

12

Change

Learning objectives in this unit

- Talking about change
- Presenting future plans
- Being negative diplomatically
- Using future continuous and future perfect to talk about plans and changes
- Talking about probability

Case study

- Increasing operational efficiency

Starting point

Choose one of the possible changes at work below. Say

- 1 what problems your company might have bringing in the change
 - 2 how you or your colleagues might react
 - 3 what arguments your company could give to make it more acceptable.
- a new system of working hours
 - using English only in meetings
 - a camera monitor system to prevent time-wasting / petty theft

Working with words | Talking about change

1 Read the first paragraph of the article and answer these questions.

- 1 What is the most critical part of organizational change and what happens during period?
- 2 What are the three main responses to proposals for change?

2 Read the rest of the article. How might employees behave if they

- 1 support the change?
- 2 are not sure about the change?
- 3 are against the change?

Adapting to change – or resisting?

Getting any organization to change is a slow process, but it's the initial stage – when the change is first announced – that is by far the most important. That's when the people in an organization start thinking about how the change will **affect** them personally. They weigh up the pros and cons and ask questions about its usefulness. Reactions will range from enthusiastic support, to apathy, to rejection. The people affected by the change will typically fall into the following three groups.

The supporters

If they can see the advantages of the change, your supporters will try to persuade their colleagues to **accept** it. They'll take an active part in the process and will do their best to understand the new procedures and **adapt** to new programmes.

The ambivalent

They can see that the proposals have good and bad points, but they may be nervous about the idea of change and feel anxious about changes to their current situation. They may **oppose** some of the

ideas, but, given enough pressure, they'll eventually accept the changes as necessary. They won't be antagonistic, but they won't be committed either so you'll need to lead them through the exercise – which they'd prefer not to do.

The opponents

These are going to be your biggest problem. They'll be difficult, rebellious and unwilling, and will try hard to **resist** the change. If they do eventually agree to it, they will still feel resentful and will be constantly watching for the slightest mistake. If they can't sabotage the new ways of working, they may **react** by becoming apathetic and doing as little work as possible.

Clearly, it's an advantage to have few 'opponents' in an organization, and the challenge is to create real enthusiasm and commitment, and get enough people 'on board' in support of the change. The key thing is to involve staff at the very beginning in the problem-solving phase. If you do, they're much more likely to be positive and enthusiastic about the solution.

3 Match the words in bold in the article to these definitions.

- 1 disagree with something and try to stop it from happening: _____
- 2 respond to something by showing feelings or taking action: _____
- 3 cause a change in someone or something: _____
- 4 agree to do something that's been suggested: _____
- 5 refuse to accept or comply with something: _____
- 6 become used to a different environment or new way of doing things: _____

4 Work with a partner.

- 1 Which of the three groups in the article would you put yourself in?
- 2 Use the words in **3** to make statements about how you react to change.

5 47▷ A multinational engineering company recently introduced a policy of using only English in all meetings. Listen to three employees talking about their reactions to the change. Which of the three groups in the article in 1 does each speaker belong to?**6 Match phrasal verbs 1–8 from audio 47▷ to verbs a–h with similar meanings.**

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| 1 <i>trying out</i> their language skills _____ | a handle |
| 2 they <i>put on</i> lots of courses _____ | b encounter |
| 3 we'll be able to <i>take on</i> more work _____ | c leave |
| 4 <i>working out</i> very well _____ | d accept |
| 5 they <i>brought</i> the policy <i>in</i> _____ | e have a (successful) result |
| 6 we <i>ran into</i> a few problems _____ | f arrange |
| 7 <i>deal with</i> support calls _____ | g practise |
| 8 <i>dropped out of</i> the courses _____ | h introduce |

7 Work with a partner. Make a sentence with each of the phrasal verbs in 6.**8 Which of these words / phrases from the article and audio 47▷ describe**

- 1 worry / uncertainty? *concerned*
 - 2 hostility? *antagonistic*
 - 3 enthusiasm? *receptive*
- antagonistic concerned receptive resistant worried nervous committed
ambivalent hostile anxious in favour critical resentful
enthusiastic keen against positive apprehensive optimistic*

9 Which of the words / phrases in 8 are followed by these prepositions?

about of on to towards (no preposition)

10 Work in small groups. Discuss whether you would support or oppose the following changes and how you would feel about them. Use the words / phrases in 8.

- a rise in taxation to support environmental initiatives (e.g. higher air passenger tax)
- compulsory car-sharing (e.g. several families / people own a car together)

» For more exercises, go to **Practice file 12** on page 124.

11 Work with a partner. Think about a past or current change at work. Talk about

- the proposals for change
- the reactions of you and your colleagues during the different stages of the change
- positive or negative outcomes of the change
- how well you feel you have adapted to the change.

i » Interactive Workbook » Glossary



Business communication skills

Context

FGR is a textiles company based in Northern England. Due to fierce competition from the Far East and Asia, FGR's management called in business consultants to see what changes could be made to help the company work more efficiently. Rachel and Imran are department leaders and have attended the consultants' final meeting. Their task now is to present the consultants' proposed changes to the other heads of department.

Presenting | Presenting future plans



1 Some teams, departments or even whole companies operate a bottom-up management approach where employees are involved in decision-making and policy-making. Work in small groups and discuss questions 1–2.

- 1 Who proposes ideas for change and makes the decisions in your company?
- 2 What role, if any, do employees play in helping implement change?

2 48▷ Read the *Context*. Listen to the presentation given by Rachel and Imran. Complete the missing information in these notes.

CONSULTANTS' FINDINGS

Job losses? Yes.

How will job cuts be made? ¹ _____

Pay freeze? Probably.

How will we be informed? ² _____

New management model: bottom-up management

When will it be implemented? ³ _____

Friday afternoon ideas forum: potential problem: ⁴ _____

Will employees get remuneration? ⁵ _____

3 48▷ Listen again. Put these phrases into categories a–d below.

- 1 As you all know, it is likely ...
- 2 We'd like to assure you that ...
- 3 Decisions will definitely have been made by March ...
- 4 Over the next few weeks, we'll be hosting departmental meetings.
- 5 Starting from next month, we'll be putting regular updates on our Intranet.
- 6 We're proposing a Friday afternoon ideas forum.
- 7 You may be wondering if this will work.
- 8 It's crucial to get the employees on our side ...
- 9 This last point is probably going to be difficult to administer at the beginning.
- 10 We're calling on you to be positive – pass this information on ...

- a Explaining planned future events / activities: _____
- b Making predictions about a future situation: _____
- c Referring to audience knowledge and concerns: _____
- d Making a call for action: _____

Tip | Let's

Use *Let's ...* rather than *I'd like to ...* in a presentation to involve your audience and make the situation more personal.

Let's digress for a moment and look at this in more detail.

- 4** Turn to audio script 48▷ on page 162. What do the speakers say to
- 1 hand over to someone else?
 - 2 indicate that they are going to give more details?

» For more exercises, go to **Practice file 12** on page 124.

- 5** Work with a partner. Take turns to present these situations using an appropriate phrase. (Each person should use a different phrase for each situation.)
- 1 Explain a future planned event, e.g. increase of staff numbers by 5%.
 - 2 Make an informed prediction about the financial status of your / a business area.
 - 3 Refer to your staff's concerns that the company may close and reassure them.
 - 4 Indicate that you are going to expand on a point about a new flexitime system.
 - 5 Hand over the presentation about your department to a colleague from a different department.
 - 6 You've made a presentation about new, higher sales targets. Give your audience a 'call for action'.
- 6** Choose one of the topics below and prepare a mini-presentation (two minutes) about proposed changes. Include at least one phrase from each category in *Key expressions*. The content doesn't have to be true for your job or company.
- your department
 - holiday procedures
 - use of the Internet in work time
 - overtime rules
 - your company's product / service
 - working hours

- 7** Give your presentation to a partner. Your partner should listen and check which phrases you used from *Key expressions*.

 » Interactive Workbook » Email

Key expressions

Explaining planned future events

Over the next few weeks, we'll be ...
 We plan to keep you informed about ...
 Starting from next month, we'll be ...
 Our idea is to ...
 We're proposing ...
 Later this year we'll be ...

Making informed predictions

Decisions will definitely have been made by ...
 Hopefully, the new model will be in place by ...
 We are fairly certain this will have been carried out by ...
 (This) is probably going to be ...

Referring to audience knowledge and concerns

We're well aware of your concerns regarding ...
 As you all know, ...
 We'd like to assure you that ...
 Many of you have asked about ...
 You may be wondering if ...

Call for action


It's crucial to ...
 We're calling on you to be ...

Giving more details

Let's digress for a moment and look at this in more detail.

Handing over to someone else

I'd like to pass the next point over to ...
 (John) will now deal with ...

 » Interactive Workbook
 » Phrasebank

Practically speaking | Being negative diplomatically

- 1** 49▷ Sometimes, when you have negative feelings about an idea or proposal, you want to be diplomatic or neutral in your response rather than say what you really think. Listen to five short conversations. What idea or proposal is being discussed in each one?
- 2** 49▷ Listen again. What does the second speaker say in conversations 1–5 to express the following?
- Conversation 1** I don't fully agree with the idea.
Conversation 2 I can understand the ideas of the two groups involved.
Conversation 3 My impression of the idea is positive but I have some doubts.
Conversation 4 I'm uncertain about the idea.
Conversation 5 I want more time before I give my opinion of the idea.

- 3** Work with a partner. Take turns to express a diplomatic response to these ideas. Refer to the *Useful phrases* on page 135.
- introducing a car-sharing policy and reducing the number of car parking spaces
 - providing only decaffeinated coffee and tea in the company cafeteria
 - introducing a shift system to make communication easier with clients worldwide but employees are concerned about the impact on their private lives
 - changing from business class to economy class for all business trips
 - centralizing secretarial support services (previously each department had their own service)

Language at work | Future continuous, future perfect and probability

1 Match these extracts from audio 48▶ to situations 1–3. What tense is used in each situation?

- a Decisions **will definitely have been made** by March.
- b Over the next few weeks, we'll **be hosting** departmental meetings.
- c I'll **be visiting** our suppliers in Bradford on that day ...

- 1 an activity that is part of a future programme ____
- 2 an activity that will be in progress at a particular time in the future ____
- 3 an action that will be finished by a particular time in the future ____

» For more information and exercises, go to **Practice file 12** on page 125.



2 Work with a partner. Look at the picture and answer questions 1–2. Use the prompts and / or your own ideas.

- 1 What will be happening over the next six months?
clear / ground cut down / trees take on / temporary workers
damage / environment
- 2 What will have happened by this time next year?
complete / project build / new supermarket create / local jobs
ruin / countryside

3 50▶ Listen to extracts 1–3. What is being discussed in each extract?

4 Turn to audio script 50▶ on page 162. Underline the following phrases that the speakers use to talk about the probability of things happening. Write 0%, 25%, 50%, 75% or 100% to show how probable the things are.

Extract 1		Extract 2		Extract 3	
might	<u>50%</u>	it is doubtful	___	definitely won't	___
bound to	___	is certain to	___	'll probably	___
probably won't	___	are likely to	___	perhaps	___
there's a good chance	___			will definitely	___

» For more information and exercises, go to **Practice file 12** on page 125.

5 Work with a partner. Using as many phrases from 4 as possible, talk about your activities in and out of work.

- 1 What activities will / might / won't you be doing
 - next week?
 - next month?
 - in six months' time?
 - next year?
- 2 What do you think you will / might / won't have achieved
 - by the end of next week?
 - between now and the end of the year?

6 Work with a partner. What developments do you predict for working life? What will be happening in twenty years' time? What changes will have taken place?

*Example: A lot more people will be working from home.
The retirement age will have been raised to 75.*

7 Work with another pair. How probable are their predictions in 6?

Increasing operational efficiency

Background

Change initiatives at Medstin

Medstin produces hi-tech diagnostic machines for hospitals. It has manufacturing plants and sales offices around the world. Recently the company has lost orders because its biggest competitors are manufacturers in China who can produce similar products for a considerably lower price. The management board brought in a business consultancy to analyse the company and suggest changes to make it work more efficiently. Their findings were as follows.

The company

- Least profitable sales / manufacturing offices
 - Mannheim Sales office, Germany: losing 5% of clients each year
 - Los Angeles, US: overheads highest of all locations
 - Oslo, Norway: highest payroll costs and smallest number of staff
- Old manufacturing technology slows down production
- Highly hierarchical structure – too many layers of management

The staff

- Trend for open-plan offices results in a high level of noise with constant distractions for workers and subsequent lack of concentration
- 12-hour shifts in manufacturing plant too long – the last 2 hours are unproductive
- Flexitime in office is unmonitored – those working 40–50 hours a week resent employees who 'bend the rules' – problematic in 8 out of 10 locations
- Office staff lunch hours last on average 80 minutes
- Computer system downtime means that each employee is unproductive on average 1 hour a week

Discussion

- 1 Is there anything companies like Medstin can do to secure jobs and the industry against cheaper and more competitive regions in the world?
- 2 What action might Medstin consider taking in response to the findings about the company?

Task

- 1 Work in groups of three. You are going to decide how Medstin could increase its efficiency. Discuss questions 1–3 and make notes.
 - 1 What changes could be made to increase efficiency?
 - 2 When should these changes be implemented?
 - 3 What might be the staff reaction to these changes? Receptive, hostile, concerned?
- 2 Use your notes in 1 to prepare a presentation to give to Medstin staff. You should each present one part of the presentation. Include the following points in your presentation.
 - Explain the current situation and plans for future change.
 - Give an idea of the time schedule.
 - Refer to possible concerns and reassure the staff.
 - Give a call for action.
- 3 Give your presentation to the class. Compare your suggested changes with the other groups. Have a class vote on the best suggestion for change for Medstin.

The Expert View

All organizations recognize the need to change, but many experience difficulty in delivering the anticipated benefits of any change initiative. One of the main causes of failing to deliver a return on investment is the poor quality of the original business case. Early planning is critical to successful change, and needs to include a clear and measurable statement of anticipated benefits, plus an outline of the internal resources required. It also needs to consider the implications of the proposed change, both for the business and for employees. To ensure a smooth transition, organizations need to develop a consistent way of initiating and implementing change.

Dr Rob Lambert, Senior Lecturer in Management Information Systems
Cranfield School of Management



Case study

Unit 12

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1

... I'm in charge of a sales team based in Lille. Most of them are French speakers, of course ... you might think I'd prefer it if everyone spoke in English, but in fact I've been anti the whole idea ever since they brought the policy in. I told them why we were worried about it, but they don't listen, they refused to modify the policy in any way ... and now that it's been implemented, we've got real problems ... just as I predicted. They know I've always been hostile to this policy ... and I'm very critical, I admit it ... but one of the reasons is that I'm genuinely concerned about misunderstandings ... and I told my manager that my team weren't sure about trying out their language skills and doing everything in English, but she was all for it ... so what can you do? But things do go wrong ... last week we had to order up 15,000 new catalogues from the Paris office, one of my salespeople phoned them and we ended up with 50,000 – a complete waste of time and money. OK, in that example, it wasn't the end of the world, but it shows the kind of thing that can happen. I say, if two people speak French, let them speak French, otherwise, you know ...

2

When they introduced the language programme a couple of years ago, I think most people were quite positive about learning English though I personally had a few concerns. Anyway, they put on lots of courses for people who needed to develop their English ... but in my department – technical support – we ran into a few problems, especially just after it was introduced. Most of my team are not really natural language learners ... basically they are techies, and they weren't very keen on having to speak English all the time. They were very resistant to the idea of using English in meetings and especially on the phone. But in fact, it's OK. They found it pretty hard to start with – some of them were quite anxious about it, especially the older ones – but now they've been speaking English for a while, it's getting easier, and they've actually improved quite a lot. We can now deal with support calls from Spain, Italy and Finland, too, and I'm optimistic that we'll be able to take on more work in the near future.

3

... Well, as head of the training department, I was asked to carry out a review of language use in the company, and when it was completed, we came up with the idea of a single language policy. There was a real problem ... we had three different

company languages ... in meetings, you would get a mix of languages, or the majority language would dominate ... and all the documentation had to be translated, so we had an army of translators and interpreters, and there was just so much paperwork, so much waste ... So that was basically why we were in favour of the new policy. At the start, people were naturally apprehensive and a few people were against it – but it was nothing serious. I think most of the staff appreciated it was the right thing to do and they were very receptive to the whole idea. Now ... I think it's all working out very well. Very few people have dropped out of the courses. We've already achieved a lot, and our different offices are communicating much better as far as I can tell ... Ask me again in a year.

48

Rachel ... OK. I've spoken about our consultants' findings and we're well aware of your concerns regarding how the changes will affect our staff. As you all know, it is likely there will be some job losses but we'd like to assure you that we will keep these to an absolute minimum and try to reduce headcount through natural wastage. Decisions will definitely have been made by March as to how big the cutbacks will be. Many of you have asked about a rumoured pay freeze ... We aren't counting this out, but this is something we'd like to avoid. Over the next few weeks, we'll be hosting departmental meetings to give more specific information ... and we plan to keep you informed about any other changes so you can answer your staff's queries with well-informed answers. Starting from next month, we'll be putting regular updates on our Intranet regarding potential changes ... but more about that later.

I'd like to pass the next point over to Imran, who has been working closely with the consultants on the subject of bottom-up management.

Imran Thanks, Rachel. Yes, bottom-up management has proven to be very successful in a number of companies and we've been working on a similar concept to implement here at FGR ... Hopefully, the new model will be in place by the end of the month. Bottom-up management is quite a simple idea ...

... Normally when change takes place, this is decided and implemented by senior management. However, to make the changes work we need the enthusiasm, motivation and energy from everyone who will be affected by those changes. Let's digress for a moment and look at this in more detail. Our idea is to give everyone the opportunity to propose changes which will benefit themselves and the company. We're proposing a Friday afternoon

ideas forum where employees can put forward their suggestions for change. Each department nominates someone to present the most popular ideas to senior management, along with a business plan or some sort of proof that benefits can be gained. The first forum will be on Friday the 24th at 3.30. I'll be visiting our suppliers in Bradford on that day, so Rachel will be here to lead the session.

You may be wondering if this will work – Friday afternoons are free for most of our employees. We're convinced the opportunities outweigh the disadvantages of staying at work longer. We must see this as a step towards becoming a more effective company. It's crucial to get the employees on our side ... and we need to emphasize that there will be money available for remuneration ... which could be paid if we see real results after the changes are implemented. This last point is probably going to be difficult to administer at the beginning but the consultants had an example of remuneration scales for us to consider.

I'm sure some of you are sceptical of the consultants' proposals, but we're calling on you to be positive – pass this information on and create enthusiasm ... sell the idea of empowerment to our staff and highlight the rewards this could bring us all. Later this year we'll be reassessed to see how effective the changes are ...

49

1

- A What do you think about changing the team meeting to Friday afternoons?
- B I have some reservations about it. People on flexitime often choose to leave early on Fridays. And concentration probably won't be as good at the end of the week ...

2

- A If you ask me, this is just a way of getting rid of staff.
- B I can see both sides of the argument. Management want to streamline the company's operation but employees are naturally worried about possible job cuts.

3

- A I can't believe they're going to make us all learn Spanish.
- B It sounds interesting – I like the idea of having a common language for the company – but people who aren't confident in their language skills might find it difficult.

4

- A Do you think this latest proposal is a good thing?
- B Mm. I'm not sure about it. Is management confident that extending our office hours will actually improve the service?