minutes). Write the goal of the change at the top of a page. On the left, write why it matters. On the right, list every reason it might not work. Get them all out; this is where the unspoken doubts surface. Then take the “why nots” one at a time and turn each into an action or an experiment. Most people stop at the why nots, and they quickly become excuses. Your job is to turn them into steps.

The Next Step Rule (20 minutes). From the actions you've just written, pick one or two and apply three rules:

1. **Name the smallest next step.** Not the big plan. The very next thing, so small it almost doesn't feel like it counts.
2. **Do it within 24 hours.** The shorter the gap between deciding and doing, the less room for hesitation.
3. **Tell someone.** Say who's doing what, out loud, to the group.

Then ask one more question before you finish: **"To make room for this, what will we stop doing?"** Agree at least one thing, and tell the people it affects.

Depth Check

1. We haven't talked about how to start.
2. We've talked about it once or twice, mostly about the plan.
3. We've talked, but we're still waiting for the perfect moment.
4. We've agreed our first experiment, but nobody has started it.
5. We ran the experiment, learned from it, and picked the next one.

What would it take to move one level deeper this week?

Your commitment

The smallest next step I'll take in the next 24 hours is:

The person I'll tell is:

The thing I'll stop doing to make room is:

Full page, story and examples: <https://www.changereadythinking.com/change-fatigue/>

6 How do we keep going?

Resilience is built before the storm. Teams that keep going have agreed how they'll behave under pressure, know what helps each person cope, use each other's strengths and shrink the horizon to the next few days when the whole change feels too big.

Try this first: When the change feels overwhelming, ask: "What do we need to do in the next four hours?"

Core Truths

Resilience is built before the storm. Teams that cope well under pressure have usually agreed how they'll behave long before the pressure arrives.

Shrink the horizon. When the whole change feels too big, focus on the next watch. What do we need to do in the next four hours, this week, this sprint?

Values only help if they're lived. A list on a wall does nothing. When everything went wrong on our family voyage, what came to mind straight after the first reaction was our values, because we'd talked about them every day. Values shape behaviours, behaviours become actions, and actions create outcomes.

Safe teams recover faster. Google studied 180 of its teams to find out what made the best ones different. The answer wasn't talent. It was whether people felt safe enough to admit mistakes and speak up early.

Use what people are brilliant at. Under pressure, teams fixate on gaps. Strengths go unnoticed, often by the people who have them, because what comes naturally feels unremarkable.

Energy is a resource. Humour, play and small wins aren't a distraction from the change. They're what keeps people going through it.

The conversation with yourself

- What puts me at my best when things are hard? Sleep, exercise, time alone, time with people?
- When I'm under pressure, what do I do that makes it harder for others?
- What do I do well that this team needs from me right now?
- What's my "next watch"? What's the one thing that matters in the next few days?

The conversation with your team

Allow 40 minutes. Choose two of these four, depending on what your team needs most.

1. **What's helped us through before?** Go round the group: "Tell us about a time you really struggled, and what helped you through it." Listen without fixing. You'll find people cope in very different ways, and the team learns what each person needs.
2. **Make your values specific.** Pick two or three of your team or company values. For each, ask: "What does this look like when things are hard? What would we actually see someone do?" A value like "respect" becomes "we say it to your face, not behind your back." That's the difference between a skinny value and a fat one.
3. **Who brings what?** Each person names one thing they've seen each colleague do brilliantly. Write them down and give them to the person. Then ask: "Where could we use these strengths more in this change?"
4. **One watch at a time.** When the whole change feels overwhelming, agree the focus for just the next week. What matters most? What can wait?

Finish by agreeing one small thing the team will do to keep its energy up: a weekly win, a walking meeting, a reason to laugh.

Depth Check

1. We haven't talked about how we'll get through the hard part.
2. We've talked about it once or twice, usually in a crisis.
3. We've talked, but we haven't agreed how we'll behave under pressure.
4. We've agreed it, but we don't yet live it day to day.
5. When it gets hard, we know how we'll respond, and we do.

What would it take to move one level deeper this week?

Your commitment

My "next watch" this week is:

The strength I'll name in a colleague is:

Full page, story and examples: <https://www.changereadythinking.com/resilience-during-change/>

Your 30-day commitment

Retake the check, compare it with week 1, and then each person fills this in. Share them out loud.

The conversation I need to have	
Who it's with	
When I'll have it	
The question I'll open with	
Who will hold me to it	
Where it is on the Depth Index today (1 to 5)	
Where I want it to be in 30 days	

The monthly Depth Tracker

Once a month, take five minutes. List the conversations that matter most to the change you're in. Score each from 1 to 5, ask whether it has moved in the last 30 days, and set one next step.

Conversation	Score last month	Score now	Moved?	Next step

You can't navigate a new world using an old set of charts. But you don't redraw the whole chart at once. You draw one line. Then the next.

Change Ready Thinking® is the work of keynote speaker and author Caspar Craven, creator of The Big Bold Mindset®.
Free to use with your team. www.changereadythinking.com