

**Innovator
Insights**

**Disruptive
Innovators
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Handling Resistance and Getting Buy-in

Your Questions Answered

**Innovators
Assemble**



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Innovation

Wider Buy-in And Engagement

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Q1. How do you get buy-in from team members and wider colleagues who are hesitant, especially when it's for a project or change that can be difficult to sell?

A change I led years ago in a software department had a strong legacy culture and my job was to go in and break and mix the team up and rename it, so the organisation could be more agile. We started with 'why is this change important and why are we doing it?' but realised what they cared about was the threat to its legacy. Once we understood that, we knew how to lead it in a different way. Giving them a new identity was the most important thing before taking away the old one.

Do customer discovery and ask questions to understand what they need, without asking what they want. Once we knew identity was so important for them, we built things in to help them move towards a new identity and we co-created it with them. We held a funeral for the old team identity and let them rename the team. That put people in the driving seat of their own change.



Q2. Are there any good keywords or phrases to use?

Use questions to help you learn where other people are coming from, like "I would like to learn about this, tell me more about", "what do you think about this", "what's challenging for you?"

Also set expectations and make it clear what's up for discussion and what's already decided. People like that transparency, so don't pretend, because people feel you've wasted their time if it's a done deal already. Say the goal is set, but how we get there is up to you.

Acknowledge feedback on concerns too. You don't have to agree but you do have to listen to where people are coming from. Use "I hear you", "can I check my understanding here". Use you said, we did and be accountable to the people you're involving in the change.

Q3. Emails or meetings may not effectively reach or engage all employees, so do you have any advice on communication methods?

Think about three things: the desired impact and what you want to achieve, the message, and the recipient's preferences. We often deliver the messages in the wrong way at the wrong time and they don't land well with the people the change is affecting.

Also, one channel isn't enough. Fix your key messages, be clear and use stories to back them up, using multiple channels. People have different preferences and need to hear things more than once. If you're sick of saying it, they're just starting to hear it. The best signal is hearing it coming back to you. Measure and adapt too; don't just do one thing and assume it works.

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Q4. What examples do you have of when 'taking people on the journey' has gone wrong and what did you do about it to turn this around?

There are two elements: attitude and tactics. If you don't have the right attitude, the tactics won't work. I tried to bring innovation into an established project management discipline in a large organisation and I started off with an attitude of 'this is how we should do things; it's obvious', but that felt threatening to people. We then asked people to share stories about early successes, so people could see it, rather than feeling forced to get on board.

Q5. Do you have any practical steps for ensuring change is embedded?

My favourite change theory is the tech adoption life cycle (TALC). It's a curve model which illustrates the early adopters, who get on board early because they like to be involved when it's messy and build it with you, to the early and then late majority, who want it to be working and easy to use before they get involved.

You can go out and find those early adopters or go out and explain the theory to people. Some will want to co-create and some will feel like they need answers that come at a later stage. Be honest and transparent and let people get involved at a stage they're comfortable with.

