Battling Organizational Fatigue

by Ogbe Airiodion

Maintain program momentum and proactively prevent employee burnout by getting ahead of change overload.

It's Bigger Than You and Your Program

It is not uncommon for a large company to manage 20 to 50 major initiatives at the same time. This intense level of simultaneous activity demands significant time, effort, and cognitive resources from team members. As employees try to juggle the demands of each initiative, they can easily become stretched thin. To make matters worse, siloed activities and a lack of coordination between program teams can lead to conflicting schedules, mixed messaging, and overwhelming demands.

As a leader spearheading a transformation initiative, you're likely to face the challenge of change fatigue. This is a saturation point when employees, overburdened by the sheer volume and complexity of changes, start to show signs of resistance and disengagement.

We suggest safeguarding your initiative by taking a holistic view of the overall organizational changes and key strategies needed to effectively manage the pace and impact of these demands.
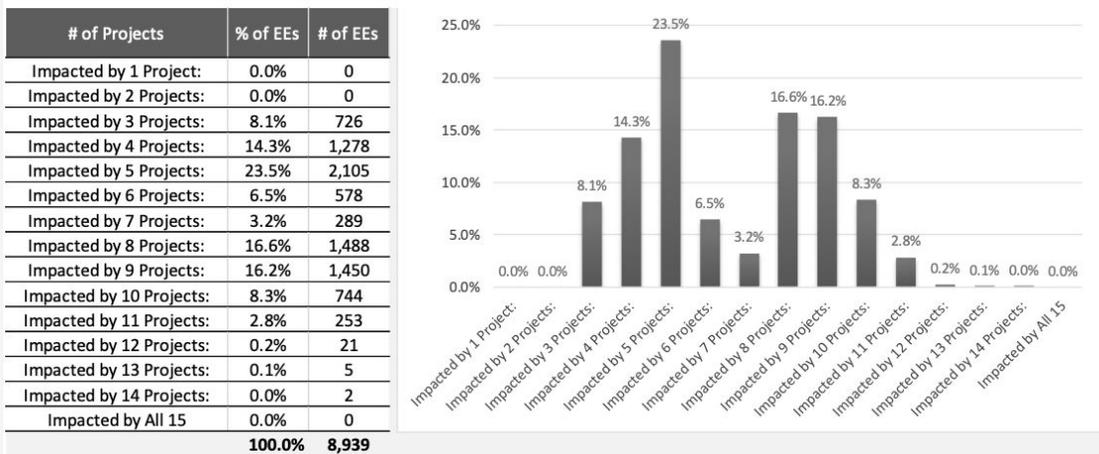
Meet The Author

Ogbe Airiodion is a former U.S. Marine and brings over 25 years of professional services experience, including 15+ years of results driven change management consulting to help clients deliver effective organization change across their organizations. He is an expert at engaging with leadership, COOs, CFOs, SVPs, VPs, and Directors, down to frontline employees to strengthen alignment and commitment and translate strategy into actionable plans that inspire employees to perform at their best.

Ogbe's OCM focus areas include digitalization with tools like Oracle AI Copilot, Dynamics 365 Copilot, and Salesforce AI. He specializes in integrations, business automations, and streamlining processes.

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Begin with a Change Saturation Assessment

Start by identifying the number of people affected by your initiative who are also impacted by other programs. This assessment will help you gauge the extent of multiple initiatives affecting individuals across your organization, including those within your own team. It's not uncommon for many people throughout your organization to be involved in and impacted by multiple large-scale initiatives, as illustrated in the assessment below.

# of Projects	% of EEs	# of EEs
Impacted by 1 Project:	0.0%	0
Impacted by 2 Projects:	0.0%	0
Impacted by 3 Projects:	8.1%	726
Impacted by 4 Projects:	14.3%	1,278
Impacted by 5 Projects:	23.5%	2,105
Impacted by 6 Projects:	6.5%	578
Impacted by 7 Projects:	3.2%	289
Impacted by 8 Projects:	16.6%	1,488
Impacted by 9 Projects:	16.2%	1,450
Impacted by 10 Projects:	8.3%	744
Impacted by 11 Projects:	2.8%	253
Impacted by 12 Projects:	0.2%	21
Impacted by 13 Projects:	0.1%	5
Impacted by 14 Projects:	0.0%	2
Impacted by All 15	0.0%	0
	100.0%	8,939

Next, assess the magnitude of saturation they are experiencing by examining the weekly commitments of each persona or job type..

Persona	# of EEs	Range of Saturation		Avg. Commitment Hours	
		From	To	From	To
Persona 1	55	Mid	High	30.7 Hours	59.9 Hours
Persona 2	626	Mid	Very High	46.9 Hours	88.6 Hours
Persona 3	54	Low	Mid	20.5 Hours	38.0 Hours
Persona 4	4,908	Mid	High	31.2 Hours	56.3 Hours
Persona 5	581	Low	Mid	21.3 Hours	37.6 Hours
Persona 5	2,574	Low	Mid	20.4 Hours	36.2 Hours

In the example above, you can see that several groups within the organization have program commitments exceeding 40 hours per week over a period of 1 year to adopt the changes. This level of commitment is neither realistic nor sustainable. It's imperative that you take proactive steps to prevent this from posing undue risk to your own transformation initiative.

Take Decisive Action to Mitigate Change Fatigue

1. **Be Realistic About What Can be Accomplished:** Conduct impact assessments to fully understand the demands placed on stakeholders. Monitor workload distribution and adjust timelines, goals, or resources as needed to ensure achievable outcomes.

2. **Simplify Communication:** Tailor communications to be clear and relevant. Use impactful subject lines and straightforward language to avoid cognitive overload.

3. **Leverage Change Champions and Committees:** Communicating through employees provides an alternative, effective messaging channel. Engaged employees can better convey messages and influence their peers.

4. **Collect Feedback:** Provide a platform for employees to share concerns and input. This helps you understand what they are facing, and they feel heard and valued.

5. **Acknowledge Saturation and Show Empathy:** Recognize the impact of change saturation in communications with employees. Express appreciation for employees' efforts and acknowledge the difficulties they face.

6. **Encourage Desired Behaviors:** Implement recognition programs to promote accountability and reward employees who effectively adapt to changes.

Promote a Coordinated Enterprise Approach to Strategic Change

A holistic change approach across an organization can be a game changer, significantly easing the burden on both leaders and employees. By reducing the workload and improving coordination, you enhance communication efficiency, eliminate redundancy, and provide clear, consistent messaging. Most importantly, a unified strategy boosts change adoption across the organization so that intended benefits are realized.

As a leader, you may not directly implement this structure yourself, but it's important to advocate for its adoption and collaborate with other leaders to drive this approach. Below are some techniques for effective coordination. Suggest, adopt, and promote these methods to support your initiative and benefit the organization as a whole.

- **Holistic Project Management.** Many organizations use a Project Management Office (PMO) Governance model to oversee projects systematically. This governance body ensures that new projects are approved and scheduled appropriately while tracking and managing existing ones to avoid overlap and saturation.

- **Enterprise-Level Control Tower.** This approach aligns, consolidates, and coordinates all initiatives, providing a unified view that significantly reduces organizational burden. Acting as a central hub, it offers clarity and control over various projects.

- **Consolidated Messaging.** Address fragmented communication by integrating messages from different initiatives whenever possible. This approach reduces the number of separate communications, streamlines information flow and lessens confusion among employees.

- **Coordinated Stakeholder Engagement.** Develop centralized solutions for direct access to frontline employees to guarantee clear and direct communication lines. This helps maintain alignment and keeps everyone informed.

- **Integration and Collaboration.** Promote program collaboration by consolidating similar initiatives. This minimizes duplication and eases the burden on employees.

- **Staggered Rollouts.** Plan the implementation of new initiatives in phases to prevent simultaneous rollouts. This gives employees time to adapt and manage their workloads more effectively.

By championing an enterprise strategy, you help create a structured, efficient, and less chaotic environment. This approach benefits the organization and helps employees manage their tasks without feeling overwhelmed.

Change How You Manage Change Fatigue

Addressing change fatigue in transformation programs requires a strategic and empathetic approach.

By simplifying communication, increasing collaboration, exploring alternative channels, and implementing holistic project management, leaders can reduce change fatigue and improve the overall effectiveness of their transformation efforts.

These strategies keep employees engaged, motivated, and capable of adapting to the changes necessary for organizational success. Embrace them to lead a successful initiative and inspire your team, making them eager and prepared to achieve exceptional results together.

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