

# SUPER MODELS

In a series of articles examining learning models, **Dr Mike Clayton** looks at Scott and Jaffe's Change Grid – the human response to organisational change

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**Why is the response to organisational change sometimes out of all proportion to the objective reality of the change itself? Most changes are hardly a matter of life and death, and yet people frequently get frightened, angry, upset and frustrated. These are powerful emotions and many authors have sought to develop an explanatory framework.**

While many trainers and coaches see organisational change as someone else's specialism, a general overview will help you to understand some of the dynamics you encounter. One of the most compelling models is that developed by Cynthia Scott & Dennis Jaffe in an article entitled 'Survive and Thrive in Times of Change'.

Their model owes much to the work of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. She researched the way people deal with tragedy, bereavement and grief, and developed a widely used description of five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.

Our ancient ancestors did not emerge in an environment of shifting organisational structures and operational processes: the

changes they encountered were often life-threatening. The responses that Dr Kübler-Ross described served them well. Now, we must use the same underlying physiology and brain chemistry to cope with both emotional trauma and an office move. It seems unsurprising, therefore, that when Scott and Jaffe researched responses to organisational change, they found a similar pattern (see opposite).

Their model suggests we move through four stages. Initially, the meaning of the change fails to sink in: we act as if nothing has happened. This is *Denial*. Once we start to recognise the reality of change, we start to *Resist* it. We do this both at the emotional level, showing anger, anxiety, bitterness or fear, for example, and also by opposing the change actively. Organisations see increases in sickness and losses, and drops in efficiency and quality.

When the organisation faces up to the resistance and engages with it in a positive way, people can start to focus on the future again. They will *Explore* the implications of the change and find ways to move forward. This can be a chaotic time, but also exhilarating – particularly when the benefits of the change are significant. Eventually people start to turn inward as they *Commit* to their future.

Scott and Jaffe are not the only researchers to articulate a model for change and there are many powerful and predictive models of change. Like all models, none is true. Yet each offers up valuable insights which, when used with care, can enhance your training and coaching, and for me, they are most useful when facilitating change. ■

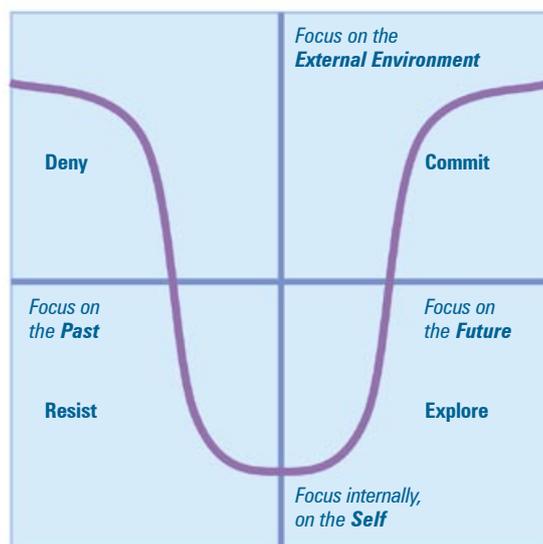


Figure 1: Scott & Jaffe, the Change Grid