Key insights

Managing change when you're not a change management professional

The UN family is constantly transforming and you've likely been involved in some way. Over the last few years changes have included new programmes of work, UN reforms, modifications stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of teleworking as well as ERP and recruitment system upgrades. Now, changes are accelerating owing to UN 2.0 and the Quintet of Change.

You're consistently tasked with supporting staff to accept and embrace change and even facilitating change discussions or conducting change-related trainings. But you don't have formal training or experience in change management. Does that make you a change management professional? Some people say yes. Others say no.

We say: While the debate goes on, you still need to help people who are exhausted by existing changes to navigate yet more changes in ways that are effective and as painless as possible. As a non-change-management-practitioner-managing-change, you are encouraged to draw from those change management people, toolboxes and networks available to you. Maybe try on a training, for size. Then decide what you would like to call yourself.

Read on for:

- Insights based on the perspectives shared by change management practitioners through the *State of Change Management in the UN System* survey;

- Suggested actions you can take, provided by the UN Lab for Organizational Change and Knowledge (UNLOCK) project at the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC).

Key insights for people who are tasked with managing change and don't consider themselves change management practitioners

One size doesn't fit all who manage change

Just because change management isn't in your job title and you don't sit in a change management team doesn't mean you shouldn't consider yourself a change manager. Take a look at our survey participants, for instance. The expression 'change management' or 'transformations' only appears in one-third of the job titles of UN change managers. Less than a third of survey participants work full-time on change management. About 40 per cent of them are located in a transformation office/unit or in a Central Change Management Function while 16 per cent sit in Programme/Operations and 11 per cent are in Human Resources.

40%
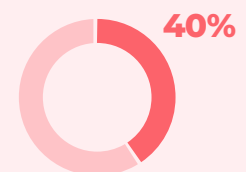
Located in a transformation office/unit or in a Central Change Management Function

## Change managers tap into many disciplines

Survey participants bring a range of skills and experience to the table, beyond project management and change management. They are most versed in communications & engagement (56 per cent), strategy development (53 per cent), facilitation (47 per cent) and training (44 per cent). They also possess solid competencies in process expertise (34 per cent), risk and risk management expertise (33 per cent), organizational development and human resources management (28 per cent).

Communications & engagement

Strategy development

Facilitation

Strategy

Process expertise

Risk management

Organization development

If you're managing change, you've got to manage change saturation too

The vast majority of organizations represented in the 2023 edition of the survey (32 out of 37) were implementing digital transformations, 31 were engaged in business transformations and 28 were involved in ways of working and culture change. Taken together, 70 per cent of organizations surveyed were rolling out five or more simultaneous transformations. All the while, only 11 per cent of respondents say their organization has plenty of spare capacity for change, and 21 per cent say the have some excess capacity.

37
32
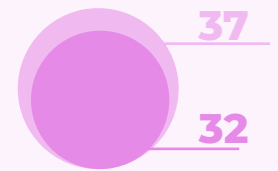
Number of organizations implementing digital transformations

Managing change is challenging, whether you're a professional change manager or not

The most challenging aspect of change is the people side of change. The biggest challenges identified by survey participants are the perceived lack of awareness of the importance of change management among senior leaders and people managers; alignment and buy-in from leadership and allocation of resources, specifically time, funding and experts.

Lack of awareness of the importance of change management

Alignment and buy-in from leadership

Allocation of resources

Measuring how change is managed is about impact and process

Survey results reveal an insufficient focus in managing change on measuring what matters. A majority of respondents say their organization rarely or never measures individual performance (55 per cent). Forty eight per cent say the same for culture and culture change, 43 per cent for change management performance and 32 per cent for organizational performance. Sixty per cent indicate being asked to report on training participation and attendance but only 39 per cent on change management activity effectiveness.

60% report on training participation and attendance

39% on change management activity effectiveness
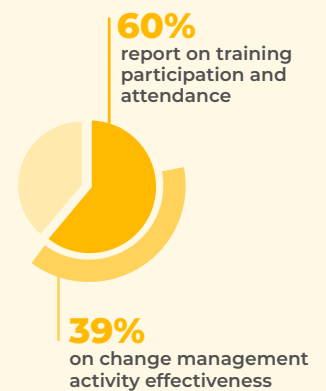
As a person tasked with managing change, you can:

Own it! If you're consistently involved in managing change, call yourself a change manager. Welcome to the family!

Find other people in your organization who also manage change. Form alliances, learn from them and share with them your lessons learned.

Leverage the tools available to change management practitioners as they make a big difference in managing change saturation and helping staff adopt and sustain change over time.

Upskill and take some change management courses. Change is a constant, therefore no matter your current or future role, this training will always serve you.

Measure what matters in change management performance, individual performance organizational performance and culture change. You will at least know what's effective and what's not.