BOOK AND AUDIOBOOK COMPENDIUM

WHEN PEOPLE THROW WRENCHES

Navigating the Emotions, Politics, and Power Plays of High-Stakes Change

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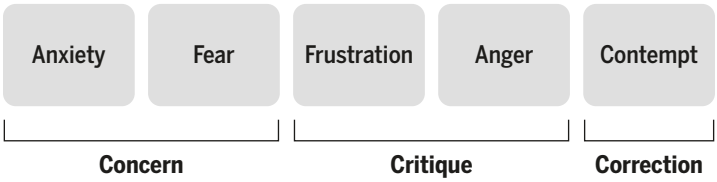
The Five Negative Emotions

The five negative emotions most likely to motivate damaging behaviors during change are anxiety, fear, frustration, anger, and contempt. Unlike embarrassment and guilt, which motivate behaviors to address our perceptions of ourselves, these five emotions motivate behaviors to address external situations.

Beyond this continuum, the five emotions can be categorized by their underlying sources: concern, critique, and correction. Identifying the source of an emotion can help you address the behaviors it motivates.



The Ten Most Common Self-Interested Behaviors

Different teams of social scientists have attempted to identify a master list of behaviors used to gain influence and power during change. Cited maneuvers range from forming secret alliances to discrediting competitors. Interestingly, most research papers identify the same basic set of self-interested behaviors.

I have clustered these ten behaviors into four categories by strategy type: influencing, conspiring, bullying, and sabotaging. The tactics become more extreme as you move to the right of the continuum. The influencing and conspiring behaviors are about angling for position, whereas bullying and sabotaging behaviors are about aggression to gain control. I view influencing and conspiring behaviors as political maneuvers and those that fall under bullying and sabotaging as power plays.

Influencing	Conspiring	Bullying	Sabotaging
Ingratiating	Alliance Forming	Resource Withholding	Rumor Spreading
Credentials Signaling	Favor Trading	Blaming and Attacking	Information Gatekeeping
Rule Enforcing			Rule Breaking

The Four-Step Response

Most people are surprised by their first experience with a self-interested power move. They watch it as if in an audience, as viewers; some are watching as victims, not responders. Immobilized, they remain silent as the drama unfolds. Hours or days later, they may think of actions they could have taken, but won't necessarily take in the future.

1. **Observe:** Spot the behavior by observing a person's actions and their words.
2. **Assess:** Identify the behavior and emotion that is motivating them.
3. **Select:** Choose the best response to the behavior given the circumstances (i.e., emotion, behavior, key player group, and phase of change).
4. **Deliver:** Give your response, pausing for a reaction.

Tools for Catching Wrenches

The four tools in this chapter will help you track, study, predict, and prepare for situations that require your intervention. Recording your observations, responses, the effectiveness of those responses, and areas for improvement will build your capabilities over time. The more you use them, the more skilled you will become.

The *Key Player Behavior Tracker* enables you to easily map the behaviors of the key players you work with. Before long, you will know how to address each key player's negative emotions and self-interested behaviors.

The *Project Pre-Mortem Planner* will help to anticipate the behaviors of key players before you start a change initiative. Drawing on your experiences and those of your team members, you imagine you're at the end of the project and identify what could have gone wrong, why it went wrong, and what could have been done to prevent it.

My Response Bank will help you learn from experience. It records the situations you face and how you respond to them. Like a forensic reporter, you can document the circumstances that led the key players to trigger their emotions, and the chain of events that followed. Effective responses you can repeat; ineffective ones you can alter. With time, your effectiveness rate will increase.

My Emotions Tracker will help you master your reactions to stressful situations. It enables you to spot and build awareness of your own emotions and behaviors that may get in your way when responding to situations.

Key Player Behavior Tracker

During high-stakes change initiatives, people think first of themselves. This is true of leaders, project team members, and frontline employees. Their attention is focused on how they are perceived during the transition and how they will land after it. Given their busy agendas and priorities, it's unsurprising that they overlook their surroundings beyond their immediate needs.

Key Player Behavior Tracker Template

Key player		
Key player group	• Senior leader • Project team member • Frontline employee	
Self-interested behavior observed	• Ingratiating • Credentials signaling • Rule enforcing • Alliance forming • Favor trading • Resource withholding • Blaming and attacking • Rumor spreading • Information gatekeeping • Rule breaking	
What they said	How did they express their behavior?	
When	What was the purpose of the meeting? What happened right before the behavior?	
Emotions	• Anxiety • Fear • Frustration • Anger • Contempt • Other	
Impact	How did people react? What was the outcome?	
Insights	What patterns do you observe that will help you predict future behavior?	

Project Pre-Mortem Planner

A post-mortem is a project review conducted as an initiative winds down. A *pre*-mortem is a project review *before* the project begins.

Project Pre-Mortem Planner Template

Key player		
Key player group	• Senior leader • Project team member • Frontline employee	
Past self-interested behavior observed	• Ingratiating • Credentials signaling • Rule enforcing • Alliance forming • Favor trading • Resource withholding • Blaming and attacking • Rumor spreading • Information gatekeeping • Rule breaking	
Example	What did they do in the past?	
Emotions triggered	• Anxiety • Fear • Frustration • Anger • Contempt • Other	
Responses that work	What responses neutralized the situation?	
Responses that don't work	What responses aggravated the situation?	

My Response Bank

Your ability to address self-interested behavior will build over time. Documenting your progress will fast-track your learning. You will fine-tune approaches that work and try new ones for those that don't.

My Response Bank Template

Key player		
Key player group	• Senior leader • Project team member • Frontline employee	
Self-interested behavior observed	• Ingratiating • Credentials signaling • Rule enforcing • Alliance forming • Favor trading • Resource withholding • Blaming and attacking • Rumor spreading • Information gatekeeping • Rule breaking	
What they said	How did they express their behavior?	
Their emotions	• Anxiety • Fear • Frustration • Anger • Contempt • Other	
My response	What did you say, and how did you say it?	
Impact	How did people react? What was the outcome?	
Future modifications	What will you do differently, and how will you do it?	

My Emotions Tracker

Your emotions can be just as disruptive as the ones that motivate individuals to gain advantage through political maneuvers. A key player launches a tactic after an emotion triggers.

My Emotion Tracker Template

What happened	Describe the situation. What did you do?	
Emotions triggered	• Anxiety • Fear • Frustration • Anger • Contempt • Other	
Root cause	What triggered your emotions?	
How I responded	What did you do or not do in this situation?	
Impact	How did people react? What was the outcome?	
Future modifications	What will you do differently, and how will you do it?	

At-a-Glance Response Summaries

Senior Leaders

Senior leaders are power-focused, motivated to preserve or advance their position within the organization relative to their peers. Their maneuvers are strategic, multi-layered, and long term. They recognize that the phases of the change initiative offer opportunities to shape their post-change role, which in turn will influence their career and the narrative about it. Power and influence are the goals of senior leaders.

Self-Interested Behavior: Ingratiating

What they are doing	Complimenting or agreeing with people with power and influence to shape the change.
What they say	"Your vision for this change is truly inspiring. It can't go wrong."
What they are feeling	Anxiety over how the change will impact them.
How you respond	Acknowledge the vision and establish fact-based decision-making to develop the new model and the plan to realize it.
What you say	"The vision is inspiring. We need to create a plan based on facts and data that will deliver it."

Self-Interested Behavior: Credentials Signaling	
What they are doing	Establishing themselves as the ultimate authority on strategy and change.
What they say	"In my twenty years as an executive, I have led three similar transformations, and I predict this will be as successful."
What they are feeling	Anxiety over future status. Fear of not being valued.
How you respond	Reposition their view as one input. Validate applicability.
What you say	"This is great to know, and your knowledge will complement the other team members' credentials."

Self-Interested Behavior: Rule Enforcing	
What they are doing	Upholding policies to block or delay undesired elements of the change.
What they say	"Our policy states that we must conduct a ten-step analysis before approving any capital spend."
What they are feeling	Fear of losing control.
How you respond	Justify an exception with facts and context.
What you say	"Only minor adjustments to the capital budget are needed. The policy only applies to new budgets."

Self-Interested Behavior: Alliance Forming	
What they are doing	Forming senior coalitions to steer the implementation.
What they say	"I have spoken with the other VPs, and we believe integration must slow down."
What they are feeling	Anxiety over outcomes. Fear of losing influence.
How you respond	Evaluate the request against strategy and outcomes, and the business case.
What you say	"I understand you all support delaying the change. Let's review the business case that recommends immediate action."

Self-Interested Behavior: Favor Trading

What they are doing	Exchanging support for mutual gain for steering committee votes.
What they say	"I'll support your region if you support mine when resources are allocated."
What they are feeling	Fear of being constrained by project requirements.
How you respond	Test proposals against change requirements and organizational benefits.
What you say	"Our decisions need to be based on what's best for the entire company based on facts."

Self-Interested Behavior: Resource Withholding	
What they are doing	Restricting resources to demonstrate power or gain leverage by underinvesting in the change.
What they say	"Those resources are needed elsewhere right now."
What they are feeling	Frustration that they are losing resources. Angry about an injustice. Contempt for the new model.
How you respond	Fight head-on. Outline risks. Escalate to senior leaders.
What you say	"Your team members have specialist skills needed on the project. Let's discuss our needs at the next steering committee meeting."

Self-Interested Behavior: Blaming and Attacking

What they are doing	Criticizing the project team's plan to discredit their work and force changes.
What they say	"This plan is fundamentally flawed and shows a lack of operational understanding."
What they are feeling	Frustration over gaps in the plan. Anger that their input was ignored. Contempt for the process that led to the current plan.
How you respond	Shift focus from personal attack to factual evidence.
What you say	"Let's focus on the specific elements of the plan you take issue with and the data behind your concerns."

Self-Interested Behavior: Rumor Spreading	
What they are doing	Sharing false information to discredit the change or those managing it.
What they say	"I hear that Megan has lost control of the project, and we are falling more and more behind."
What they are feeling	Fear of anticipated changes. Anger over how the project team is managing the project.
How you respond	Address the rumor publicly and disprove it with facts.
What you say	"I have heard that some feel the project isn't going well under Megan. Her steering committee review last week was well received, and she has the team's support."

Self-Interested Behavior: Information Gatekeeping	
What they are doing	Selectively sharing data to hamper change or present a favorable view.
What they say	"The most important metric is compliance, so we are only presenting this data."
What they are feeling	Fear of exposure. Contempt for how progress is being measured and the consequences of poor numbers.
How you respond	Share the rationale for needing full data sets. Ask for the missing information. Escalate the gaps if they resist.
What you say	"Customer response time is important, but so is time in call and the ability to resolve customer issues. I will add the gap as a risk if I don't receive all the data tomorrow."

Self-Interested Behavior: Rule Breaking	
What they are doing	Disregarding new operating processes or decision-making protocols post-launch for personal gain.
What they say	"We've decided to proceed without full approvals. Customers aren't going to wait for us to get our act together."
What they are feeling	Frustration over delays or processes. Anger over new practices. Contempt for the new ways of working.
How you respond	Escalate the rule breaking to the most senior leaders, including the impact on the new model. Encourage leaders to enforce consequences for insubordination.
What you say	"You haven't been following the procedures you approved, which is exposing us to compliance penalties. Approval requirements are non-negotiable. I am escalating this to the steering committee."

Project Team Members

Project team members are reputation-focused. They are motivated to secure a good role in the post-change organization. They position themselves to look competent, valuable, and, ideally, indispensable. Credibility and security are the goals of project team members.

Self-Interested Behavior: Ingratiating	
What they are doing	Complimenting or agreeing with leaders to gain visibility and be perceived as competent for job security.
What they say	"That's an excellent point, I completely agree."
What they are feeling	Fear of irrelevance.
How you respond	Promote the importance of honest feedback. Broaden the discussion to include other views.
What you say	"That's a good start, for sure. Does anyone else have a different view we should consider?"

Self-Interested Behavior: Credentials Signaling	
What they are doing	Presenting technical skills, accreditations, and experience to demonstrate expertise to gain control.
What they say	"As a Six Sigma Black Belt, I know this step is mandatory."
What they are feeling	Fear of loss of control.
How you respond	Acknowledge expertise as part of the combined knowledge and skill of the team.
What you say	"Your expertise is important, as is every other team member's. Our ability to consider all approaches is essential to leveraging our strengths."

Self-Interested Behavior: Rule Enforcing	
What they are doing	Upholding project governance and organizational policies to block changes or demonstrate authority.
What they say	"As stated in the governance model, you must complete this template for your status update."
What they are feeling	Anxiety over role clarity or authority. Fear of the proposed changes.
How you respond	Acknowledge governance. Negotiate pragmatic flexibility when required.
What you say	"I appreciate the need for consistency. Let's review scenarios where flexibility makes sense."

Self-Interested Behavior: Alliance Forming	
What they are doing	Establishing relationships with leaders and project members to influence the new model design and transition plan.
What they say	"The finance lead and the legal lead feel the deadline is unrealistic."
What they are feeling	Anxiety about not performing well. Fear of failure.
How you respond	Test justification based on project goals and facts (not personal feelings).
What you say	"Let's review the critical path, resource assumptions, and interdependencies that led to this deadline."

Self-Interested Behavior: Favor Trading

What they are doing	Exchanging project accommodations for support or future favors.
What they say	"I'll approve your timeline and plan if you guarantee full participation in training sessions."
What they are feeling	Anxiety about execution. Fear of noncompliance.
How you respond	Validate changes against project needs. Escalate the trades that don't support the strategy.
What you say	"Each plan will be reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose and aligned with all workstreams."

Self-Interested Behavior: Resource Withholding	
What they are doing	Protecting their assigned resources from being poached by other workstreams.
What they say	"I can't spare anyone; my workstream is on the critical path."
What they are feeling	Fear of missing outputs or deadlines. Anger over lost capacity due to project needs.
How you respond	Escalate the impasse and follow project governance to resolve resource conflicts based on priority.
What you say	"Let's bring this issue to the weekly steering committee meeting to discuss project needs and risks of resource loss."

Self-Interested Behavior: Blaming and Attacking	
What they are doing	Accusing other individuals or workstreams of shortfalls or delays to avoid blame.
What they say	"The delay is your fault because you didn't provide the specs on time."
What they are feeling	Fear of blame or reputation damage. Frustration over multiple shortfalls. Anger over inability to influence.
How you respond	Frame the issue as a shared project risk. Facilitate root cause discussions about shortfalls. Remove barriers. Escalate chronic poor performance to the project management lead.
What you say	"This is a project issue. Let's work together to identify all contributing factors to this miss."

Self-Interested Behavior: Rumor Spreading

What they are doing	Creating narratives to discredit those who are not cooperating or are vulnerable to blame.
What they say	"It's not looking good. I hear the rollout will be delayed again."
What they are feeling	Anxiety about an uncertain future. Fear of punishment. Anger over other people's behaviors that are negatively impacting outcomes.
How you respond	Expose rumors and address them with facts. Note that rumors pose risks to implementation by distracting people and causing harm.
What you say	"The program is broadly on track, with the identified gaps being resolved. The go-live date remains the same, and you will be the first to know if there are any changes."

Self-Interested Behavior: Information Gatekeeping	
What they are doing	Selectively reporting information or data to present a positive view of progress or performance.
What they say	"The information we have received so far suggests we are on track. We are 'green.'"
What they are feeling	Fear of scrutiny and capability doubts.
How you respond	Inquire about the reason for not delivering the data. Gain a commitment for when the data will be shared. Escalate if the deadline is missed.
What you say	"The information you provided is only one input to our tracking dashboard. We need the other data before assessing our progress. Why haven't you shared this data?"

Self-Interested Behavior: Rule Breaking	
What they are doing	Taking shortcuts or ignoring required practices to become more efficient or effective.
What they say	"We don't need to run that full test. I'm confident the process works well. We need to focus on execution."
What they are feeling	Fear of failure. Frustration with additional time or work commitments. Contempt for a system viewed as inferior.
How you respond	Insist on following all testing protocols to minimize risk. Restate the requirements. Escalate if they refuse.
What you say	"We must follow all test protocols to avoid issues at launch. The full test results are due next Tuesday. Let's escalate now if you don't intend to run the full test."

Frontline Employees

Frontline employees are security-focused. They have the lowest level of formal power, which doesn't necessarily mean they have the lowest impact on transformation success. Their knowledge of the business and feedback during testing new procedures are critical inputs into the new model. Frontline employees' goals are survival and stability.

Self-Interested Behavior: Ingratiating

What they are doing	Complimenting or agreeing with managers to gain influence or protection.
What they say	"Whatever you think is best, boss."
What they are feeling	Anxiety over unknown changes to daily routines.
How you respond	Broaden their perspective to value providing honest inputs.
What you say	"I value your opinion. What do you really think about this change based on your experience?"

Self-Interested Behavior: Credentials Signaling	
What they are doing	Broadcasting technical knowledge or accreditations to demonstrate value.
What they say	"I've been doing this job for fifteen years, and I know this new way won't work."
What they are feeling	Anxiety about the unknown. Fear of loss of relevance or a skills gap.
How you respond	Acknowledge and respect experience. Focus on abilities to make the new system work.
What you say	"We need your experience to incorporate the new procedures so they are workable."

Self-Interested Behavior: Rule nforcing	
What they are doing	Upholding policies or rules that delay or block changes.
What they say	"This policy prevents us from doing that. It's a deal breaker."
What they are feeling	Anxiety over changes. Fear of specific changes and the speed at which they will occur. Anger over disruption and uncertainty.
How you respond	Confirm the policy's relevance. Justify making an exception or look for adjustments to meet compliance requirements.
What you say	"Let's review how the policy applies here and what adjustments we may need to make to follow it if required."

Self-Interested Behavior: Alliance Forming	
What they are doing	Informally sharing fears and forming collective responses, including lobbying for concessions.
What they say	"Most of us agree that the new process won't work."
What they are feeling	Fear of failure. Frustration or anger that their input has been ignored.
How you respond	Engage the group to understand their concerns. Raise issues in project forums if they are valid.
What you say	"Help me understand why you believe the process won't work. I will raise your concerns at the next update meeting."

Self-Interested Behavior: Favor Trading	
What they are doing	Exchanging influence or information for both parties' gains.
What they say	"We'll participate in training and testing if you give us a couple of months before formal performance tracking."
What they are feeling	Fear of failure.
How you respond	State the importance of full participation for a successful transition. Listen to understand concerns. If justified, recommend making adjustments. Escalate threats before they become a default tactic.
What you say	"I am interested in why you need a couple of months before performance tracking. What do you see that the project team doesn't?"

Self-Interested Behavior: Resource Withholding	
What they are doing	Not participating fully in readiness activities.
What they say	"We are too busy with customer orders to test. Get someone else to do it."
What they are feeling	Anxiety over unknown expectations. Fear of failure. Anger over inconveniences and requests to participate in unwanted changes.
How you respond	Stress the importance of participation. Escalate immediately.
What you say	"Full participation is necessary to derisk the go-live. If you can't, let's raise this issue now as a risk to the initiative."

Self-Interested Behavior: Blaming and Attacking	
What they are doing	Accusing or criticizing others to assign responsibility for poor performance or to discredit them.
What they say	"Sales dropped because of the new app. Our customers are furious, and our hands are tied."
What they are feeling	Fear of punishment.
How you respond	Acknowledge and welcome the feedback. Test the claim with data. Engage the sales team to identify specific issues and resolve them.
What you say	"Thank you for raising the issue. What are the facts that point to the app? Let's identify all potential reasons for the sales drop and develop solutions for them."

Self-Interested Behavior: Rumor Spreading	
What they are doing	Spreading misinformation or pessimistic views to create resistance.
What they say	"I heard layoffs are coming after they learn everything we know."
What they are feeling	Fear of not having a voice in defining the new process. Anger about the changes and their impacts. Contempt for changing what isn't broken.
How you respond	Refute rumors publicly with facts. Provide more communication and check-ins for areas where negative rumors originate, if known.
What you say	"I have heard a rumor that layoffs are coming. This is untrue, and it doesn't make sense given the large investment we have made in the plant."

Self-Interested Behavior: Information Gatekeeping	
What they are doing	Withholding customer or process insights that reveal adoption issues.
What they say	"Everything is looking good on our end."
What they are feeling	Fear of blame.
How you respond	Cross-check data through systems or multiple sources. State that gaps are to be expected and are owned by all functions.
What you say	"It is important to identify all issues quickly, so we can work together to minimize negative impacts."

Self-Interested Behavior: Rule Breaking	
What they are doing	Not following processes, protocols, and rules to damage the new model or avoid it.
What they say	"We're still using old procedures where it makes sense."
What they are feeling	Fear of failing. Frustration over new procedures. Contempt for new ways of working.
How you respond	Explain that all processes will only work if followed. Gain commitment to comply or escalate to the head of the function before raising with the steering committee.
What you say	"We must follow new procedures for the new model to work properly. Let's identify the support you need to use them effectively."

Self-Interested Behavior Progression Across Project Phases

Each phase of change reveals more information on the gains and losses individuals must adopt. As the stakes become higher, people's emotions trigger, and they often resort to more aggressive self-interested behaviors. Here are response summaries for each behavior by phase of change.

Ingratiating

Likeability is an important source of influence and power. It can lead to greater consideration of perspectives and can sway decisions. It can also act as a shield against political maneuvers. Flattery or agreeability begins immediately after the change announcement and continues through adoption. These tactics target those perceived as powerful, who often shift as the organization's design and structures become clear.

Ingratiating works on most people. Almost everyone wants to feel good about themselves. I find the technique is least effective when the pressure is on during the Preparing for the Change and Adopting the Change phases. People are in action mode, focused on completing their tasks, with less time for casual conversations or what may now seem like extraneous compliments.

Project Phase: Planning the Change

What they are doing	Agreeing to someone's views even if they are faulty.
What they say	"Going live in six months makes a lot of sense. The timeline is very tight, but we always find a way."
What they are feeling	Anxiety over ambiguous status. Fear of not being perceived as a go-getter or of being incompetent.
How you respond	Broaden perspectives by including multiple sources of feedback to include balanced inputs.
What you say	"This is an option. Let's pressure test it with all functional leads to confirm we are not taking on too much risk."

Project Phase: Preparing for the Change

What they are doing	Praising leaders or the project management team to get special treatment.
What they say	"I would like to take a minute to call out the good work the training team is doing to get us ready for this change."
What they are feeling	Anxiety about not having a relationship advantage with those in power. Fear of exposure.
How you respond	Acknowledge the compliment and extend it to others.
What you say	"Dan's team is doing a great job, and along with the other hardworking teams, we will be ready when we take on the change."

Project Phase: Adopting the Change

What they are doing	Publicly praising the team to gain visibility and credit for the success.
What they say	"We did it. I have never witnessed such a smooth transition. Steve, your team provided great support as we managed risks and achieved our goals. We couldn't have done it without you."
What they are feeling	Fear of lack of praise.
How you respond	Acknowledge the positive feedback. Broaden the praise to the full team.
What you say	"Early results are positive and promising. We all had a part to play in our success."

Credentials Signaling

Establishing expertise through stating accreditations and experience is an effective way to dissuade or trump other perspectives. It is most commonly used when uncertainty is highest. The "most qualified" view shapes the options considered and chosen.

Credentials signaling works well throughout the Preparing for the Change phase, up to the point when the model is tested and known. At this point, everyone has valuable experience through training and scenario planning. In this high-pressure atmosphere, there is little room or tolerance for "I know best" justifications.

Project Phase: Planning the Change

What they are doing	Using expertise to influence the detailed project plan.
What they say	"I am Project Management Institute Agile certified. Best practice requires us to streamline our approval process."
What they are feeling	Anxiety of status loss.
How you respond	Fear of becoming invisible or losing control to other team members. Test the recommendation.
What you say	"That's an interesting perspective. Let's assess the benefits and risks of simplifying our approval process and present our findings at the next steering committee meeting."

Project Phase: Preparing for the Change

What they are doing	Establishing themselves as experts who have superior contributions due to validated skills and experience.
What they say	"At my last company, I led the transformation to a similar organizational model. We met all our objectives."
What they are feeling	Fear of loss of relevance or control in the new model.
How you respond	Acknowledge the credentials and position them as part of the team's contributions that will support transitioning to new ways of working.
What you say	"It's great to know you have this experience. We will need everyone's experience to avoid mistakes and overcome any adoption challenges that arise."

Project Phase: Adopting the Change

What they are doing	Avoiding blame for issues by citing expertise.
What they say	"The information indicates that we are 20 percent below target. My twelve years of running this department tell me that we are meeting objectives."
What they are feeling	Fear of embarrassment and punishment.
How you respond	Validate data and reframe the gap as a team problem to solve.
What you say	"I will confirm our data is accurate. Assuming it is, we are all responsible for resolving all gaps."

Rule Enforcing

Policies and protocols are created for reasons, which is the strength of this gambit. They are objective and, therefore, upholding them provides amnesty to those who enforce them.

This tactic intensifies during the Planning for the Change phase and continues through the Adopting the Change phase. How it's used shifts from influencing the new model design to opposing it once it's completed.

Project Phase: Planning the Change	
What they are doing	Upholding project governance rules to enforce compliance and demonstrate authority.
What they say	"The governance model says everyone must get leader approval for plan changes, starting with completing this change request form. Incomplete submissions will be sent back."
What they are feeling	Fear of holding no authority and losing control.
How you respond	Confirm that you understand the policy and assess whether it applies to you. If it doesn't, present a case for an exception or escalate to the steering committee.
What you say	"I understand the policy. Let's discuss a reasonable exception. If you don't agree, let's discuss my request at the next steering committee meeting."

Project Phase: Preparing for the Change

What they are doing	Upholding rules and standards to discredit the new model design and alter it to their advantage.
What they say	"The new planning process has too many steps and doesn't meet our customer expectations. We need to reduce the number of steps from seven to three."
What they are feeling	Fear of operation within disadvantaged constraints versus the current practices.
How you respond	Test the validity of the concern.
What you say	"We need to map our new process to customer requirements to confirm there is a problem, how widespread it is, and what options we have. Any changes need to be reviewed at the steering committee meeting."

Project Phase: Adopting the Change	
What they are doing	Strict adherence to new rules and procedures regardless of circumstances or negative consequences.
What they say	"The new shared services department handles all customer service. When our biggest customer called with an issue, I told them to try the 1-800 number instead."
What they are feeling	Fear of being blamed for noncompliance. Anger or contempt about the new model design.
How you respond	Acknowledge the rule and provide a rationale for exceptions and variances to accommodate circumstances.
What you say	"I understand the rule, and in this circumstance, the customer had an immediate issue you might have resolved. In the future, I trust you will use your best judgment."

Alliance Forming

Building relationships based on mutual beliefs and interests happens quickly after a change announcement. These relationships fulfill a security need during uncertainty, gaining comfort in knowing others think the way they do. Wanting to know "Who is on my team?" or "Who can I call on for support?" is normal.

These connections formalize during the Planning the Change and Preparing for the Change phases as individuals realize the power of aligned goals and self-beneficial coordinated actions. In the Adopting the Change phase, people are building new work team relationships and are absorbed in learning new processes and procedures. Although alliances still play a role in influencing modifications to the plan, they are less powerful and effective.

Project Phase: Planning the Change	
What they are doing	Collective opposition to parts of the new model or implementation plan that aren't in the organization's best interests.
What they say	"Operations and sales do not support a leadership team review and approval of annual departmental budgets. Separate reviews with the president, as we do now, is best for all."
What they are feeling	Anxiety about new procedures. Fear of loss of autonomy or reduced resources.
How you respond	Justify the new practice that ensures senior cross-functional visibility and alignment with the organization's strategies.
What you say	"Thank you for sharing your perspective. We have limited resources, and the leadership team must allocate funds aligned with our strategy and organizational priorities. A joint review is the only way to achieve this objective."

Project Phase: Preparing for the Change	
What they are doing	Coordinated opposition to the new model.
What they say	"Everyone in my department agrees that the new processes are too long and ineffective—especially our director, Alma."
What they are feeling	Fear of loss of status. Frustration over new processes. Anger over inflexibility.
How you respond	Contempt over the new operating model and its requirements.
What you say	Test for validity and, if the change isn't warranted, present the rationale for the original design, including the business input that supported it during the Planning the Change phase. If required, escalate to the sponsor or the steering committee.

Project Phase: Adopting the Change

What they are doing	Teams coordinate to request operating model changes, exceptions, or agreement to use legacy tools.
What they say	"The three of us agree that the new way is too time-consuming. We need to go back to the old ways of working."
What they are feeling	Fear of losing power and status. Anger that their input didn't inform the model. Contempt for the team that designed the change.
How you respond	Acknowledge the request. Assess the claim. If warranted, evaluate the proposed solution. Escalate the recommendation to the steering committee.
What you say	"Thank you for sharing this issue. My team will investigate. We will also assess your solution, including any knock-on impacts to other functions. Any changes need to be approved by the steering committee."

Favor Trading

Bartering for mutual benefit is a practical way to acquire things of strategic value and build alliances. The worth of advantages is subjective, based on someone's circumstances. Trading something of low value for something of high importance is a good bargain.

Favor trading is used more broadly and aggressively during the Preparing for the Change and Adopting the Change phases of an initiative. This is when time pressure is the highest, and quick deals can remove roadblocks to activities and plans.

Project Phase: Planning the Change

What they are doing	Negotiating plan elements or implementation plan concessions in exchange for support.
What they say	"We will provide the performance data monthly if you eliminate the bi-monthly preliminary reporting."
What they are feeling	Fear of non-delivery. Frustration over extra work requirements associated with the change.
How you respond	Explain the rationale for the decision. If there are no downsides, make the change.
What you say	"Some departments rely on your bi-monthly data to assess risk. We will validate the need for preliminary reporting."

Project Phase: Preparing for the Change	
What they are doing	Offering support in exchange for making adjustments to the plan.
What they say	"For me to sign off on the new decision rights, I need veto rights on the final decision."
What they are feeling	Fear of loss of power. Contempt over their perceived status.
How you respond	Assess the merits of the proposal by testing scenarios according to the new processes and rules, rejecting those that add risk to the model. Escalate roadblocks to the steering committee.
What you say	"You are consulted on all decisions, and the supply chain lead makes the final call, which aligns with the model. Having two decision-makers doesn't follow our protocols and may cause confusion and bottlenecks."

Project Phase: Adopting the Change

What they are doing	Seeking advantage through recommending solutions that benefit a few groups, but not the organization.
What they say	"The IT lead and I have completed a full review, and the solution is for our team to own the process like we used to. IT will lead technology enablement, and my team will run the day-to-day operations."
What they are feeling	Fear of loss of autonomy and control. Frustration with new practices. Contempt for the new model.
How you respond	Stop the trade, or the steps in motion to complete it. Form a cross-functional team to identify and assess options. Review the analysis and recommended option with the steering committee.
What you say	"We have identified this issue. A cross-functional team will determine and evaluate options according to the project's approved process. The steering committee will review the best option."

Resource Withholding

Change initiatives rely on project and business resources to prepare for and transition to a new operating model. Reducing team member participation and budget can be disastrous for a project. It forces corner-cutting and less rigorous analysis and decision-making.

All key players can use this maneuver, from minimizing team participation to reducing individual effort. This behavior has a greater impact in the Planning the Change and Preparing for the Change phases, when the most work and effort are required.

Project Phase: Planning the Change

What they are doing	Blocking participation of key project resources.
What they say	"My team is not available for training next month. Also, I need to reduce my finance manager's participation from 50 to 10 percent."
What they are feeling	Fear of underperforming. Anger about the impacts of reduced resources.
How you respond	Escalate immediately to the steering committee. Present the risks associated with reduced project resources. Consider a compromise, if manageable.
What you say	"Your finance manager is the only qualified subject matter expert for the training design. She is essential to a successful transition. I will present your request to the steering committee."

Project Phase: Preparing for the Change	
What they are doing	Removing resources from the project team to perform other work.
What they say	"We have a distribution issue and must pull Ida and Mel from the project. We need them yesterday."
What they are feeling	Fear of performance shortfalls. Frustration over limited resources.
How you respond	State the work required by the team, and, specifically, by Ida and Mel. Escalate the request to the steering committee.
What you say	"We are too close to the launch date to make changes. We have these remaining tasks, and Ida and Mel are needed to complete essential tasks. Releasing Ida and Mel would jeopardize readiness to adopt the change."

Project Phase: Adopting the Change

What they are doing	Removing project resources early.
What they say	"We need to remove Ella from the project team. I need her to address a major operational issue."
What they are feeling	Frustration with transition commitments. Anger about resource loss to support the model.
How you respond	Remind the individual of their agreed commitments. Identify compromise options. Escalate project risks to senior leaders immediately.
What you say	"We are in the hyper-care phase of the transformation. Removing Ella now will add risk to short-term operations and adoption. Let's explore other options that work for both of us."

Blaming and Attacking

Accusing or criticizing behavior surfaces in the Planning the Change phase as details of the new model become known. Creating a perception of incompetence can suggest that there are better-skilled people to shape the future—ones that the aggressors prefer. Teams that are struggling and behind on their commitments are typically the first targets.

Blaming and attacking intensify during the Preparing for the Change phase, as all three key player groups learn more about their new roles. There will be winners and losers, and the losers realize they have little time to change the future. Instigators continue to use this tactic during the Adopting the Change phase, although the momentum of business operations is often too great to alter the model.

Project Phase: Planning the Change

What they are doing	Criticizing the planning team to force redesigns or shift accountabilities.
What they say	"The project plan has failed to consider business needs once again. The project team is working in a vacuum."
What they are feeling	Fear of failure to perform under new conditions. Frustration about a design element or a plan requirement's impact. Anger over loss of power and influence.
How you respond	Assess the validity of the claim with facts. Provide contrary data. Escalate new attacks. Escalate behavior that you cannot tolerate.
What you say	"I am surprised you believe we failed to consider the business's needs, given that your director reviewed our plan last week with no changes."

Project Phase: Preparing for the Change

What they are doing	Assigning fault for problems or delays.
What they say	"Training missed the mark. We won't be ready for day one, and adoption will be low."
What they are feeling	Fear of being held accountable. Frustration over poor performance. Anger over lost status or perceived incompetence.
How you respond	Acknowledge the feedback. Refute the claim with facts, especially other possible causes for poor performance. Focus on preparation gaps.
What you say	"I appreciate you sharing your concern. The training was co-designed with your team representative. Many of your team members didn't attend all the courses."

Project Phase: Adopting the Change

What they are doing	Attributing performance dips to others or the new model to avoid accountability.
What they say	"The team set us up to fail. Training was inadequate, and the process is missing a critical step."
What they are feeling	Fear of punishment. Frustration or anger over learning a new system. Contempt for the changes created by the new model.
How you respond	Focus on solutions to existing gaps. Invite the attacker to collaborate on identifying and resolving the problem's root cause. State a positive first step to begin the resolution process.
What you say	"I am glad you raised this issue. The process was extensively tested and reviewed by your team. I am wondering what the real reason for this gap is. Let's review this with the workstream leads tomorrow at the weekly briefing meeting."

Rumor Spreading

The intent of false information is sabotage. The news is negative and usually inflammatory, crafted to disrupt and destabilize the initiative. Lies or exaggerations spread until they are challenged, stopping the dissemination with facts. Unfortunately, the most salacious rumors are the most interesting and novel and therefore travel the furthest and the fastest. Since misinformation flows underground, a lot of damage can be done before it surfaces and is addressed.

People create rumors as soon as the change is announced. People speculate and create worst-case scenarios that can be presented as facts. False stories continue throughout the other two stages to destabilize the project. They are less effective during the Adopting the Change phase because there is more data and eyewitness accounts to disprove them.

Project Phase: Planning the Change

What they are doing	Circulating negative narratives about the plan design's feasibility or the team's abilities to create doubt or gain support.
What they say	"I heard that the steering committee isn't happy with the plan content and timing. Someone told me they are thinking of making changes to the team."
What they are feeling	Anxiety over the change. Fear that the change will go through quickly. Contempt for the direction of the organization.
How you respond	Repeat the rumor as worded and test its validity with information and data. Note the damaging effects of inaccurate information.
What you say	"I've heard a rumor about our leaders being disappointed with the plan. This is false. They are pleased by the speed and dedication of the team. Rumors are destructive, and I encourage you to share them so we can test them."

Project Phase: Preparing for the Change

What they are doing	Circulating stories about the negative impacts of the change or shortfalls in preparation to adopt it.
What they say	"Data provided by the new order fulfillment system is garbage. I hear customer service will drop 20 percent when we lose our current software."
What they are feeling	Fear of a changing work environment or inability to perform in the new operating model. Contempt for perceived unnecessary or inferior changes.
How you respond	Ensure employee updates include current information. Ask respected peers to share honest perspectives on the rumor-targeted areas. Refute rumors publicly and quickly with facts.
What you say	"We have identified some data integrity gaps. The technical team is on target to correct the issue within the week."

Project Phase: Adopting the Change

What they are doing	Spreading false accounts to create doubts and justify adjustments to ways of working.
What they say	"I heard that customer service has dropped by 30 percent, and our biggest client is considering other suppliers."
What they are feeling	Fear of failure to perform. Frustration with new practices. Anger about losses from the new model. Contempt for the model and those who created it.
How you respond	Address the rumor immediately by identifying its source. Engage the area where the rumor may have started. Ask the department lead to meet with the team, disprove the rumor, and discourage spreading falsehoods.
What you say	"I heard a rumor that our biggest client is frustrated with our new system and is thinking of leaving us. I spoke with them today, and they understand our growing pains, given their recent changes."

Information Gatekeeping

Information can be tangible, such as integration-tracking or performance data, or intangible, including knowledge and experience. Hoarding, selectively sharing, or manipulating information is a form of sabotage. The intent is to control and alter inputs that would aid the transition.

Owning the data is the best way to control its meaning. Data becomes a greater focus in the Preparing for the Change phase. As more information and intelligence are generated, there are more opportunities to leverage these inputs to gain an advantage. Information gatekeeping is one of the few self-interested behaviors that can be equally strong in the Preparing for the Change and Adopting the Change phases.

Project Phase: Planning the Change

What they are doing	Hiding or selectively sharing information that adversely impacts their area's performance or favors an undesired design element.
What they say	"We can't provide that operational data; however, this information is a good proxy."
What they are feeling	Fear of being exposed by full data. Contempt for the planning process and the outcomes it creates.
How you respond	Validate that the data is unavailable and the new data is relevant. Escalate this issue to the steering committee.
What you say	"Help me understand why we can't access this data. I will double-check with IT and add the data gap to the risk log for us to discuss at our next steering committee meeting."

Project Phase: Preparing for the Change	
What they are doing	Withholding or tampering with data that exposes poor performance.
What they say	"This month, we made an estimate of performance given a glitch in the system. Everything we have looks good—we are 'green.'"
What they are feeling	Fear of criticism over low performance data. Investigate the reason for the information gap.
How you respond	Determine if there are alternative ways to source the data. If not, validate the estimate.
What you say	"I am wondering why the gap occurred this month when there is a freeze on system changes. I am sure you have checked with the team, but let's ask them again. Also, let's review the data you have to see if we can add to it."

Project Phase: Adopting the Change

What they are doing	Selectively or falsely reporting data to hide poor results or avoid attention.
What they say	"There is nothing wrong with my data. My team has validated it."
What they are feeling	Fear that poor performance will hurt their credibility and reputation. Fear of exposure.
How you respond	Notify the report submitter that their data is incorrect. Ask them to resubmit their report. If they don't, flag the issue as a risk for steering committee review.
What you say	"Please validate your numbers and resubmit your report. If our numbers don't match, we need to escalate the issue to the steering committee."

Rule Breaking

The best way to break a new operating model is not to follow it. Like the childhood game Mouse Trap, it only takes one missing piece to not catch the mouse. During change initiatives, the pieces include rules, processes, protocols, decision-making rights, and organizational channels. Every break causes tension in the new model.

Rule breaking builds as the inner workings of the new model become clear. It does the most damage in the Adopting the Change phase, when operating performance and customer relationships are at risk. Without quick intervention and correction, the damage and costs escalate.

Project Phase: Planning the Change

What they are doing	Skipping process steps or bypassing approval protocols for expediency or personal benefit.
What they say	"We already moved ahead using our own process. Yours is too time-consuming, and we are running out of time."
What they are feeling	Frustration over governance requirements. Anger over initial plan assumptions. Contempt for the change.
How you respond	Identify the impacts and risks of not following the project process. Stand your ground on nonnegotiable steps or protocols. Escalate to the steering committee.
What you say	"Your decision to deviate from approved protocols has created risks to the plan. I am flagging these risks for review at the next steering committee meeting. Please join me."

Project Phase: Preparing for the Change

What they are doing	Skipping readiness steps (testing, training, approvals) to sabotage change readiness activities to discredit the new model or project team.
What they say	"John and Jared attended testing walkthroughs, and most of my team members are available for training. The others will do so after go-live."
What they are feeling	Anger over preparation requirements. Contempt for the operating model or how the project is being managed.
How you respond	Outline the risks associated with incomplete readiness activities. Inform them that the gaps will be forwarded to their functional leader and the steering committee, and that they can try to justify them.
What you say	"New systems and processes will not work properly without all testing and training completed as designed. I need to add your gaps to the risk register and notify your functional lead and the steering committee. You are welcome to present your perspective."

Project Phase: Adopting the Change

What they are doing	Covertly sabotaging the new model by continuing to use the old practices or tools.
What they say	"It's faster and better to manage our business through our tried-and-true spreadsheets. The new digital system can't do what we can do manually. We are all about results."
What they are feeling	Anxiety about greater exposure or capabilities required in the new world. Frustration with new practices. Contempt for the new model.
How you respond	Confront the dissenter about their compliance gaps. Outline the negative impacts of their actions. If they refuse to comply, escalate the breach immediately to the sponsor and encourage them to reprimand the rule breaker.
What you say	"Using old processes and tools jeopardizes operations. Can I count on you to follow the new processes and practices? No? I will raise your decision not to follow the model with the steering committee at their next meeting on Friday."