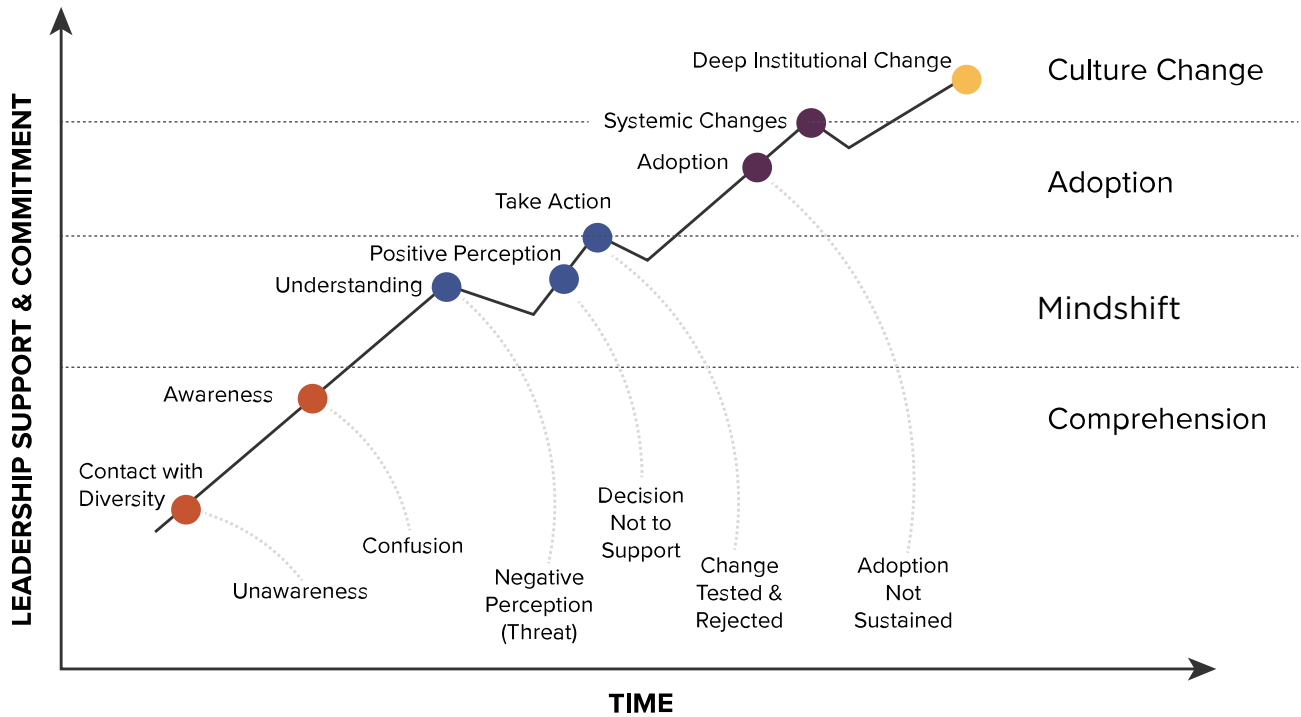# Realize

The Change Curve

The Change Curve

Organizational and individual change can be hard. It helps to think about change as a process that occurs over time, with experiences that can often be predicted and prepared for.

The version of the change curve we'll explore here was designed to help change organizational culture around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. It is very useful for that purpose, and adaptable to other kinds of change as well. Alden E. Habacon adapted this model based on ODR, Inc. and TWI, Inc. in 2019. We'll use it here to show what happens for employees during a change process in the specific situation of a merger.

Comprehension
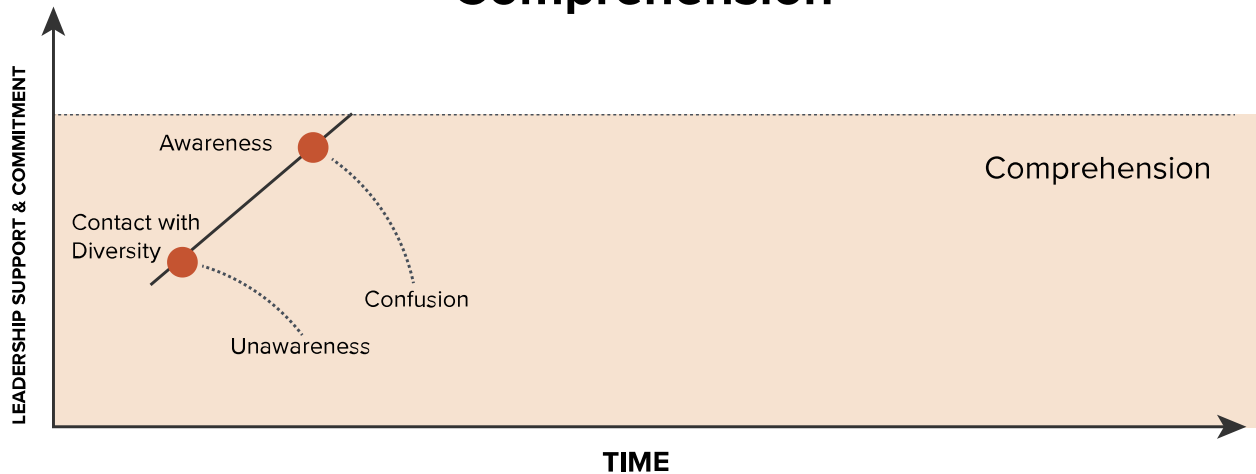
At the start of a change process in an organization, employees are often not aware of the coming change. The executive team may have been working on something, and at some point, this is shared with employees.

Example: A smaller organization is merging with a larger organization. They do the same kind of work but have very different organizational cultures.

As employees of the smaller organization become aware of the merger, they may experience confusion about why the merger is needed and worry about what will change in their role and workplace.

Employees of the larger organization may be uncertain whether this will cause more work for them or perhaps work will be better distributed.

Communication strategies are key to building awareness of the upcoming change. Remember to offer a variety of types of high quality communications, and opportunities for employees to discuss and ask questions.
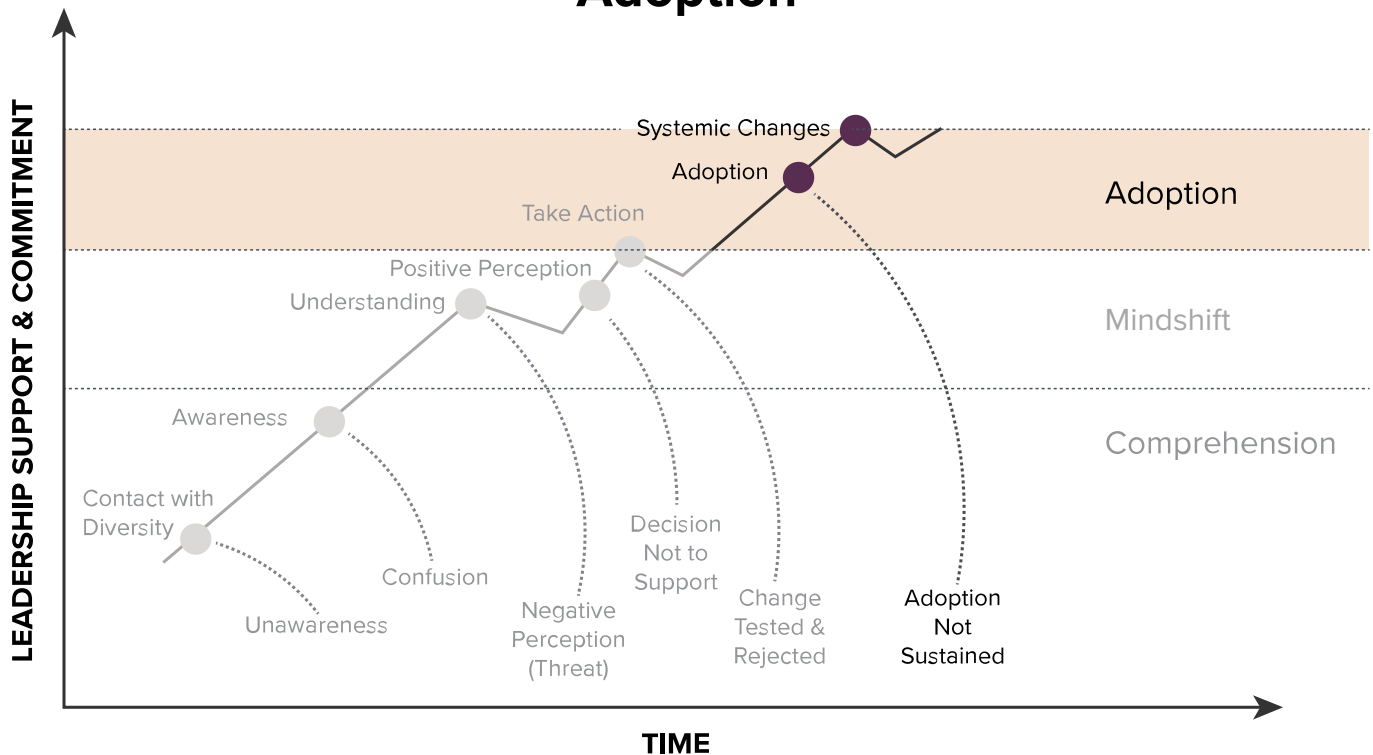
Mindshift
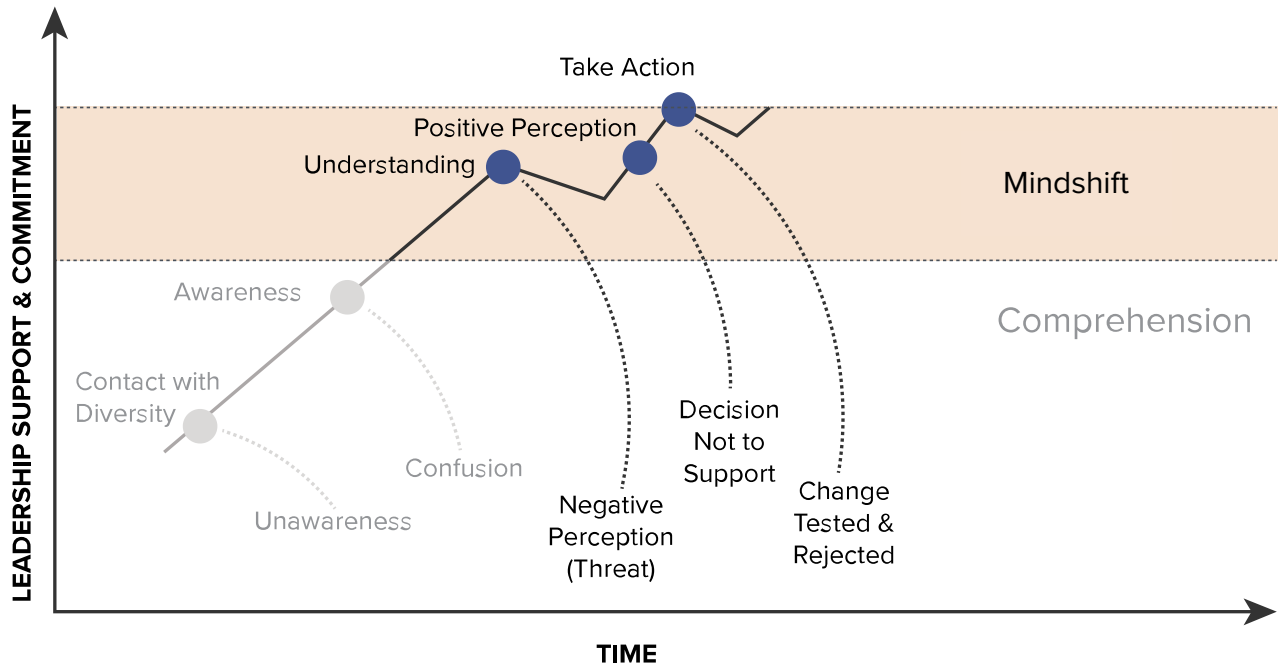
As more information is shared, and conversations like Town Halls are held, employees learn and understand more about the change, from the purpose and goals, to how it will be implemented. At this point, some employees may have a negative perception of the change.

For example, long-term employees of the smaller organization have a history and a long record of contributions within that organization. They may see the change negatively and take longer to develop a positive perception because they don't see value in adopting the systems and culture of the larger organization. The shift will be easier for someone new to the organization or fresh out of school, who is not so invested.

Patience and listening are needed to help employees make a Mindshift. Continue to communicate and gather input on the upcoming change.

Adoption

LEADERSHIP SUPPORT & COMMITMENT

Systemic Changes

Adoption

Take Action

Positive Perception

Understanding

Awareness

Contact with Diversity

Confusion

Unawareness

Negative Perception (Threat)

Decision Not to Support

Change Tested & Rejected

Adoption Not Sustained
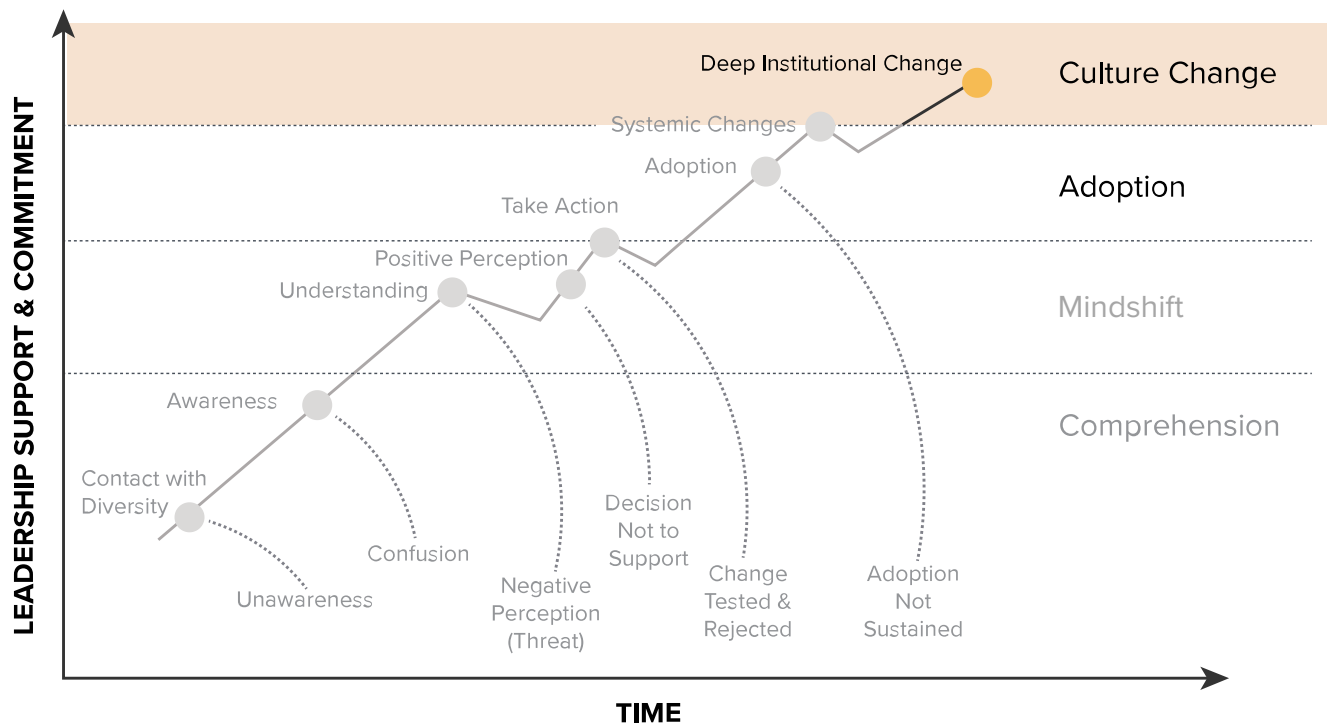
Adoption

Mindshift

Comprehension

TIME

As change is implemented, employees will start to take various actions, in their own roles. Some will move to Adoption of the change. Others may try to implement the change and reject it, or not sustain the change over time.

For example, an employee from the smaller organization may find that their role has more administration and less opportunity to use their people skills. They might not be in the role with the best fit in the new structure. Or an employee might find that learning the new systems and software is challenging at that stage in their career.

Providing supports to employees, like training in new systems, can help to achieve sustained adoption of the change. When employees are being asked to implement the change, reducing their workloads in other areas, or hiring temporary help, can give space and time to do the change work.

Culture Change

When adoption is sustained over time, the organization experiences systemic change, leading to deep institutional change.

For example, for the smaller organization in the merger the new way of working has now become the new normal. For employees in the larger organization, they will feel that their new colleagues are now valued team members.
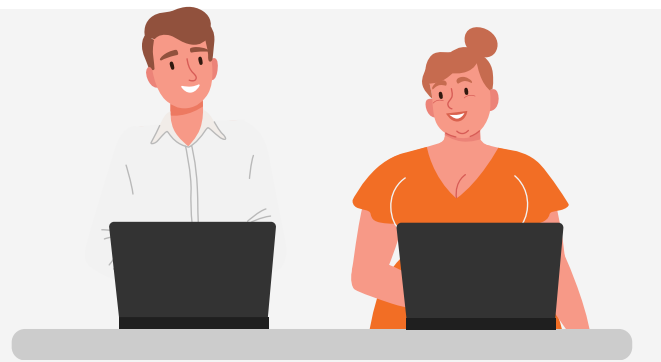
The organization will have a lot to celebrate when completing the change process. There may be some employees who have not made it through the change process, rejecting the change at some point. Build both realities into your change management plan.

This Change Curve is adapted from Alden E. Habacon, Diversity & Inclusion Strategist, February 2019, Adapted from ODR, Inc., and TWI, Inc.