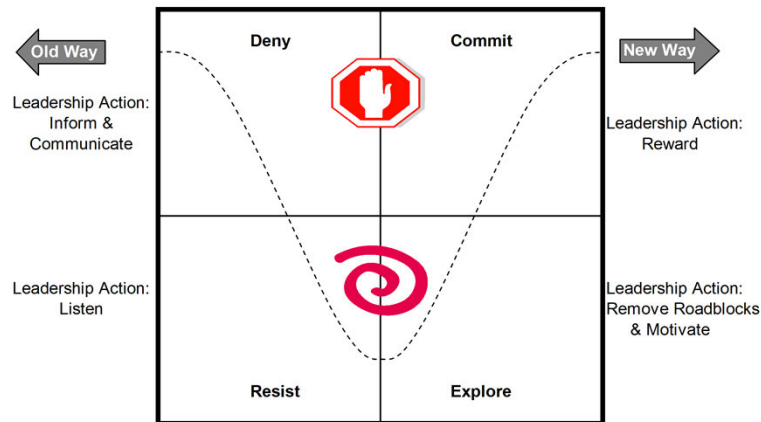


# How Individuals React to Change

## Stages of Reaction to Change



Project Leaders can:

- Understand sequence of stages
- Offer appropriate type of help in each stage
- Plan and manage change like a project

When a significant change comes, such as a major redirection of the deliverables of a program, even the most positive person does not switch instantly to the new way. They react through a sequence of stages. It is possible to push change through rapidly from the top down, forcing people to switch quickly from the old way to the new way. However, a “hammer” change like that just shoves the reactions underground, so it usually doesn’t last long. Reserve hammer changes for things that are truly urgent, and expect to spend a lot of time and effort cleaning up the mess afterwards.

A better approach is to allow time for people go through the stages shown above. Some people will go through them faster than others, and can be the pioneers that help pull others along behind them. You don’t have to just wait around while people move haphazardly through the stages. The chart shows leadership actions you can take to help people deal with each stage, and then move forward.

Note that the boundary between resistance and exploration is very fluid. People will tend to oscillate back and forth between them. The first time through this oscillation, a person may see one or two silver linings among a long list of objections. On each subsequent cycle, the person should find more possibilities to explore. (If not, they are moving backwards into firmer resistance.) As their excitement about new possibilities builds, the person will move more firmly into exploration, and eventually to commitment.

