

KNOWLEDGE CENTRE · OCTOBER 2026

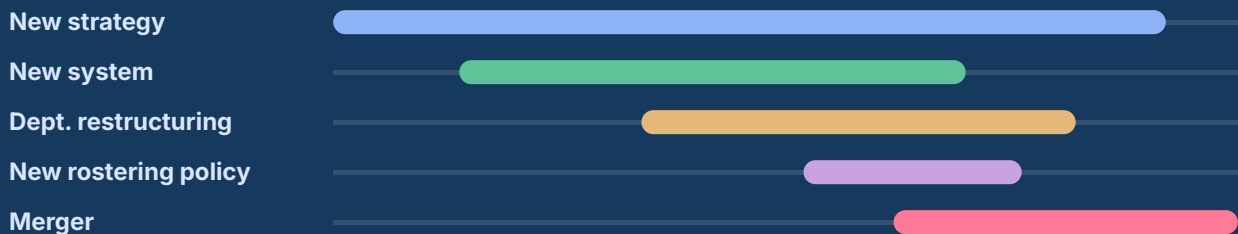
Tired of change

Why buy-in wears thin with every new change, and how to keep your people on board

For HR leaders who steer one change after another. On trust, changes piling up and what you can do before people check out.

SOUND FAMILIAR? FIVE CHANGES IN ONE YEAR

Illustrative


355

companies reported a major restructuring to the Dutch employee insurance agency (UWV) in 2025: the most in ten years

nearly 1 in 2

employees in organisations going through major change is looking for another job

1 in 5

of them report more sick days

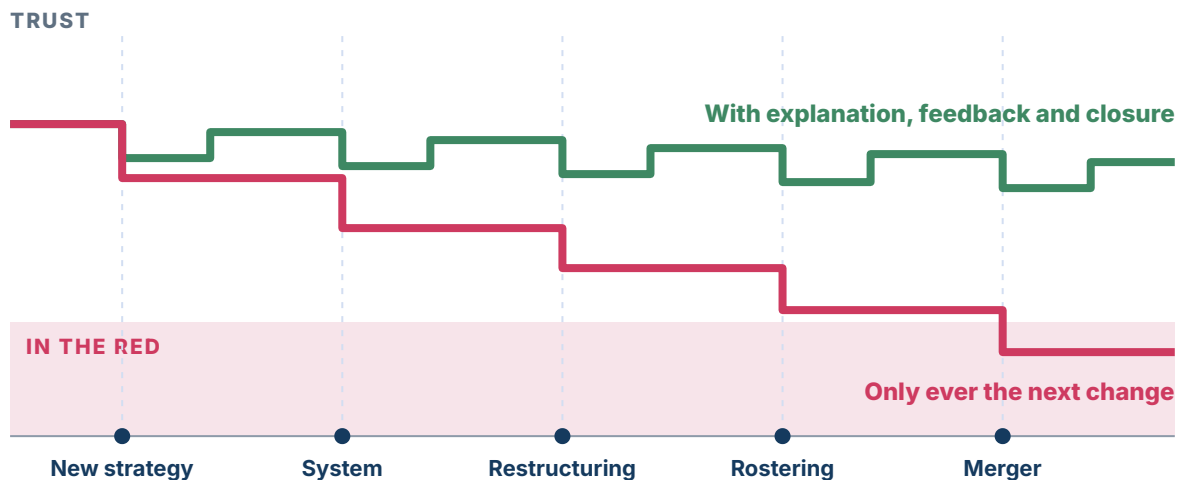
IN ONE MINUTE

The whole story on one page

No time for fourteen pages? Here is the core, at a glance.

Five changes, two approaches

Illustrative, not measured



The problem is not the fifth change. It is that the first four were never settled. **The approach:** after every withdrawal, pay something back in.

FOUR THINGS TO REMEMBER

1 Trust carries the most weight.

Across sixty years of research, the strongest predictor of how people respond to change.

2 Taking part helps.

People who can help shape the how are more open to change.

3 Asking without acting costs.

People who hear nothing back say less next time, or nothing at all.

4 Tired is not opposed.

Change fatigue is a signal, not unwillingness. You can measure it and do something about it.

Nobody is against change. Only against changes that never get finished.

CHAPTER 1

Sound familiar?

A year in an organisation that keeps changing. Watch the stack on the right in particular.

MONTH	WHAT HAPPENS	NOT YET DONE
○ JANUARY	The board presents a new strategy. Everyone gets a glossy brochure.	Strategy
○ MARCH	A new system arrives. The old way of working disappears, the new one is not ready yet.	System Strategy
○ JUNE	A department is restructured. Conversations follow, and unrest.	Restructuring System Strategy
○ OCTOBER	The employee survey goes out again. Nothing was ever said about last year's results.	Survey Restructuring System Strategy

NOVEMBER

"There is a lot of resistance to the merger."

But is it resistance to the merger? Or is it the fifth change in a year, among people who no longer believe their input leads anywhere?



This scenario is made up. The pattern is not: we see it in many organisations.

CHAPTER 2 · THE INSIGHT

Buy-in works like a bank account

Every change makes a withdrawal from the same trust. If nothing is paid back in, one day you are in the red. This is the year from page 3 as a bank statement.

TRUST ACCOUNT STATEMENT

In · out · balance

	Opening balance of trust			60
JAN	New strategy announced	-10		50
FEB	Explained in every team, including what stays	+6		56
MAR	New system, old way of working ends	-12		44
APR	Questions in team meetings, no feedback	-6		38
JUN	Restructuring of one department	-14		24
SEP	Rostering policy "for consultation", already decided	-8		16
OCT	Survey out, last year never discussed	-6		10
NOV	Merger announced	-12		-2

WHAT PAYS BACK IN

Explaining why. Letting people help shape the how. Reporting back. Finishing what you start.

WHAT WITHDRAWS

Something new before the last thing is finished. Questions without answers. Token consultation. Silence after the announcement.

The merger is not the problem. It is just the withdrawal that tips the account into the red.

Illustrative statement. The amounts are a picture, not a measurement. Based on research into trust and participation in change, and on what Deepler sees in practice.

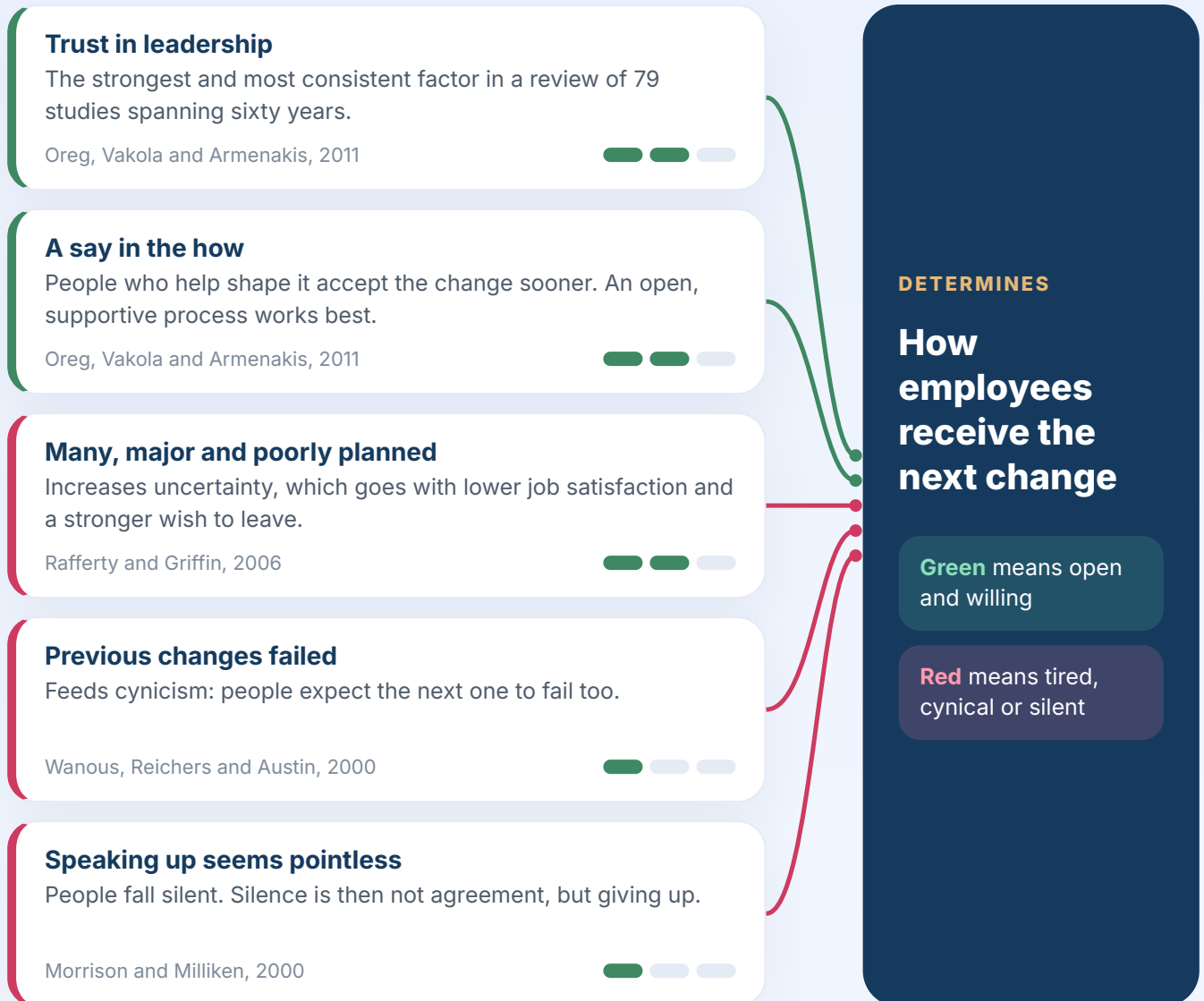
BLOG Listening without action costs trust



CHAPTER 2 · WHAT WE KNOW

What sixty years of research teaches us

Five things determine how people receive a change. Two help, three wear people out.



Bars bottom right: how strong the evidence is. Two: large review or broad study. One: single study or theory.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR HR

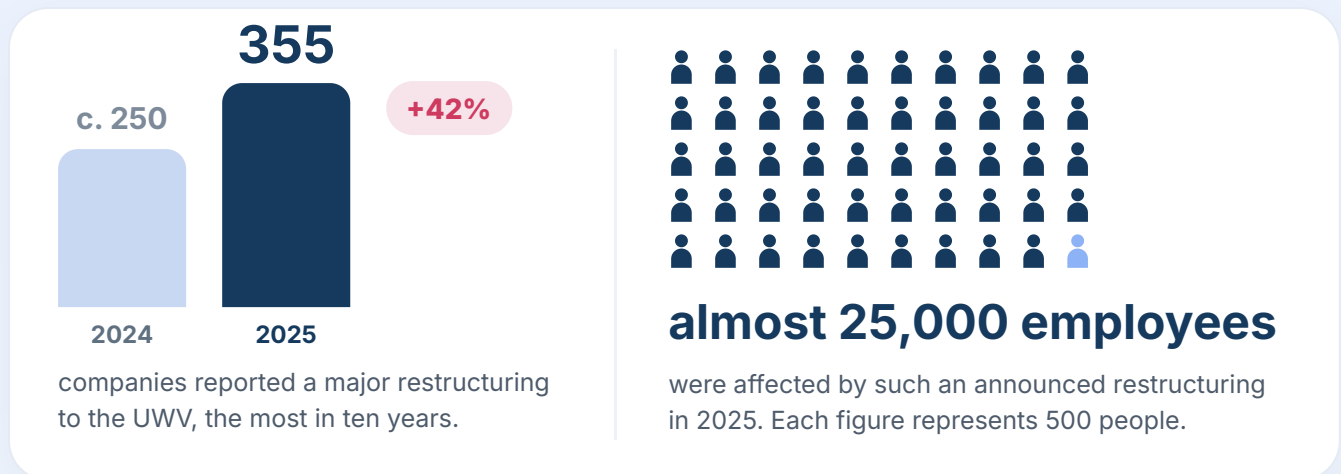
Resistance rarely lies in the change itself. It lies in how much trust is left, in the piling up, and in whether people are heard. As HR, you can influence all five.

CHAPTER 3

What is at stake

The Netherlands is restructuring more than it has in years. And employees are showing what that does to them.

RESTRUCTURINGS IN THE NETHERLANDS



UWV, collective redundancy notifications 2025, via Nieuws.nl, July 2026. The 2024 figure is derived from the 42% rise.

IN ORGANISATIONS GOING THROUGH MAJOR CHANGE



Integron, Employee Experience in Nederland 2025, poll of 5,000 workers. Treat it as a signal.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR HR

Change is no longer the exception but the normal state of affairs. Lose people during the change and you pay the bill afterwards in turnover and absenteeism.

CASE How two merging organisations mapped their cultures

deepler.io/en/culture-in-a-merger



CHAPTER 3 · IN THE BOARDROOM

Six things you are going to hear

You will hear firm claims about change and resistance. Here is how you can respond.

MANAGEMENT TEAM MEETING · ITEM 4: THE MERGER

6 statements, 6 responses

MT

"People are just against change."

People who trust their leaders and can help shape things are far more open to it. It is more often the approach than the people.

· Oreg, Vakola and Armenakis, 2011

HR

MT

"We'll just communicate it one more time."

Broadcasting more does not help if nobody can talk back. Show what you do with input.

· Deepler practice

HR

MT

"But we did ask them, didn't we?"

Asking without reporting back costs trust. Next time, people say less.

· Deepler practice

HR

MT

"This really is the last restructuring."

People only believe that once the previous one is finished. Past experience feeds cynicism.

· Wanous, Reichers and Austin, 2000

HR

MT

"Resistance has to be broken."

Resistance is information. It tells you where the plan rubs against the work.

· Deepler practice

HR

MT

"It's quiet, so it's been accepted."

Silence often means people think it is pointless to say anything.

· Morrison and Milliken, 2000

HR

Use it as an opener. Which of these six does your management team say most? Start there.

CHAPTER 4

What pays back in?

Six deposits into the trust account, sorted by how strong the evidence is.

WELL SUPPORTED

large review or broad study

+ Build trust in leadership

Leaders who explain, listen and do what they say.

Oreg et al., 2011

+ Let people help shape the how

Not whether, but how it lands in the work.

Oreg et al., 2011

+ Plan and pace

Less at once, and well planned. That dampens uncertainty.

Rafferty and Griffin, 2006

ONE STUDY

+ Measure fatigue

Not just satisfaction. There is a validated questionnaire for it.

Bernerth et al., 2011

PRACTICE

what we see working at clients

+ Close the loop, even on a no

Every question is a promise. Say what you will do with the answers.

Deepler practice

+ Finish what you start

Close visibly before you start the next one.

Deepler practice

-1

for every new start

The simplest rule: set at least one deposit against every new change. A completion, a round of feedback, or a change that stops.

TO BE HONEST

Most research shows correlation, not hard cause and effect. But for decades the direction has been the same: trust and participation make the difference. Measure whether it works for you.

BLOG Why we involve employees early in change

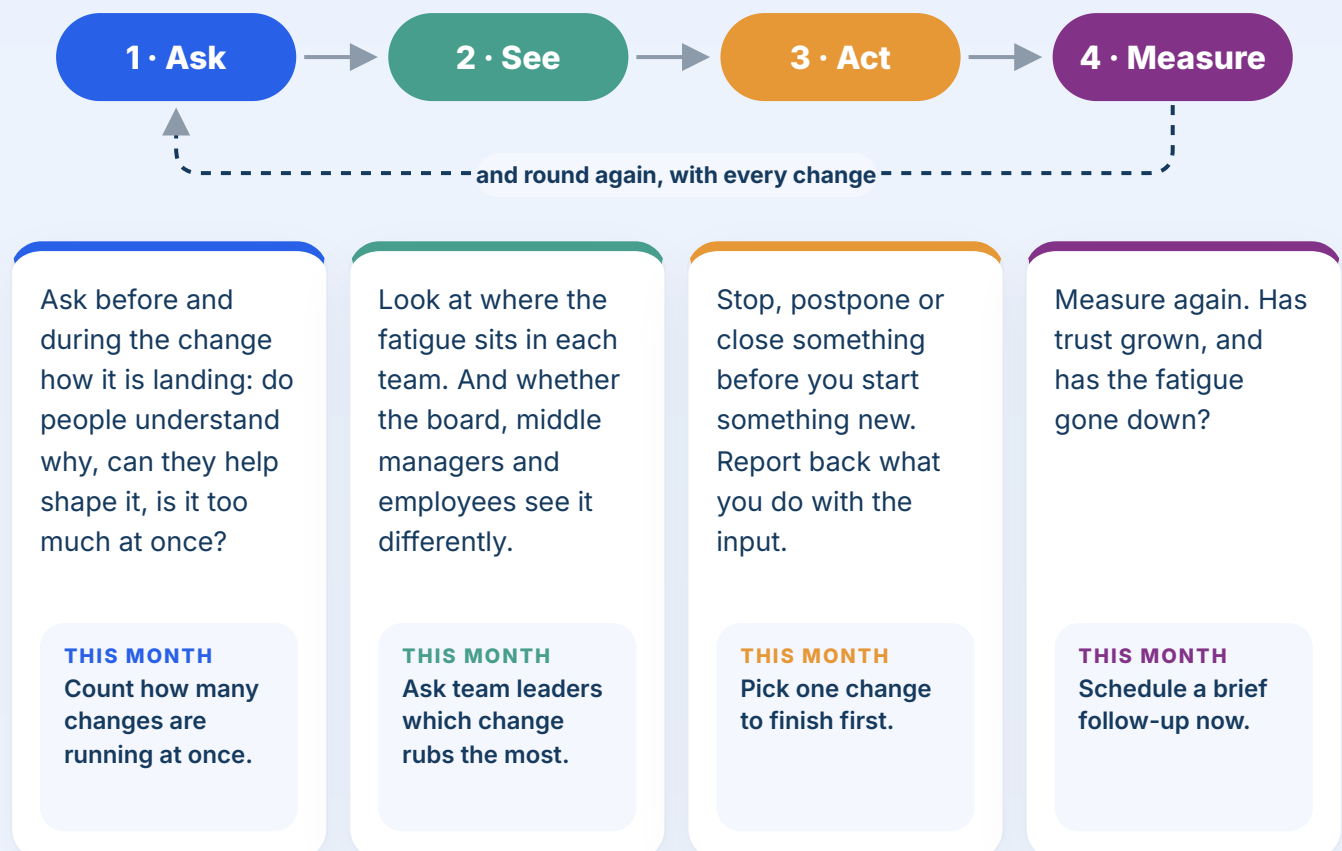
deepler.io/en/involving-employees-in-change



CHAPTER 5 · THE APPROACH

Ask, see, act, measure

Four steps to win back buy-in. Not a project with an end date, but a loop you go through again with every change.



ONE OWNER

One owner per change, who also takes care of the feedback. Otherwise everyone is responsible, and nobody does it.

CELEBRATE WHAT IS DONE

Close visibly: what was achieved, what did we learn? That pays back into the account.

DEEPLER Ask, see, act, measure: that is how Deepler works too

deepler.io/en →

CHAPTER 6 · WORKSHEET

How high is your stack?

Stack all ongoing changes on top of each other, with the management team. The height of the stack alone is often an eye-opener.

CHANGE	STARTED	WHY EXPLAINED	REPORTED BACK	FINISHED	WEIGHT
	☐	☐	☐	☐	L M H
	☐	☐	☐	☐	L M H
	☐	☐	☐	☐	L M H
	☐	☐	☐	☐	L M H
	☐	☐	☐	☐	L M H
	☐	☐	☐	☐	L M H
	☐	☐	☐	☐	L M H
	☐	☐	☐	☐	L M H
	☐	☐	☐	☐	L M H
	☐	☐	☐	☐	L M H
Example: new rostering policy	Mar 2026	☒	☐	☐	L M H

HIGH

LOW

☒ yes
 ☒ partly
 ☐ no
 Weight: L low, M medium, H high

Start at the bottom

SORT THE STACK, WITH THE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Stop

What delivers too little for what it costs?

Finish

What is nearly done, and deserves a visible close?

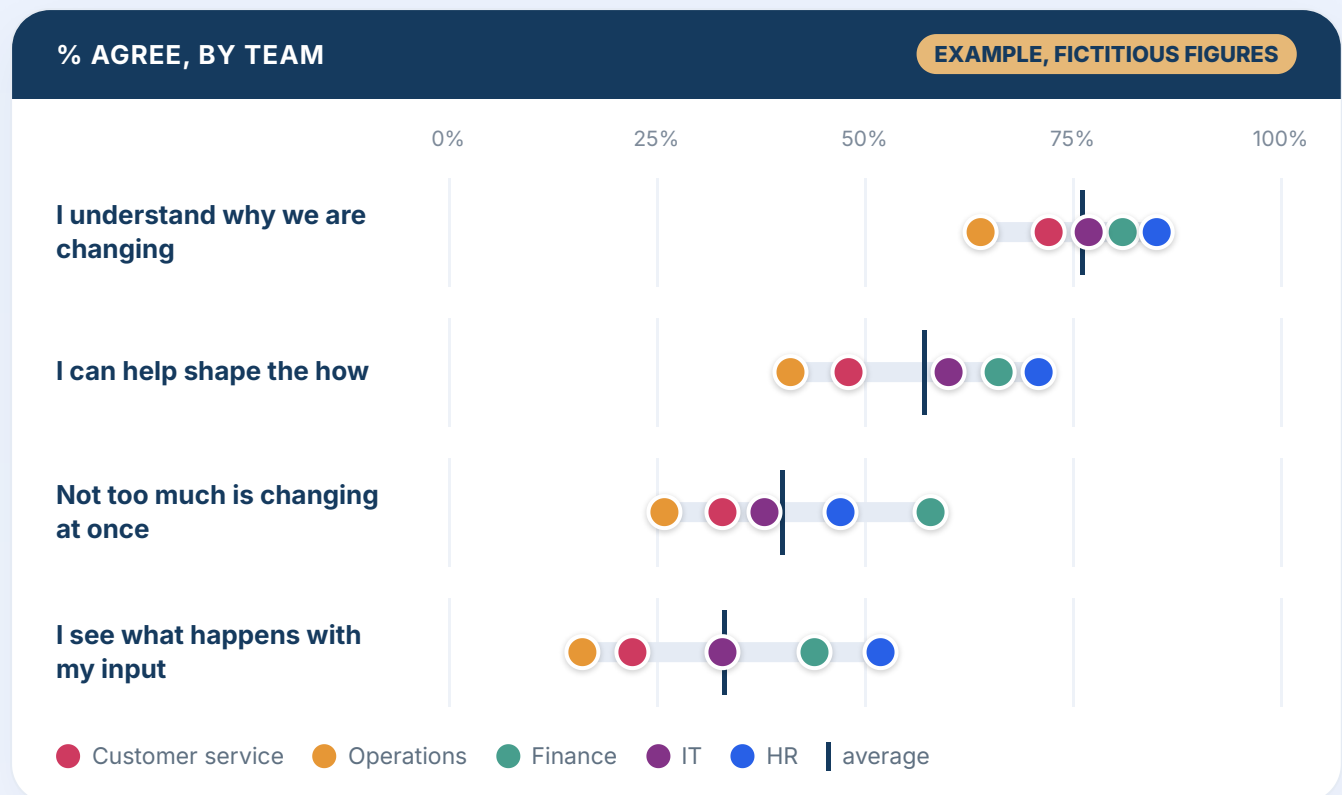
Wait

What can wait six months without harm?

CHAPTER 6 · WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

How to see where the fatigue sits

Four statements, five teams. Each dot is a team. The further apart the dots, the more the teams differ.



43 points

between understanding the why and seeing what happens with your input

What stands out. Everyone gets the why. But in the operational teams, hardly anyone sees what happens with their input.

What it means. The problem is not the strategy, but the piling up and the silence after asking.

Where to start. With Customer service and Operations: report back first and finish something.



With **Deepler Research** you put statements like these anonymously to every team, and see per team where it rubs. [View the research modules.](#)

WORKSHEET · BASELINE

How is your account doing?

Ten statements, five minutes. No 0, partly 1, yes 2. Fill it in with the management team and a few team leaders: where you differ is where the conversation lies.

AREA	STATEMENT	0 · 1 · 2	TOTAL
Piling up	We know how many changes are running at the same time.	0 1 2	----- /4
	We rarely start something new before the last is done.	0 1 2	
Explaining	With every change we explain why, and what is not changing.	0 1 2	----- /4
	Managers can explain the why in their own words.	0 1 2	
Voice	Employees help shape how a change lands in their work.	0 1 2	----- /4
	Voicing doubt is not immediately seen as resistance.	0 1 2	
Follow-up	After every survey we report back what we will do with it.	0 1 2	----- /4
	Every change has one owner.	0 1 2	
Closure	We close changes visibly and name what has been achieved.	0 1 2	----- /4
	We measure how teams experience changes, not just whether they are done.	0 1 2	

Your balance: draw a line

Total ____ / 20



0 to 7 · In the red

Start nothing new. Finish something first and report back.

8 to 14 · Tight

Pace it, and give people more say in the how.

15 to 20 · Healthy

Keep it up, and measure per team if it lasts.

BLOG Reporting back results: you said, we did

deeper.io/en/sharing-employee-survey-results



CHAPTER 7 · AND YOU?

You carry every change with you

HR guides the change, holds the conversations and absorbs the unrest. Often while the next one is already being prepared.

YOU FIRST

**How full is your own account?
Colour in the boxes.**

Two boxes or fewer? Then read this page twice.

RECOGNISE

One restructuring is barely finished before the next is on the agenda. And you hold the conversations, including the difficult ones.

ARRANGE

Agree with the board what you need to guide a change well: time, people, an honest story.

SPEAK UP

You are the first to see changes piling up. Name it at the table, even when it is uncomfortable. That is HR too.

THREE QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON

Which change am I carrying right now that I do not believe in myself?

What would I like to tell the board about the piling up?

Which change would I be glad to see stop?

You cannot ask for buy-in you no longer feel yourself.

METHODOLOGY

Sources

FIGURES AND MODELS

UWV (2026). Meldingen collectief ontslag 2025, via Nieuws.nl, 6 July 2026.

Integron (2025). Employee Experience in Nederland 2025. Poll of 5,000 workers, via HR Community.

Deepler. Buy-in as a bank account, practice model based on experience with clients.

RESEARCH

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Morrison and Milliken (2000). Organizational silence. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(4).

Bernerth, Walker and Harris (2011). Change fatigue: development and initial validation of a new measure. *Work & Stress*, 25(4).

How we rate the evidence. Two bars: large review. One bar: single study or theory. Practice: what Deepler sees at clients. **What we do not claim:** we give no percentage of failed changes, because no reliable figure exists. The Integron figures come from a poll. The figures on page 11 are fictitious.

About Deepler. Deepler was founded in 2021 by four change managers. We help organisations listen to employees and see what is needed. Better performance through better listening. deepler.io/en/about-us

MORE FROM THE KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

How is trust holding up ahead of your next change?

Scan the code and read how two merging organisations put their cultures side by side before starting the integration.

deepler.io/en/use-cases/culture-in-a-merger →

