



The Change Formula

By Christine Grimm

Have you ever wondered what needs to be in place for real change to take place and stick?

Why some change feels easy but other types of change feels impossible?

Here is a way to think about, how you think about and approach change. This can work for individual and organizational change.

“The Formula for Change” was created by Richard Beckhard and David Gleicher, refined by Kathie Dannemiller and is sometimes called Gleicher’s Formula. This formula provides a model to assess the capacity for personal or business change.

The Change Formula

$$(D \times V) + FS > C$$

Dissatisfaction x Vision + First Steps > Cost of Change

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Credits for Model to Richard Beckhard



The Formula for Change $D \times V \times F > R$ proposes that the combination of dissatisfaction with the present situation, a vision for the future, and the real possibility of immediate action must be stronger than the resistance being felt for meaningful change to occur and “stick”.

Let's look at each component:

Dissatisfaction

This is the ‘**Why**’ or the motivational factor in the formula. Few people honestly like change. Most people fear it and often assume they will fail if they leave their comfort zone. Most dislike how it feels to change a habit, a behavior, or the work process. Even when the change is your idea, there can be fear and hesitation. It is even worse when the change is imposed upon us.

In most cases, the level of dissatisfaction needed to support significant change efforts must be quite high. We often notice that something really bad has to happen, a crisis maybe or great “pain” or failure before leaders or individuals will take action to make a change, even when they knew it was inevitable.

Vision

The Vision is the ‘**What**’ factor of the formula and how you would like to be in the future. This works best when it is compelling and represents something that you really want to make happen. The contrast between the way things are “**now**” and what “**could be**” ideally generates enthusiasm to replace the fear and any negativity in the dissatisfaction.

People who do not know where they are going will, in their confusion, become a resisting force to the change. In our personal lives, this can look and sound like apathy, procrastination, confusion, etc. In corporate it can sound like overt resistance, skepticism, and a vote to keep the status quo.



First Steps

It is critical to identify a few concrete steps that can be taken towards the vision. Often the first step is not clear so even though Dissatisfaction is high and the Vision is compelling, nothing will happen until we know how to launch the process into the “new”.

Resistance

The forces that might be working against your change can be categorized as resistance. Often if the resistance is well organized and/or exercised by people who have high levels of influence, it can prevent change from occurring. Resistance can also include refusal to take action by key employees or other people necessary for the change to take effect.

Sometimes it is our thinking that creates resistance. This can be rational thinking based on data or past experience. This can also be resistance caused by MSU, “making stuff up”.

We, as humans, are self-protective animals, so by nature, our instincts are to attempt to control outcomes in our favor. Our brain will “make up” stories with potential scenarios to help us predict the future and avoid the things we are most afraid of. These thoughts are often flawed and can cause us to resist or avoid moving forward.

It can also be that we are in our comfort zone and would prefer to play it safe rather than risk learning or trying something new. For change to materialize the “weight” of the $(D \times V) + FS$ must be greater than the “weight” of the resistance that holds us back.

For more information about making sustainable change in your life or work, on your team or in your business, contact us at info@ariacoach.com.