

Let's Move: An Exercise in Change

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Purpose: To give students a chance to experience change in a way that creates resistance.

Resistance to change is a common problem faced by organizations. In this easy-to-implement activity, students experience change through a structured process of moving seats, which creates resistance that mirrors what is seen in organizations.

The activity is most effective when it is conducted a couple of class meetings BEFORE change is discussed. The word "change" should not be used to describe or guide what is taking place. These steps will avoid priming students as to the purpose of the activity. Once everyone resettles, announce that the new seating arrangement is permanent (note: students are not told ahead of time). Students are given a brief opportunity to vent among themselves. The venting process inevitably leads to questions, which are largely deflected to enhance learning. Students will need to be reminded in succeeding class meetings about sitting in their "new" seats.

The activity is debriefed in a subsequent meeting where change is the topic of discussion. The session begins with a general question (i.e., how do you like the new seating arrangement?), which leads to more venting. Respond to complaints or questions with, "Why is that a problem?" Students will essentially teach themselves about the reasons for resistance to change. Discussion is then related to resistance to change in the workplace.

No initial setup is required. The activity can be conducted in approximately 15 minutes depending on the depth of discussion. Common reasons students identify for not liking the change can be related to resistance in other settings. Complaints include I cannot see the screen (structural), I cannot sit with my friends (social), I like my old space (personal discomfort), or I do not know why we must do it (lack of understanding).

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTERS:

- Teaching Talks are typically exercises/activities/assignments used in a single class session
- Include a standard title page, but do not include an abstract
- Maximum 300 words, not including title or references (note: a full paper is not required)
- Use a 12-point font (note: smaller font used for this example to fit it to one page)
- Citations/references are not necessary unless you make use of author's published work