



THE CHANGE READINESS ILLUSION: WHEN CONFIDENCE OUTPACES CAPABILITY

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Meet the Authors



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Sondra Kiss is the Managing Partner, where she brings over 20 years of experience guiding Fortune 500 companies through their most critical change initiatives. Known for her ability to frame complex challenges, define success metrics, & craft actionable, high-impact solutions. A dedicated mentor & advocate for female entrepreneurs, she is committed to empowering the next generation of leaders.

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As the Founder & CEO she is dedicated to fostering organizational change, enhancing leadership development, & improving employee experience. With over 30 years of experience in change management & organizational development, she has worked to promote employee development, belonging, & workplace culture transformation, with the goal of making work *work* for everyone.

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Dynamic Talen Partners

She partners with growth-stage, PE-backed, and founder-led companies to scale through aligned people strategy, systems, & culture that lasts — all grounded in creating business value through people. With 20 years of experience across public, private, & PE-backed environments, she brings both strategic rigor & operational agility to drive outcomes that matter.

Executive Summary

Disruptive change is moving faster than most organizations can absorb it. While change resistance gets a lot of attention, the biggest risk is not always resistance to change. More often, it is the gap between how ready people feel and how ready the workforce is to execute.

A disruptive change readiness survey conducted at the Transform 2026 conference makes that gap visible. Respondents appear more confident in their own ability to handle change than in the workforce's overall ability to deliver it.

That discrepancy is important for leaders guiding transformation because personal confidence is not the same as organizational capability. A person can feel ready while the system around them is not. A change effort can have strong buy-in and still fail if the organization lacks sufficient does not have enough practical skill depth to absorb, adapt to, and carry the change through at scale.

In a business environment where the pace of change is accelerating. Leaders are under pressure to respond faster, adapt sooner, and absorb more disruption with less time to prepare. In that setting, assuming readiness can be costly. The real question then becomes do people support the change in principle and does organization have the skill base to carry it out.

“Some of us feel transformation-ready, but systemically, we don’t have the structure or capability to manage through the change this environment demands.”

Chief People and Transformation Officer

What the Survey Found

The survey asked four direct questions about readiness for disruptive change and asked respondents to rate each using a 5-point Likert scale:

- Personal skills
- Personal mindset
- Workforce skills
- Culture readiness

The results pattern was clear. Personal readiness was stronger than organizational readiness. Respondents were more confident about their own ability to navigate disruption than about the workforce's overall skills or the organization's cultural readiness to support change. It suggests that disruptive change may not be failing at the level of intent but failing at the level of execution.

The key issue is not just willingness or mindset around change. It is capability.

The workforce skills gap is the most important finding from the survey. It suggests the challenge is not simply whether people are open to change. It is whether the organization has sufficient capability to make the change work in practice, or has built enough practical capability to make it work in daily execution.

Change is outpacing people

The pace of change has been accelerating markedly since 2019. Employees are being asked to execute in a state of constant flux. While many transformation efforts are strategically necessary, the organization may not be ready to execute well. The survey reflects that reality. People may feel personally prepared, but the workforce still lacks the skills required to deliver the change at speed.

Confidence does not close a capability gap.

The skills gap should not be treated as a side note to culture. It is a separate issue. Culture asks whether the organization will support the change. Workforce skills ask whether the organization can actually do the work of the change.

Leadership Implications

Do not confuse confidence with capability

Lesson 1:

Personal confidence is not the same as organizational readiness. A leader can have a team that feels capable and still operate within a workforce that is not fully equipped to execute the change. During transformation efforts, don't overfocus on alignment and under focus on capability. If leaders assume readiness too early, they may not discover the problem until execution slows.

Treat workforce skills as its own risk layer.

Treat workforce skills as its own risk layer

Lesson 2:

Workforce skills should be treated as a distinct management concern, not folded into culture. Do not stop at asking whether people support the change. Leaders also need to know whether the workforce has the specific skills required to deliver it. That includes the ability to adapt quickly, collaborate across functions, learn new ways of working, and make decisions under pressure. If those skills are underdeveloped, the change will be at risk. The survey suggests the skills side may be more fragile than many leaders expect.

Culture can support change, but skills make it real.

Use managers as the bridge

Lesson 3:

Managers matter more than most change plans acknowledge. They are the lever that turns strategy into action. If the workforce skills gap is the main vulnerability, managers are the people most likely to help close it. That means managers need more than a communication plan. They need practical support, clear expectations, and the ability to reinforce new behaviors in the flow of work.

What the Survey Found

Measure readiness more precisely

Lesson 4:

Leaders need a more precise view of readiness. Broad statements about being “ready for change” are not enough. Skill readiness should be assessed by role, function, and level of responsibility so leaders can see where capabilities are strong and where they are thin. Averages can hide weakness while granular measurement exposes it.

The right question is not, “Do people support the change?” It is, “Can the organization realistically execute it?”

Move from sentiment to capability

Lesson 5:

Change leadership needs better measurement. Sentiment data can tell leaders how people feel. Capability data tells them whether the organization can actually perform. If the goal is to reduce change risk, leaders need to know where human capability gaps exist before they slow execution. The earlier it becomes visible, the easier it is to address. This is especially important in large-scale change, where the cost of being wrong is high and the time to recover is short.

“Seeing it and doing it are two different things. Our leadership sees it, but our workforce isn’t prepared to execute.”

VP, Human Resources

What Leaders Can Do Next

Leaders guiding disruptive change can take **four** practical steps.

1. Separate personal readiness from organizational readiness in every change discussion.
2. Put workforce skills assessment at the center of the change strategy.
3. Understand where human risk exists within the organization.
4. Build a readiness process that looks beyond broad engagement or attitude measures and focuses on execution capability.

The strongest change strategy still fails if the workforce cannot carry it.

Focus on the root cause

The survey demonstrates people are open to change. It also reveals the harder problem of whether the workforce has the skills to make the change succeed. It suggests that failure often stems from overlooking the root cause: underestimating the human capability required to execute the change strategy. If leaders cannot see those gaps early, they will keep mistaking confidence or acceptance of change for readiness.

For organizations facing disruption, that is the risk worth watching. It is the reason to measure skill readiness before the change outruns organizational capability.



About the Survey

Conducted onsite at the Transform 2026 conference by C2IQ, Dynamic Talent Partners, and Kissinger Group. There were **50** companies surveyed, with respondent roles as follows: **16%** individual contributors, **40%** managers and **44%** executives. A Likert Scale of 1 strongly agree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree and 5 strongly agree was used.

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