



LEADERSHIP TOOL 002

VARIS CHANGE READINESS CANVAS

A practical diagnostic to assess change readiness and identify the support people need during change.



THEQUIETLEADERHQ.COM

INTRODUCTION

Change initiatives rarely fail because leaders lack ambition or good intentions. They fail because one or more of the conditions required for successful change have not been sufficiently established. The destination may be unclear, the plan incomplete, resources unavailable, people unconvinced that the effort is worthwhile, or those responsible for implementation may not yet have the skills they need.

When these gaps are overlooked, leaders can mistake activity for readiness. Meetings are held, plans are announced and implementation begins, but uncertainty, frustration and resistance quickly emerge. What appears to be a problem with people's attitudes may instead be evidence that the change itself has not been adequately prepared.

The VARIS Change Readiness Canvas provides a structured way to examine five conditions that influence whether a change is ready to move forward: Vision, Action Plan, Resources, Incentives and Skills. Each element is considered separately because strength in one area cannot fully compensate for weakness in another.

The purpose of the tool is not to guarantee that change will succeed or to remove uncertainty. It is to help leaders identify weaknesses before they become implementation problems, test their assumptions against available evidence and decide what needs strengthening before proceeding. Used throughout a change process, VARIS can also help leaders recognise when circumstances have shifted and the conditions for successful implementation need to be reviewed.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

1

VISION

Clarify the change you are trying to create and why it matters. Consider whether people understand the purpose, the desired outcome and what will be different if the change succeeds.

2

ACTION PLAN

Examine whether there is a credible route from intention to implementation. Identify the key actions, responsibilities, timescales and milestones required to move the change forward.

3

RESOURCES

Consider whether people have sufficient time, capacity, information, tools and support to implement the change. Identify any resource gaps that could undermine success.

4

INCENTIVES

Identify why people would commit to the change. Consider whether the benefits are understood, the reasons for changing are meaningful and the case for change is sufficiently clear.

5

SKILLS

Assess whether the people implementing the change have the knowledge, confidence and capability required. Identify where development, support or additional expertise may be needed.

READINESS SCALE: RATE EACH ELEMENT FROM 1 TO 5

1 ABSENT

The condition is **largely absent**, with little evidence that the requirements for successful change have been established.

2 WEAK

The condition is **partly present**, but significant gaps remain that could undermine successful implementation of the change.

3 DEVELOPING

The condition is **developing**, with some foundations established, but further work is required before implementation begins.

4 SECURE

The condition is **established** and ready to support implementation, though minor areas still require some further attention.

5 STRONG

The condition is **firmly established**, with clear evidence that it can consistently support successful implementation of the change.



A QUIET LEADER PRACTICE

Do not use the scores to confirm a decision already made. Rate each condition against evidence, invite challenge from different perspectives and focus on the weakest area. Change is rarely strengthened by ignoring the condition leaders least want to address.

READING THE SIGNALS

When change begins to struggle, the way people respond can provide clues about what may be missing. These signals are not proof of a particular problem, but they can help leaders decide what to investigate.



CONFUSION

People may struggle to explain where the change is heading, why it matters or what success looks like. Different interpretations and uncertainty may indicate that the **Vision** is not sufficiently clear or understood.

MISDIRECTION

People may be working hard, yet progress remains inconsistent or disconnected. Competing priorities and unclear responsibilities may indicate that the **Action Plan** needs clearer direction, ownership or sequencing.



FRUSTRATION

People may understand and support the change but repeatedly encounter obstacles to meaningful progress. Lack of time, capacity, information or practical support may indicate that sufficient **Resources** are not available.

RESISTANCE

People may question the value of the change or comply without genuine commitment. Reluctance to invest effort or accept disruption may indicate that the **Incentives** for changing are insufficiently compelling.



ANXIETY

People may understand the change but remain uncertain about their ability to deliver it successfully. Hesitation, avoidance or repeated dependence on reassurance may indicate that necessary **Skills** need further strengthening.



A QUIET LEADER PRACTICE

Do not label people as confused, resistant or anxious and assume you understand the cause. Treat behaviour as information. Notice the signal, remain curious about what sits behind it and investigate whether one or more conditions for successful change need strengthening.

CHANGE READINESS SNAPSHOT

Choose one specific change you are leading or considering. Describe it briefly, then assess each VARIS condition using the readiness scale from Page 3. Base your ratings on evidence rather than optimism or intention.

THE CHANGE I AM ASSESSING

What is changing, who will be affected and what outcome are you trying to achieve?

CONDITION	MY RATING	WHAT EVIDENCE SUPPORTS THIS RATING? Consider conversations, data, feedback and your own observations
 VISION	☆☆☆☆☆	
 ACTION PLAN	☆☆☆☆☆	
 RESOURCES	☆☆☆☆☆	
 INCENTIVES	☆☆☆☆☆	
 SKILLS	☆☆☆☆☆	

INITIAL DIAGNOSIS



Which condition received your lowest rating?



What evidence suggests this condition needs attention?



What might happen if you proceed without strengthening it?

WEAKEST CONDITION INVESTIGATION

Return to the condition you rated lowest on page 5. Use the prompts below to examine what is happening, whose perspective may be missing and what evidence you need before responding.



CONDITION I AM
INVESTIGATING: _____

1 WHAT ARE YOU NOTICING?

What behaviours, patterns, comments or outcomes suggest that this condition is weak?

2 WHAT MIGHT BE CAUSING IT?

What decision, assumptions or gaps may have contributed to the current situation?

3 WHOSE PERSPECTIVE IS MISSING?

Who has been affected by this change but has not yet been heard? What might they provide?

4 WHAT DO YOU STILL NEED TO KNOW?

What evidence, conversations or data would help you understand the situation better?



A QUIET LEADER PRACTICE

Do not rush from a low rating to a solution. Weak readiness is a signal to investigate, not an invitation to assume. Listen to the people closest to the change, test your interpretation against evidence and understand the cause before deciding what to do next.

STRENGTHENING READINESS

Use what you discovered on Page 6 to identify the actions most likely to strengthen readiness. Focus on causes rather than symptoms and choose actions that are proportionate, realistic and within your influence.



CONDITION I AM
STRENGTHENING: _____

1 WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

What needs to be different before this condition is strong enough to support the change?

2 WHAT ACTION WILL STRENGTHEN IT?

What practical action could address the identified cause rather than simply treating the symptoms?

3 WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED?

Who should lead, contribute, be consulted or provide support for this action to succeed?

4 WHAT COULD GET IN THE WAY?

What barriers, competing priorities or unintended consequences may prevent this from succeeding?

READINESS COMMITMENT



THE ACTION I WILL TAKE FIRST

WHO WILL OWN IT

BY WHEN



A QUIET LEADER PRACTICE

Do not try to strengthen every condition at once. Focus first on the weakness most likely to undermine the change. One well chosen action, followed through properly, is more valuable than a long list of improvements that nobody owns.

CHANGE READINESS ACTION PLAN

Turn your diagnosis into a focused plan for strengthening readiness. Record only the actions that matter most, make ownership explicit and decide what evidence will show whether readiness is improving.



CHANGE I AM
PREPARING FOR

PRIORITY ACTION What specifically will you do?	VARIS CONDITION Which condition does this action strengthen?	OWNER Who is responsible?	BY WHEN? Target date	EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS What will show this action is making a difference?
1				
2				
3				
4				



THE ACTION THAT
MATTERS MOST



WHAT I WILL STOP OR
DELAY



WHEN I WILL REVIEW
PROGRESS



A QUIET LEADER PRACTICE

An action plan is useful only when priorities are clear, ownership is explicit and progress can be observed. Keep the plan short enough to manage, review it regularly and change course when the evidence suggests your actions are not strengthening readiness.

REVIEW AND REASSESS

Return to the five VARIS conditions after taking action. Reassess each condition against current evidence, compare your ratings with the original snapshot and decide whether the change is ready to proceed.



CHANGE I AM
REASSESSING

CONDITION	ORIGINAL RATING	NEW RATING	WHAT HAS CHANGED
 VISION	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	
 ACTION PLAN	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	
 RESOURCES	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	
 INCENTIVES	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	
 SKILLS	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	

MY READINESS DECISION



PROCEED

Readiness is strong enough to move forward.



STRENGTHEN FURTHER

Some conditions will still need attention before proceeding



PAUSE AND RECONSIDER

The evidence suggests the change needs more fundamental review



ASSESS

Rate readiness



INVESTIGATE

Understand weakness



STRENGTHEN

Build readiness



PLAN

Commit to action



REASSESS

Review evidence



A QUIET LEADER PRACTICE

Reassessment is not about proving your actions worked. Return to the evidence with curiosity. If readiness remains weak, strengthen the conditions again. Good leaders do not force change forward simply because time has already been invested.