Ultimate Guide to Change Management

5 Steps in Successfully Managing Changes

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Managing in Times of Change

5 Steps in Successfully Managing Changes

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Our ability to cope with change is becoming more and more of a factor in whether or not we are successful. Those of us who can respond quickly and positively to change increase our chances of success by becoming an assett to our company and a potential high contributor to the future success of the company.

Equally, from a business point of view, those companies who have the ability to adapt to a changing environment, increasing customer expectations, increasing pressure from shareholders and increasing competition will differentiate themselves from the rest and are likely to be those companies that will be ahead of the rest in the next 5 to 10 years.

So, learning how to manage and lead a process of change is becoming an essential skill. Whether you are responsible for defining the direction of your business and leading the change or are a middle manager with responsibility for implementing the change decided by others, you must be able to effectively manage the process for the benefit of all.

If you are planning any change, large or small, it is important to anticipate some of the possible barriers you might face and how you could overcome them. Preventing problems before they happen is always the best way of solving them.

BARRIERS	HOW TO OVERCOME
Employee resistance	Communicate, communicate, communicate. Identify their fears and concerns, show you understand and work with them to resolve these.
Your own lack of agreement with the change	Raise your questions and concerns with your boss. Get clarification on anything that you don't fully understand. Ensure you can see real benefits before you can begin to communicate with your team, even if you don't agree with them.
Unclear direction from above	Talk to your boss and get as many answers as you can. Make your own plan for implementing the change in a way which makes sense for you and your team.
Difficulties in maintaining momentum	Hold regular review meetings, team and individual. Set milestones to review progress towards intermediate goals. Communicate, communicate, communicate!

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It is important to recognise that in managing change you are managing people through a process, which is emotional in nature. Recognising the stages that people go through and how you can manage each stage will also increase your chances of success. The following curve shows the 5 emotional stages of change.
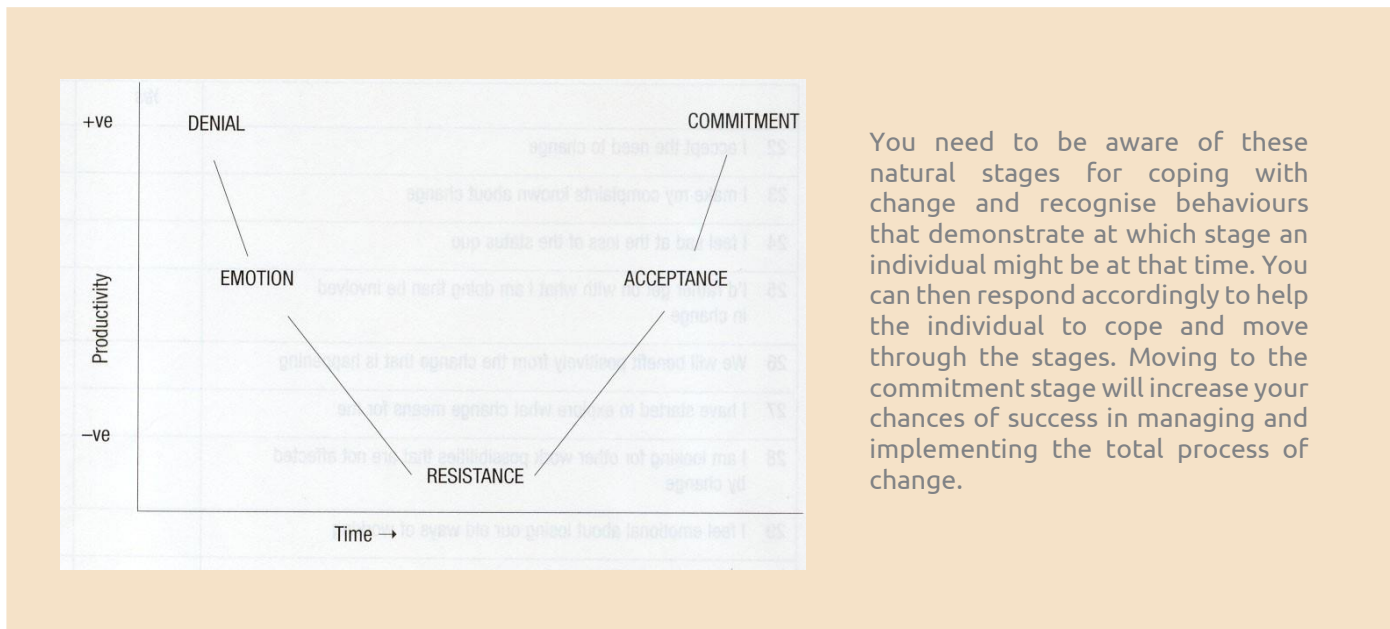
You need to be aware of these natural stages for coping with change and recognise behaviours that demonstrate at which stage an individual might be at that time. You can then respond accordingly to help the individual to cope and move through the stages. Moving to the commitment stage will increase your chances of success in managing and implementing the total process of change.

The following is a step-by-step guide for how to manage change in practice.

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1   Clear Vision and Goals

- Where are you now and where do you want to be, short and long term.
- Specific goals for the business, the department, the team and each individual, including yourself.

Why is it so important to begin with a Vision?

Think about what 'change' really means, in any context. Whatever it is that you are doing now will be somehow different in the future. This could be a good thing or a bad thing. If today I am unhappy in my work and seeking a new opportunity, then I am likely to perceive a 'change' in my work as a good thing. If today I am happy and settled in my work and it fits well with my current lifestyle, then I may perceive any change as a potentially bad thing. But, whichever situation, will it be a change for the better or a change for the worse? I will only know that when I know exactly what the change will be.

In business terms we call this the Vision! It's a way to describe what things will be like after the change has taken place. Much resistance to change comes from fear. Fear of not knowing what will happen, fear of not liking the new way, fear of not fitting into the new way or not being able to cope with the new way. The Vision is vital in painting a positive picture that will overcome all these fears and show people the positive and good things that they can expect when the change is completed.

What makes a good Vision?

The Vision, if it is a good one, also creates motivation and a desire to make the change. This comes from details. The Vision is not just a nice sentence, like: "We will be the leading service provider in our market place." This doesn't really mean anything in practical terms. The Vision for change purposes must include enough details to satisfy any fears and create motivation. For example it might include:
- What the future will look like.
- How this will be better for everyone.
- Positive differences between the current situation and the future plans.
- Current problems and issues that will be resolved in the future.
- What this will mean for each person.

How is the Vision created?

The best Vision is one that all involved develop and agree together. This is important because our attitude to change is significantly influenced by whether or not we choose it. If we decide to change our job we're excited about it. If someone else tells us our job will change we are unhappy about it, even if the change will be better for us. So, it's important to involve people as much as possible.

For example; let's say that senior management have announced a reorganisation and certain things will now change. At a local level you can now create a Vision with and for your own team, which is in line with the overall change. There will be certain things fixed that you can't change, but as you look more into details there are always some things that can be decided and influenced from a local, team level and this helps each individual to feel a little more in control and responsible for the final result. You can also explore together in more details the impact of the change, the pros and cons, discuss any concerns and focus on positive benefits.

Why do we then need goals?

Goals are the specific tasks that need to be achieved in order to reach the Vision. Goals will focus work and effort and make the Vision a reality sooner rather than later. The process of change is often stressful and so faster completion of a process of change is always better. Goals also give each individual something specific on which to focus. Their part in the change process becomes clear. They have something specific to aim for and this also provides motivation and helps to overcome the negative emotions associated with change.

What makes a good goal?

Just as you can take the corporate Vision and from this create your own local Vision, so you need to create goals which are in line with the Vision and cascade through each level, e.g. total business goals, lead to department goals which lead to team goals which lead to individual goals. Therefore when an individual achieves a goal they know it is contributing to the bigger picture. There are 5 key principles to follow when setting goals which, if followed will increase the chances of the goal being achieved. We call this SMART goal setting.

Effective Goal Setting – SMART

Specific
The clearer the goal is the more likely it is to be achieved. What exactly is expected? To what extent can it be defined and agreed?

Measurable
How will you (and the individual) know that the goal has been achieved? What are the criteria you will use to judge its success?

Achievable
How challenging is the goal? If it stretches the individual too far then they will feel it is impossible to achieve, they will be demotivated and lose interest even in trying. If it is too simple it also holds no interest. It needs to be challenging enough but not too much. You will only know this by agreeing it with the individual.

Relevant
The individual must see the relevance of the goal. It must be worthwhile in their eyes. By following the step by step approach, linking the Vision and Goals and involving them in the process they are more likely to see this relevance and feel motivated.

Timely
What is the timescale in which this goal must be achieved? What else influences its success and what else does it influence? What factors could hinder or slow down progress e.g. financial issues, resource issues etc. Taking all this into consideration the timescale must be realistic.

So, by completing the first step 'Clear Vision and Goals' you have taken the first step towards managing change positively. Let's take at look at how to continue to move forward positively, by following step two 'Communicate'.

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2 Communicate

- Communicate the vision and goals.
- Be positive and practical.
- Get their input and their commitment.
- Agree their goals, responsibilities and when and how you will monitor progress.

During the first step we talked about the importance of communicating the vision and involving the team in the creation and implementation of the vision and goals, as appropriate. However the importance of this stage 'Communicate' cannot be overstated. It is vital not just as a second step but throughout the whole process.

Why is communication so important?

Researchers have told us that only about 7% of the messages being processed by the brain at any one time are coming from an auditory source. This means that what we hear and what we understand could be two different things. Think about all the misunderstandings that regularly take place every day, the frustrations you feel when you know you have explained something, but the other person has misunderstood or simply not heard you. The times when someone is telling you something and yet you cannot make any sense of what they are saying. We often think this about someone's intelligence level or their interest level. However, published work from psychologist Albert Mehrabian has helped us to better understand what happens when we communicate, by demonstrating the following relationships between the "Influences on Communication".

When you speak to another person their understanding of what you have said is based upon the following:

7% - The Content (i.e. the words alone)
38% - Vocal Influences (i.e. tones, accents, stresses, pauses, intonation, rhythm, pitch)
55% - Non-verbal Influences (i.e. posture, gestures, facial expressions, eye movements, muscle and skin colour changes)

In summary, this research shows that a staggering 93% of our ability to influence in any communication is coming from a stimulus outside of the specific words we use. When you think about this it's amazing that any of us ever really understand each other at all! It certainly explains why there are so many misunderstandings.

Another factor in understanding the importance of communication is to think about what happens in the absence of communication. Our understanding of others is also influenced by our own believes about ourselves, about the other person, about the situation. Also by the current quality and history of that relationship and by our, or the other person's, expectations etc.

So, imagine that your boss has explained a new project to you and that he'll want your help with this. Then days, even weeks go by and he doesn't mention it again. Twice you've asked him what's going on, but he just says there's nothing to tell at the moment. In the meantime he looks stressed and nervous and appears to be avoiding talking to you. What conclusion might you draw from this?

- My boss has changed his mind and doesn't want to tell me.
- My boss is not impressed with my work and is asking someone else for their help.
- I've done something to offend my boss – I don't know what, but I must have done something.
- The project is no longer going to happen so he no longer needs to talk to me.
- The fact that my boss is stressed means something bad is going to happen to me and our department.

From the bosses point of view absolutely nothing may have changed. He has communicated and when he has something new to communicate he will do so. In the meantime he is simply getting on with his busy day-to-day work, expecting others to do the same and completely unaware of the assumptions being made by others based on his behaviour instead of his communication!

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So what and when should we communicate?

The simple answer to this is everything, all the time! It's almost impossible to over communicate. Of course you need to consider confidentiality, but otherwise, the more people know and the more often they hear it the more secure they will feel. You will reduce the possibility of assumptions and misunderstandings. And communication doesn't just mean that you talk – it means talking and listening. One of the best ways of communicating the right messages is to 'put yourself in the others shoes'. Stop thinking of the situation from your own point of view, but instead from theirs. If you were them, what concerns and questions might you have? What conclusions might you draw from what you see around you? What might you most need from your boss and colleagues? By asking yourself these kinds of questions you will help to understand what kind of communication process you need to use.

POSSIBLE COMMUNICATION PROCESSES	
Daily	To make a connection and maintain rapport. To check everyone is OK and show that you are OK. To be available for a coffee, an informal chat or an occasional lunch together. This resolves small questions before they become big problems. It shows that nothing significant has changed from yesterday to today!
Weekly	Short team meetings, to review progress, discuss what's happened this week and what the plans are for next week. Raise any problems, answer any questions, and listen to any ideas or concerns. Encourage them to discuss amongst themselves, share their feelings, their concerns, and their ideas and help each other. Be available for anyone who needs an individual chat with you. Approach them; don't just wait to be asked. Sometimes being listened to is all someone needs!
Monthly	An individual chat with each person to review their own situation, give praise and encouragement and discuss any problems. Ensure they know you are there to help them. Agree goals and plans for the next month and how you will help and support them.
Quarterly	A formal team meeting to review achievements in the past quarter and agree goals and plans for the next.

By using some or all of these processes you increase the chances of communication being clear, no misunderstandings and so no unnecessary problems arising. This will help to keep motivation high, ensure performance is focused and results are achieved. This in turn creates new motivation during the process of change and demonstrates that the change will be positive and success will be achieved for all.

So, let's move to Step three, Lead by Example.

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3 Lead by Example

- Be a positive role model.
- Be consistent in your approach.
- Demonstrate by example how to make the needed changes.
- Be supportive and encouraging.
- React quickly to any problems or issues.

This step is potentially more difficult as it is less dependent on a process or a step-by-step or a checklist of things to follow. This step is much 'softer' and open to personal interpretation. For example, what exactly is a role model, who decides what exactly one should do and what exactly makes a good role model? How do you 'lead by example' and what does this mean in the context of managing change? A lot of questions!

So, let's begin at the beginning. What's the difference between a leader and a manager?

A Leader

- Decides and defines the future of the business.
- Communicates this direction in a motivating and compelling way.
- Inspires others to give their best.
- Invites ideas and encourages initiative.
- Listens to others.
- Provides needed help, resources or information.
- Finds out what training and development people need to excel.

A Manager

- Ensures his department is 'in line' with the total company direction.
- Ensures his team understand the responsibilities of the department and their role in this.
- Ensures people do what's expected of them.
- Communicates when necessary.
- Tells others what they should be doing.
- Expects people to get on with their work.
- Is concerned with the cost of sending people on training courses.

Do what I do!   **Do what I say!**

'Do what I do' is an excellent way of thinking about a real leader and someone who leads by example. Perhaps we can say this is a 'modern' manager, although some of us always managed this way. A traditional manager had authority because of his position and he got things done by ensuring that others knew what they were supposed to do and did it. Today, a leader is working in a more complex, changing and demanding environment. To succeed today, you have to be able to get your people to give their best and work with you to achieve the goals of the business, not simply come to work!

So, what does all this mean for managing change?

Well, often we see many things beginning to change at the same time. Job descriptions are often no longer so fixed. Roles develop and grow as needed and so the work that someone did last year may not be the same as what they will do this year. Processes and systems change to meet customer needs, to become more productive or efficient, this again means individuals need to do things differently and make improvements. So in business we need employees who can think for themselves, who can use their own initiative, who can solve problems and make decisions. This is a much more demanding person to 'manage' than simply someone who 'does what you say'.

This is where the manager needs to develop his skills and into more of a leader.
By 'leading by example' a leader can 'show' others what they need to do. As children we learn by watching our parents or brothers and sisters and we copy their behaviour (for good or bad). A role model has a similar function. By leading by example we are demonstrating the behaviours that we also expect others to adopt. We show what is possible, we show what can be achieved and we show the benefits that can be gained for ourselves. This inspires others to follow instead of forcing them to do something they don't agree with. During a time of change this is often the best way to gain real commitment and motivate people to make the necessary changes.

So, in order to 'Lead by Example' you first need to take a long hard look at yourself. What messages does your behaviour communicate? Are you setting a good example for them to follow? Are you confident enough in yourself to demonstrate changes, answer their questions and help them overcome obstacles?

Once you can answer 'Yes!' to these questions then you are ready to move ahead. Reconsider your vision and your goals. What exactly do you need from your team? What have you already communicated to them? How can you now help them to make these changes by making the changes yourself? Which behaviours do you need to demonstrate to help show them the way? Make a list of these things and a plan for how you intend to implement them. The more specific, the better.

For example...

GOAL	ACTION
I want them to see the benefits of receiving on-going feedback about their work. I want them to actively seek this feedback and use it as a way to confirm the progress they are making and identify further areas for improvement and then act upon this feedback.	Ask them for feedback on what I am doing, what they think I am doing well and what they think I could improve. Respond positively to this feedback and choose 2 or 3 suggestions for improvements that I can make. Implement these things and show them how I am doing this. Explain the benefits of this approach and then suggest that they also try it.
To get them to make and implement more improvement ideas.	Hold a brainstorming session. Ask them for their ideas. Listen careful to each idea and record them. Choose together the best 1 or 2 ideas. Ask them how we could implement them. Involve them in the implementation plan. Later meet again to review together how successful those ideas have been. Ask for more ideas.

Leading by example is the most effective way of encouraging your team to make changes. If you haven't yet experienced it, try it. You might be surprised by the results!

So, how this leads us nicely to step 4, Motivate.

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- Build the team.
- Encourage each individual.
- Give constructive feedback.
- Coach and develop.
- Build strong relationships as a solid foundation for changes.
- Be available to listen.

How do I motivate my staff?

It's one of the most frequently asked questions. There are many theories about the different levels of motivation and the role money plays in motivating our people. So, let's consider this from another angle. When we say, 'Our staff are demotivated' what does that really mean? Perhaps they have no enthusiasm or interest in their work. Perhaps they seem bored or have a 'don't care' attitude to what they are doing. Perhaps they lack focus, have low energy and appear generally unhappy. These things all represent different states of mind, emotions, in this case negative emotions. So if being demotivated represents some kinds of negative emotions, then what makes us motivated, what makes us 'feel good'? The difficulty with this question is that the answer is different for different people. Through better interpersonal skills we can begin to understand these differences. In order to answer our question, let's look at 4 different types of people.

MOTIVATION TYPES

TYPE 1
Some people 'feel good' when they feel confident, when they have a task that stretches them and demands them to push themselves in pursuit of a challenging goal, when they can prove their worth and receive public recognition of their achievements.

TYPE 2
Some people 'feel good' when they feel that their efforts are appreciated and valued by those around them, when they can work closely with others, where they can trust each other and know they will help and support each other, when they receive personal thanks for their efforts.

TYPE 3
Some people 'feel good' when their work is of substance and they know they can do high quality work, when they have the time and resources to do the job as well as they are able, in their own way and in their own time, when they feel their expertise is valued and respected.

TYPE 4
Some people 'feel good' when they are able to work as part of a team, when they can be flexible in their work, when they can be creative and experiment with new ways of doing things, when they have a variety of tasks that involve them working with a wide range of people in both formal and informal situations, when they can celebrate their successes with the rest of the team.

The reality is that every individual needs something different and specific for them, to enable them to 'feel good' at work.

So, how do we use this knowledge?
Motivation is essential during a time of change. People need to be reassured about the future and made to feel good about their place in that future – good about themselves. This is why it is essential to get to know your people as individuals. Understand what's important to them and what they need in order to feel good. Once you have this knowledge then you use it to adapt your behaviour to suit each individual. In other words, give each person what they need in order to help them to feel good about themselves. Once they feel good, they will be able to be more open minded, more positive, able to perform better and handle the changes that are taking place.

Once things are moving in a positive direction then you need to continue this, through feedback and ongoing coaching and development. Through feedback you can reflect back to them what they are actually doing, what's working and what's not, what are their strengths and what could they improve.

GUIDELINES FOR GIVING FEEDBACK	
1.	Tell them what they did well.
2.	Tell them what could be improved.
3.	Finish with a general positive summary.
Be specific.	Tell them what exactly they said or did, give specific examples.
Be objective.	Talk about their behaviour and skills, not them as a person. Comment on what you actually saw and heard, not what you 'assume' they meant or intended.
Be positive.	Be constructive with all feedback given, tell it in a way that is constructive and useful and will make the other person feel good about themselves and learn something useful (use your Interpersonal Understanding Skills).

Through coaching you provide ongoing help and support to your people. A chance to talk about what's working and what's not, help them to solve problems, make decisions and set goals for the future. In other words make plans based on the feedback they have received.

A Structure for Coaching – GROW

Goal
Where do you want to be?

Reality
Where are you now?

Options
How can you get there?

Will
What will you do?

And so this process continues: Motivate, Give feedback and Coach! So, how do we make sure this keeps going in the right direction? Step 5, Monitor Progress.

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5   Monitor Progress

- Review progress regularly, as a team and individually.
- Ask for and accept feedback and suggestions.
- Amend and update the plan.
- Recognise and reward progress and achievements.
- Celebrate success.

So now we reached the final step, it might seem like this final step is not so important, all the hard work has been done and now things should just take care of themselves. Unfortunately this is not the case. This final step is essential in ensuring that the initial goals you set are actually achieved and also in completing the cycle which reinforces motivation in your team. They feel they have achieved something and this motivates them to achieve more.

So, what does this stage actually involve?

Well, although it is an important stage it's not so difficult. If you imagine the 5 steps to form a loop then this step closes the loop and then step one begins again. In other words at this stage we look back to the first stage and check progress towards the goals we have set. We get feedback from our team to ensure things are still moving in the right direction and no unexpected problems have appeared or their motivation has decreased. Based on this review and feedback we make adjustments to our action plans in order to keep us on track and then once the goal is finally achieved we make sure this is highlighted to everyone involved, recognition given to those who have contributed to this result and even a small team celebration to enjoy the feeling of success, mark the moment and be ready again to move on!

Without this stage things can begin to move backwards without you realising it and this is why getting feedback from your team is so important. An example may illustrate this. A few years ago I was lucky enough to hear one CEO talking about how he had implemented a culture change programme into his organisation. In the early stages they had conducted a lot of training for all employees, involved them in making plans for the change, agreeing the direction in which they would go and some principles for how they would together, achieve their new goals. One of these principles was that all employees would be treated equally. It did not matter what your position, everyone parked in the same car park, ate in the same restaurant, etc.

A short while into this process the CEO asked a few employees for their feedback on how things were going. He was surprised that they were a little reluctant to speak and things were obviously not going as well as he thought they were. Eventually he discovered that the reason for this was that they believed that the principle of equality was not being put into practice. Their reason for this was that every day they saw his car parked in the space closest to the office and so they believed this space was being saved for him.

He knew that the only reason this was the case was because he arrived at the office earlier than everyone else and so always took the first space. However after this feedback he changed his behaviour. Each morning when he arrived to an empty car park he would intentionally drive to the opposite end of the car park and park in the space furthest away from the office, thereby proving that there was no favouritism.

This is a good example of how it is often the small things that can cause problems but of course this means that these things can also be easily solved, if you are prepared to really listen to your team and act on what you hear.

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In the previous step we looked at a process for giving feedback. It is just as important how you receive feedback. Receiving feedback positively is the best way to encourage more feedback and show that you really want to know what they think. The following shows what's important when receiving feedback:

DO

- Listen.
- Make Notes.
- Ask questions to check or clarify your understanding or gain ideas.
- Discuss how you might act on their feedback.
- Thank them for giving the feedback.

DON'T

- Disagree with them.
- Explain why what they say is not correct.
- Justify your actions.
- Ignore their comments.
- Thank them but do nothing.

Finally the last step is to ensure you acknowledge what has been achieved and make a point of celebrating, in some way. This can be anything from an agreed financial incentive or a one-off bonus payment to a simple thank you or a team party. Whatever is appropriate. This is another type of feedback to your team. It shows that you appreciate their efforts and that they have done a good job. This will remotivate them to achieve more and provide renewed energy for the next goal.

Now that you have got this far, the process simply repeats again. You're back to step one and setting a new goal. And so it goes on!

If you need an in-depth advice on Change Management and how to apply it in practise consult the author Pam Welsby at pam@fastforwardonline.com or call Ana Barić, Client Manager, on +386 40 600 779 or write to her at ana@fastforwardonline.com.

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