

NAVIGATE TO THE 8 TIPS IN THIS E-BOOK

- **►** Introduction
- ▶ 1. Build objectivity and let go of what you can't control
- ▶ 2. Listen for the three stages of transition
- ▶ 3. Constantly communicate with the people you lead
- ▶ 4. Fill your cup first
- ► 5. Create and follow a 3-6-month strategy
- ▶ 6. Lead your peers and lead your bosses
- ▶ 7. Build your leadership brand
- ▶ 8. If things become stormy, be the Emotionally Intelligent (EQ) lighthouse
- ▶ Source and reference materials
- ► Corporate Alchemy Services



Published in Australia by Corporate Alchemy pty ltd corporatealchemy.com.au ABN: 15 657 997 361

8 MoG Aware Leadership tips

First published in Australia Oct 2023
Copyright © Corporate Alchemy / Peter Shields / 2023
Typesetting and design: Lauren Canty

Editing: A big thank you to Melissa Chandler and Lauren Canty for their invaluable contribution.

The right of Peter Shields to be identified as the Author of the Work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

ISBN: 978-0-6486011-2-8

Government Leaders,

Welcome to your MoG Aware Leadership Effectiveness E-Book

A change in government often leads to changes in the structure of public sector: this is known as a Machinery of Government change (MoG). MoG change can include evolving, devolving, abolishing and merging government entities and transferring assets, people and liabilities between departments. This process is often ambiguous and protracted, delivering uncertainty levels exceeding other 'business as usual' changes.

This e-book provides eight actionable tips for leading through and beyond MoG change and offers ways for you to confidently and effectively guide and support individuals and teams.

Research on change shows that people experience externally driven change through predictable stages, and for many, change can be experienced as a loss. "The process of letting go of the past can bring up feelings of sadness, grief and loss" (1).

People commonly experience change as a loss because the nature of our identity is to seek and maintain certainty and predictability. This is even more significant in the Public Sector, where research has shown that motivation generally has firm foundations in "interest in a community of people, a state, a nation", and "belief, values and attitudes that go beyond self-interest and organisational interest, that concern the interest of a larger political entity"(2).

On a practical and psychological level, restructuring creates unpredictability, adding tension to people's workplace experience. It introduces the likelihood of physical changes (change of office, manager, location) and changes affecting the meaning people attach to their roles and professions. This uncertainty in the workplace can impact satisfaction, relationships and productivity, requiring leaders to utilise additional skills and resources.

Use these eight tips as a reference and guide as you plan, review, and refresh your approach to leading your people through MoG change.

You can successfully establish a path through the change process reducing stress and increasing productivity while supporting attitudes, conversations, and outcomes that deliver value far beyond the MoG period.

Peter Shields, peter@corporatealchemy.com.au Director



- (1): William Bridges: Managing Transitions Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2017)
- (2): Perry et al, Public Service Administration Review Sept/Oct 2010; 682).





In the public sector, structural changes are inevitable. MoG changes will continue to present challenges beyond your control. The key to effectively leading through them is accepting their inevitability, letting go of what you can't control and focusing on what you can control; your ability to lead others with objectively, empathy and optimism.

Why acting on this tip is good for your people:

On some level, most people will feel negatively about the changes and may react counterproductively. As a leader, expect resistance to change but be the consistent voice of purpose. Reassure your team, even in confusing times. Objectivity breeds confidence and productivity. Recognise change's routine nature, and guide others to focus on what they can control, influence, impact, and choose.

How to integrate this tip into your leadership practice:



Knowledge building

Build your political landscape knowledge by researching government history and policies, including formal policies, pre and post-election statements, and more.



Authentic communication

Engage with your your Secretary, CEO or Executive team, asking open questions to promote dialogue and clarity. Those with an authentic voice are more included and involved with critical decisions.



Transparency

Lead with courage, purpose, and integrity, communicating what you know while respecting confidentiality and sensitive timing. If and when you are asked to deliver difficult news to individuals or teams, be straightforward and respectful.



Positive focus

Be aware of the merits of the bureaucratic process and the stability and consistency it delivers. Focus on the positives. Become a student of the public sector. Large institutional hierarchical organisations have merits and folly.



Practical frameworks

Use practical frameworks to structure thinking about how to focus the activity of your team. For example, white-board three buckets: one for things to action and deliver, one for things to consider and guestion, and one for things to let go of.

Watch out for the following behavioural traps:



Over-personalising

Over-personalising changes and getting lost in worry and or frustration. Acknowledge the impact on yourself, talk with your peers, seek assistance through your EAP to process your feelings, and guide others to do the same.



Micro-managing

Overplaying your hand as a leader by moving into micro-managing or becoming more demanding. Some managers do this to alleviate their fears or worries and achieve little but propagating unnecessary stress and discontent for others.



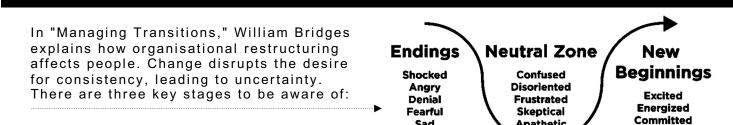
Silo visioning

It can be easy to focus only on the team, division or branch you lead without understanding and accepting the interconnectedness of it to the remainder of the agency or the public sector. Recognize the interconnected political landscape and relationships within your organisation. Trust the system's strengths while acknowledging its flaws.



Tip 2

Listen for the three stages of transition



Sad

Apathetic

Why acting on this tip is good for your people:

The emotional ups and downs experienced during a MoG change mean individuals and teams may underdeliver compared to their actual capacity. If you can recognise and support people through the stages of transition they will return to normal or advanced levels of productivity and satisfaction. Your job as a leader is to continue to deliver results through people by guiding and enhancing their experience through the change. Getting this right will allow them to grow and learn with you and their colleagues to find new confidence, productivity levels and trust.

How to integrate this tip into your leadership practice:



Listen and be curious

Listen to your people and be curious about which stage of the three stages of transition they might be at. Do this by noticing people and 'checking-in' regularly.



Validate feelings

Address people as individuals and let them know that what they feel is okay; there is no right or wrong with the human emotional experience of change.



Create space for feelings

Give space for people's feelings, ask open questions to elicit their experience "What questions do you have about this change?" "What support do you need from me?" "What is your experience of this?" etc.



Provide clarity and support

Ensure people are clear about their role's key tasks and invite them to focus on delivering on those key tasks and invite them to ask for help if they can't.



Self-Resource

Resource yourself to have the emotional space and the competence to lead optimistically. Have a private practice for tracking, venting and accepting your own emotions about this MoG change.

Watch out for the following behavioural traps:



Rushing

Rushing people through to Stage 3 = the new beginnings - too quickly will force them to stay in Stage 1 or 2 longer. Show empathy and support, allowing them to express their feelings without correcting or blaming them for how they feel.



Overestimating your emotional resilience

Overestimating your emotional resilience during the change and blaming others. All change is challenging and imperfect; it always has been. Understand and recognise your own behaviours/triggers/reactions when under stressful situations.

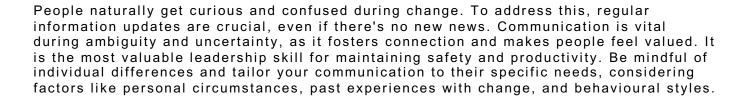


Impatience

Becoming impatient with others' emotions or reduced effectiveness. Guide them through their emotional journey. Use this change as an opportunity to enhance your self-awareness and leadership skills. Build trust and credibility with others.







Why acting on this tip is good for your people:

In the absence of information, people become concerned about their lot in the world. Having clarity about the future is a crucial need for people. At the core of the adult human mind is a vigilance that scans for risk. When a threat is sensed. defensive behaviour can become the norm. One obvious thing that emerges in the absence of communication from the boss is that people make things up; gossip appears and will consume a lot of energy, emotion and time. Being on the front foot with authentically optimistic comms, especially if you acknowledge the positives and speak objectively about the challenges; will build a trusting and empowered culture.

How to integrate this tip into your leadership practice:



Verify information sources

Ensure you are paying attention to reliable and accurate sources of information about any potential changes.



Regular updates

Find the communication channel(s) that work for your people and use them regularly; weekly or fortnightly. Encourage interaction and keep abreast of their comments and interactions, address as required.



Individual conversations

Talk to people individually to back up your broader messaging. Be composed, use eye contact and listen to their perspective.



Identify transition stages

Listen for which of the three stages of transition (refer to Tip 2) the individual may be experiencing. Ask open questions and validate their perspective without agreeing or supporting what they are saying, especially if they are being particularly negative.



Address misinformation

Address misnomers, hearsay, and gossip as soon as possible by asking for the details and letting people talk it out. As people' speak out the gossip', it is soon seen for what it is.

Watch out for the following behavioural traps:



Being time-poor

Getting too busy to craft and share meaningful communications (being time-poor). Prioritise time to communicate now and regularly.



Negative reactivity

Getting annoyed at gossip or gossiping yourself (personal satiation of negative emotional reactivity). Have and practise your own emotional resilience process.



Rushing others' emotional progress

Telling people to 'move on' from their emotional experience before they are ready. People are non-linear beings, and you can help them move on by being present and respectful of their experience.

CORPORATE A L C H E A



The best leaders of MoG restructures have a solid sense of self and can work with the many complexities inherent in large organisational change. They do this by ensuring their mental and emotional cup is full of the emotional capacity, spaciousness, and objectivity needed to lead others through change confidently.

Why acting on this tip is good for your people:

Your people look to you for clarity, certainty, and direction; whether you know it or not, they are alert to how optimistic or pessimistic you are. Though it will often remain unspoken, your direct reports need to see you acting with confidence - that everything is okay, and they expect you to be organised, composed, and connected to what is likely to play out, whether that's bad news or good news for them. Being authentic during this time is essential; being emotionally grounded will help.

How to integrate this tip into your leadership practice:



Maintain well-rounded lifestyle habits

Ensure you are maintaining the good habits of your lifestyle, including time with friends, family, your community, sleep, and exercise, which will help you to feel solid and present. Your job is your occupation, not your life.



Develop your mindset

Build your mindset development skills. Your mindset (the patterns of how you think and feel) can be developed and is an infinite well of learning for improving your leadership capabilities.



Craft an adaptive strategy

Have a clear and adaptable 3–6-month strategy that anticipates best and worst outcomes for you, your role, and your team's mission. Stay open and objective, using it to remain adaptable and prepared for any changes.



Embrace transition and seek support

Be honest with yourself about your journey through the three stages of transition from Tip 2. Allow yourself time to feel what you are experiencing, be patient if you are feeling challenged and ask for and accept help from your supporters when needed.



Establish and communicate boundaries

Have and hold boundaries with your people, your peers and your bosses. Be clear about your role expectations and communicate clearly and objectively. This may include saying no and or asking people to review their expectations of you and your role.

Watch out for the following behavioural traps:



Old negative stories

Following old negative stories (mental patterns and habits that drive negative self-talk) about yourself and others by denying the emotions you experience. This can lead to emotional fatigue and a loss of motivation.



Reacting to the stress and negativity of others

Reacting to the stress and reactivity from others who may get caught up in chopping and changing priorities, resulting in overwork or wasting time. Focus on the key things that matter most.



Blame and gossip

Blaming others and or gossiping with your peers, your boss and most importantly, your direct reports. Gossiping, ranting, or venting might seem relieving at the time, but it rarely achieves anything constructive.



Tip 5

Create and follow a 3-6-month strategy

The best leaders have and follow a solid strategy that allows for adaption and flexibility to keep the team productive during change. Focus your leadership on a plan of action designed to keep moving towards the long-term overall aim of your team. Being strategic is best represented by calmly, thoughtfully and consistently moving one step at a time towards the purpose or goal of the group, division or branch.

Why acting on this tip is good for your people:

Operating with composed energy and optimism, grounded in a strategic framework, will enhance individuals' enthusiasm and engagement. An action-focused strategy, aligning with stakeholder needs, enables teams to overcome challenges and achieve impactful outcomes. Ensure your action-focused strategy empowers people to decide how they deliver on the essential outcomes. Your people are adaptable (under the right leadership) and can learn and grow through any change.

How to integrate this tip into your leadership practice:



Clarify your team's purpose

Get clear about 'the why' your team exists. Consider the current context and re-pitch 'the why' (your team's purpose and vision) based on the current knowns and unknowns.



Set a strategic timeline

Pick a clear timeline (3 months or more) and create a stakeholder map that includes milestone achievements for each key stakeholder that meets their expectations.



Leverage the 80:20 principle:

Use the 80:20 law that shows 80% of the output will come from 20% of the effort (actions, individuals, milestones, etc). Focus your strategic plan on the most relevant 20% of your stakeholders, team members, milestones, and activities.



Engage others

Share your strategic intent with your team and build your plan with them. Share the strategic plan with your boss and ask for their support. Share the strategic plan with your key stakeholders and let them know you are open to dialogue.



Consider dependencies and impacts

Spend time thinking through dependencies and the intended and unintended impacts of actions and reactions within the technical and people (adaptive) aspects of this MoG change.

Watch out for the following behavioural traps:



Being reactive vs proactive

Having no strategy and being reactive instead of proactive. Having a strategic plan takes bravery because the nature of the public sector is very reactive. Having no strategy might feel safer but it could deplete your sense of agency and competence.



Fear-driven reactivity

Reacting to the reactivity (fear driven reflexive decisions) of others and getting caught in the assumption that everything is urgent and important. It is a developmental challenge to learn and to lead with a strategic focus.



Overworking without dialogue

Working everyone too hard by saying yes to things without dialogue and authentic agreement. Practice dialogue when you receive requests or direction for unrealistic increases in workload.

People at all levels need your leadership and can benefit enormously from your focus, respect and care. Value your peers and bosses and support them to succeed, especially if they are struggling. Leading through MoG change is an opportunity to help others achieve and grow through the experience. Care about the success of others, and others will care about your success and the law of constructive reciprocity will flourish for all.

Why acting on this tip is good for your people:

Leaders who invest in their peers' and superiors' success build trust and mutual respect. Such an approach builds allies and contributes to a stable environment, enabling your team's autonomy and productivity. Your people will enjoy more independence, respect, and confidence from others to do their jobs. Being in your team, branch or division will become more rewarding and ultimately enhance everyone's reputations.

How to integrate this tip into your leadership practice:



Start the conversation by saying I have created a strategic plan for the next 3 to 6 months. I see opportunities for both of us, do you want help with it? If they say no, patiently and persistently repeat this step till they make time for you.

Engage stakeholders in person

If they say yes, share it in person, be clear about the vital 20% of deliverables that impact / contribute to their roles most, and ask for their perspective, input and support.

Listen and validate

Listen to their perspective and validate their input. At the right time, ask them for their focus or strategy and offer help.

Address negative politics

If you encounter peers or senior leaders engaging in negative political manoeuvrings (lobbying for themselves by discrediting you and your team, fighting for relevance or grabbing at tasks, titles, and teams), actively double down on your dialogue skills, specifically asking open questions. Dialogue always reveals negative politics for what it is.

Demonstrate authentic leadership

Ensure your personal leadership brand authentically demonstrates optimism, confidence, a service orientation, composure and a willingness to embrace and learn through the MoG change together.

Watch out for the following behavioural traps:

Self interest

Apply an everyone-for-themselves mentality and partake in negative politics. Instead, actively engage politics by being the voice in the system that respectfully embraces debate and builds trust.

Overidentification with work

Getting lost (conflating your identity with your role) in the business of the team you lead and forgetting you have more to this life than this job. Remember to fill your cup (Tip 4) and focus on having a rich personal life beyond this organisation.

Saying yes by default

Saying yes to stressed people and resenting them later. Individuals and organisational cultures are perfectly flawed, and the best leaders empathise with this and communicate without agreeing to everything thrown their way.

Your leadership brand is how people perceive you based on their experiences or hearsay. It can be distilled into a simple statement, like "Joanne is a valuable team member" or "Stephen can be difficult to work with." Always be reinforcing your personal brand. You deserve to profit and progress in your career, and even though things might seem unfair at times, the one thing you can do is be accountable to yourself and build your leadership brand despite the subjectivity of how people characterise you.

Why acting on this tip is good for your people:

Your leadership brand shines on or shadows the people you lead. If you show up stressed, unfocused, negative and hard to work with, some of that will, by extension, impact how others think about your people, too. If you show up as dependable, consistently optimistic, authentic in dialogue and focused on serving, your people will enjoy your leadership brand's bright hue.

How to integrate this tip into your leadership practice:

Build your brand from the inside out

The way you show up in the workplace is a simple and beautifully flawed projection of how you feel about yourself on the inside. Become the student of your leadership self. This is your life and career, and knowing, accepting and valuing yourself will set you up to be wholeheartedly accountable and responsible for what is possible.

Have a solid mental health practice

Deliberately establish and follow a repeatable process for maintaining and building your leadership mental health. This might involve diarising difficult situations, quiet reflection, exercise, therapy, leadership coaching, diet, sleep etc.

Use the NSW public sector capability framework

Always be developing your leadership brand along the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework trajectory. It provides the ladder rungs for anyone dedicated to improving their leadership brand. Use it in your language when you talk about yourself with Senior People and anyone in the People and Culture team.

Know that feelings impact perception and relationships

Embrace the truth of business relationships; how people feel about you remains when they think of you. Humans are feeling-based creatures; pay attention to how you make people feel.

Make people feel good

Deliberately and authentically make people feel good about themselves by acknowledging them and validating their perception of their experience. Then, practise dialogue to elicit strategic thought and collaboration.

Watch out for the following behavioural traps:

Denial

Denial of the reality of business relationships. It is challenging to accept the subjective nature of other's perceptions and their potential impact on you. Denial brings short-term comfort by allowing you to avoid engaging with complex feelings.

Resentment and anger

Feel resentful and angry about how others decide what happens with your role and team. Sometimes, decisions will appear unjust, naïve or downright wrong, and so it has always been.

Blame and gossip

You are tarnishing your leadership brand by blaming or gossiping about others. Gossiping can be a vehicle for building connections with other dissatisfied people, but in the long run, it creates distrust and can be bad for your brand.



Tip 8

If things become stormy, be the Emotionally Intelligent (EQ) lighthouse

Emotional intelligence (EQ) allows leaders to see, access and operate with increasing objectivity through organisational change. It takes bravery to fully open yourself to developing emotional intelligence because it isn't easy. Emotional intelligence can set you on a trajectory towards more agency, leadership effectiveness and greater impact.

Why acting on this tip is good for your people:

Everyone you interact with, direct reports, peers, bosses, and many stakeholders, may experience some fear, resulting in reduced productivity or personal distress during MoG events. Being emotionally intelligent is about understanding how fear impacts your thinking, feeling and automatic behaviours, transcending it, and caringly leading others to do the same. Build your leadership EQ and be the consistent, composed guiding light through your dedication to serve confidently.

How to integrate this tip into your leadership practice:



Build self-awareness

Become self-aware about your moment-to-moment embodied feelings, emotions, and self-talk (thoughts within your mind) as you experience change. There are two generic thinking patterns in a leader's mind: fear-driven and possibility-driven.



Manage yourself

Become decisive about how to manage yourself depending on your triggers and activations. In the moments where you are driven by fear, you are likely incapable of leading. Notice it, manage it, and return to leading through optimism and possibility once you have recomposed.



Know others

People are creatures of habit, and your organisation has a cultural bias to accept the patterns of behaviour that manifest.

Activate your EQ by observing, anticipating, and leading others when they get triggered into fear-driven thinking and behaviour.



Manage others

Activate empathy and compassion when others are in a state of fear. Listen, acknowledge, and understand their perspective. Ask what they need. People seek understanding and validation, not agreement, rescue, fixing, or control.



Be goal orientated

Be the leader to observe the challenges without under or overcompensating for them and gently reminding everyone about the shared goal. People appreciate confident direction and focus.

Watch out for the following behavioural traps:



Overlooking self-reflection in change

Ignore investigating how others and the organisation's changes influence your patterns of thought, feelings, and actions. Leadership is an inside-out proposition, and developing your EQ will enable your leadership of others to flourish.



Neglecting empathy in challenging times

Ignore empathising with the challenge others are experiencing. It is easy to dismiss the reactivity of others or to judge them for being weak, naïve, egotistical, etc. Without empathy, you may fall into the trap of misunderstanding others.



Maintaining focus and accountability

Drop focus and accountability on getting things done. If you notice yourself falling into ambivalence, despair, or helplessness, use this as the chance to become self-aware. MoG changes are excellent opportunities to learn and grow our EQ.

SOURCES AND REFERENCES

Springer: New York, NY. William Bridges: *Managing Transitions* Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2017).

Perry et al: Public Service Administration Review Sept/Oct 2010; 682).

Bob Anderson and Bill Adams. (2015). *Mastering Leadership: An Integrated Framework for Breakthrough Performance and Extraordinary Business Results*. Wiley: Hoboken, NJ.

Jim Blascovich & Joseph Tomaka. (1991). "Measures of Self-Esteem." In J. P. Robinson, P. R. Shaver & L. S. Wrightsman (Eds.) *Measures of Social Psychological Attitudes, Vol. 1.* (pp. 115-160). Academic Press: San Diego, CA.

Joseph Campbell. (1949). The Hero with a Thousand Faces. Pantheon: New York, NY.

Ludwig von Bertalanffy. (1968). *General Systems Theory: Foundations, Development, Applications*. George Braziller: New York, NY.

Margaret Wheatley (1999). *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World.*Berrett-Koehler: Oakland, CA.

Robert Kegan & Lisa Laskow Lahey. (2006). *Immunity to Change: How to Overcome It and Unlock the Potential in Yourself and Your Organization*. Harvard Business School Publishing: Boston, MA.

Robert Kegan & Lisa Laskow Lahey. (2016). *An Everyone Culture: Becoming a Deliberately Developmental Organization*. Harvard Business School Publishing: Boston, MA.

Paul D. MacLean. (1990). The Triune Brain in Evolution: Role in Paleocerebral Functions.

Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow & Marty Linsky. (2009). *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. Harvard Business Press: Boston, MA.

"People will experience elements of this MoG as problematic and challenging, no doubt; change has never been experienced equitably and seamlessly by all. Practise leadership with confidence and compassion for yourself and others and foster trust in change so all might thrive through this phase of their career."

Peter Shields

OUR SERVICES











Book a Discovery Call



<u>admin@corporatealchemy.com.au</u> <u>www.corporatealchemy.com.au</u>