

It's time to change the way we change

Introduction

Change is everywhere.

Your 35-year-old self is likely different from your 17-year-old self. You may be different now than you were before the pandemic. You've probably even evolved in some way since yesterday.

The point is that, as humans, we are always changing.

You would think we'd be good at it by now.

So why is change so hard?

And, from a professional point of view, how can we bring lasting change to our organisations?

At Forty1, we wanted to find answers.

The focus group

We gathered change and communications professionals from around the world and asked them to share insights and experiences so we could explore how, together, we can change the way we change, for the better.

In a one-hour focus group, we created a psychologically safe space to uncover:

- What makes a change initiative succeed or fail?
- What are the essential ingredients to make change that sticks?
- How can we create change people want to be part of?

This report shares a combination of their insights, external research and our expertise on change to offer you practical guidance for your own change initiatives.

We'd like to thank the participants for their time, expertise and honesty. We couldn't have done it without them. We hope this report will help guide you to more impactful and sustainable change in your organisation.

How do people feel about the future of change?



...but they weren't confident they could get there



3.4

5
Very likely

We believe it's time
to change the way
we change – for our
businesses, our people
and ourselves.

Three priorities for lasting change

We know how important it is to get change right.

Companies that are good at it have a competitive advantage ([Prosci](#)).

However, only 34% of change initiatives succeed ([Gartner](#)) and 80% are led from the top down and don't stick ([Gartner](#)).

It's no wonder focus group participants were not confident they could achieve their vision.

We also know that change is complex.

Using input from the focus group, plus our own research and expertise, we have identified these 3 priorities to help organisations deliver lasting and impactful change:

1. Put people at the centre of change
2. Use data to drive effective decision making
3. Elevate your communications with creativity

This report will explore each of these priorities, offering expert tips and actionable solutions along the way.

Priority One

Put people at the centre of change

Put people at the centre of change

The Challenge

Change is often perceived negatively. When asked what people feel when they hear “change is coming”, participants told us:



There's no doubt that change can trigger a lot of emotions. In fact, in [Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross'](#) 5 stages of change, the first 4 are denial, anger, bargaining and depression.

Yet, people are a powerful force for positive change and the key to unlocking successful organisational transformations.

“The leaders of people-centric companies understand that it's people who make their company successful.”

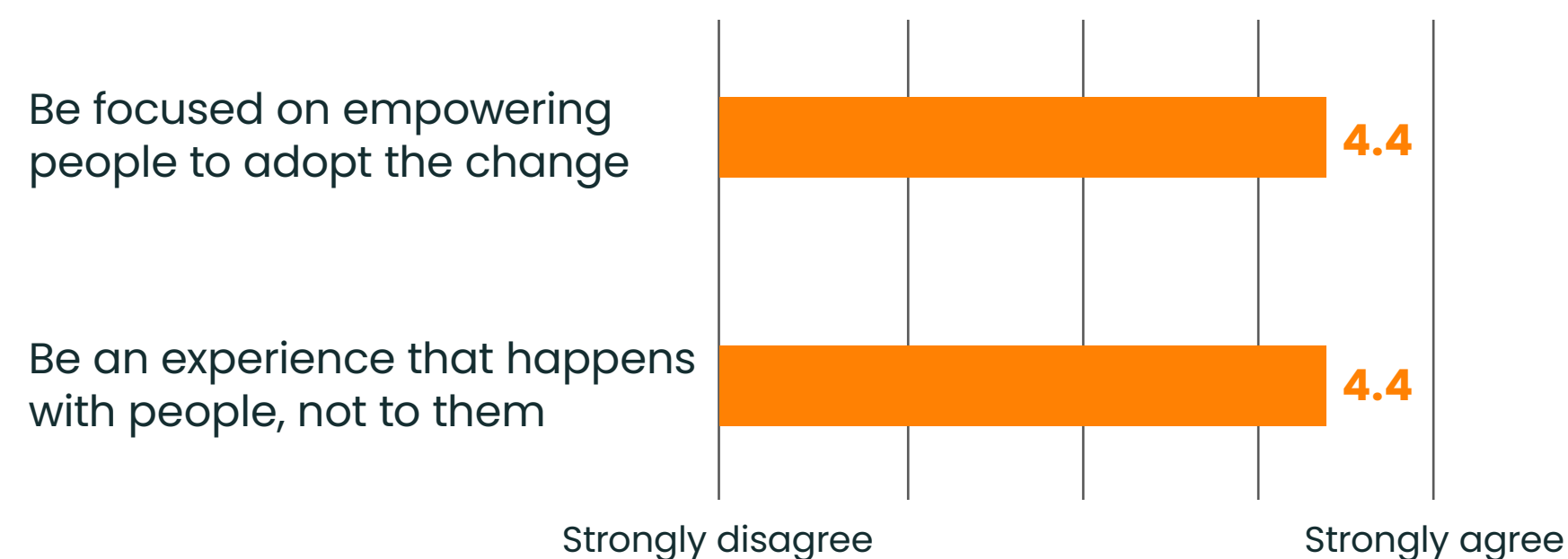
[Forbes 2019](#)

Put people at the centre of change

What we heard

Participants agreed that successful change programs must empower people to adopt the change. People should feel change is an experience that is done with them, rather than to them (average rating of 4.4 on a 1-5 scale).

To be successful, I believe great change must...



When people feel they have a stake and a voice in the change, they are more likely to support it. Conversely, when they don't, they have the power to derail it.

One focus group participant said:

"If people are not engaged and supporting the change then it simply won't happen. People are the ultimate barriers to change, no matter what processes or systems you have in place."

Put people at the centre of change

Our perspective

Behavioural science unravels the complexity of change. It explains why people find it more natural to say “no” to change than to embrace it.

They can harbour the status quo bias: “We’ve always done it this way. Why change now?”

Or their reality is skewed by the endowment effect of over valuing what they have and undervaluing what is ‘new’.

Or perhaps they’re just stuck in an old habit where they can do what they’ve always done without giving it much thought or effort.

When we understand why people say no to change, we can look for ways to engage and include them to help them lean into “yes”.

When you add behavioural science to your change expertise, you create a powerful approach that strengthens people’s readiness and guides them toward actions to make lasting change.



“The need to shift mindsets is the biggest block to successful transformations.”

McKinsey, 2019

Put people at the centre of change

Our expert tips and solutions

Listen to learn.

Don't create materials until you hear employees' voices. You'll get a trove of information and can adapt your approach to their needs. Try focus groups, interviews, surveys, working groups and Q&As. Create psychologically safe forums to have honest conversations.

Know your audience.

Try creating personas for your audiences, mapping what they'll need to know, feel and do to successfully adopt the change. Find the best methods to reach them. Are they shop-floor, front-line, field or office workers? Tailor your approach and communications accordingly.

Give them a reason.

People want line of sight into how the company will be better after the change. Connect the individual to the change vision so they know what's in it for them and where they fit.

Focus group participants said:

"People want to feel like they're in control of what's happening to them."

"People want to be part of something bigger than them, but they have to feel included."

"Focus on the why as much as the how."

Priority Two

Use data to drive effective decision making

Use data to drive effective decision making

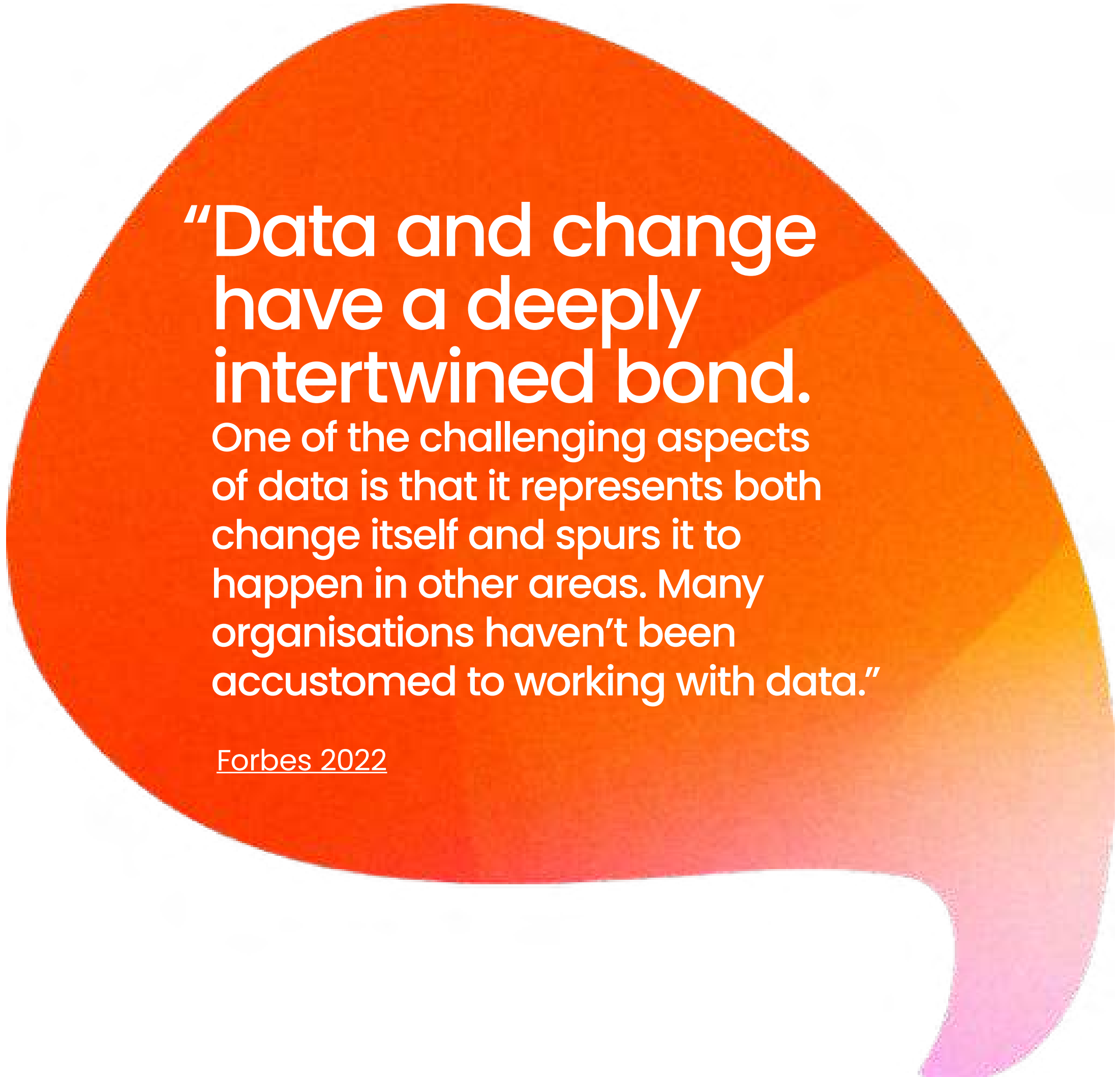
The challenge

It can be daunting to gather data about how change will be perceived, adopted and sustained. But having that data is essential for crafting focused and relevant change initiatives.

Working off assumptions of what you think will happen or relying on what's worked before is a risky way forward, like driving blindfolded.

Measuring attitudes, behaviours and feelings, and knowing what to do with that data can be tricky, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't do it.

The right data allows us to make better decisions about how to introduce change, mitigate issues, maximise impact and course correct when necessary.



“Data and change have a deeply intertwined bond. One of the challenging aspects of data is that it represents both change itself and spurs it to happen in other areas. Many organisations haven’t been accustomed to working with data.”

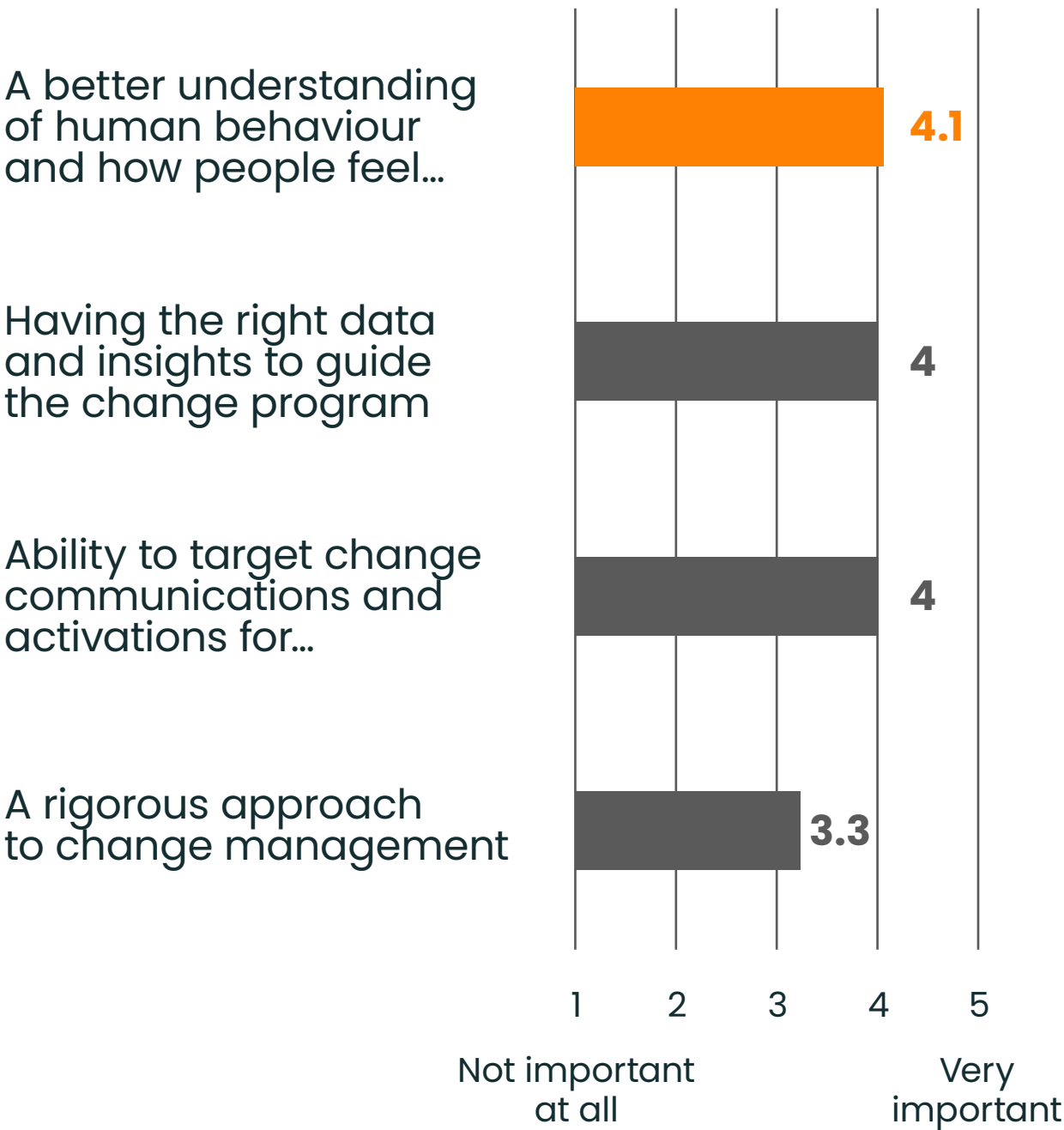
Forbes 2022

Use data to drive effective decision making

What we heard

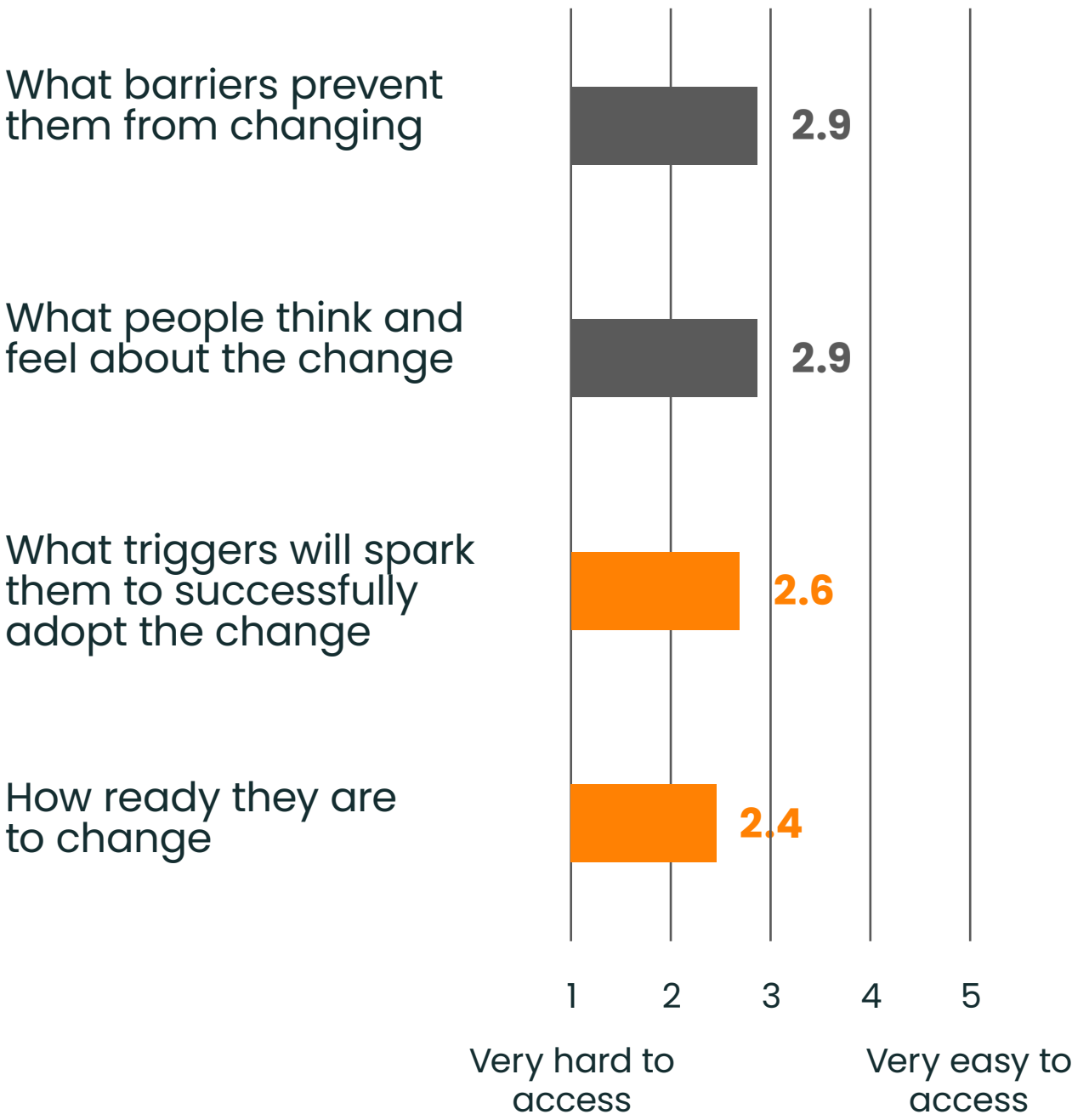
The focus group agreed that having the right data about how people are feeling about change is important.

How important are these factors in delivering change that sticks?



Yet they also said that accessing this data is difficult.

How accessible is the following information to you when leading the change?



Use data to drive effective decision making

Our perspective

In our experience, a well-defined goal for a change initiative informs the focus of our data collection. And because we understand how challenging it can be to gather informative change data, we've developed a proprietary diagnostic tool.

We apply this tool to the change goal to collect a variety of data. This includes people's perceptions of pros and cons of the change, the barriers that prevent them from meeting the change goal and what stage of change they're in at that point in time.

With that data in hand, we are equipped to create custom change programs that address their concerns and motivate them to take action.

Measuring progress is crucial to gauging adoption. The same diagnostic tool can be deployed at select timepoints to show progress, uncover gaps and risks, and make improvements as needed.

Data can be daunting but the value you get in clear, focused decision making makes it worth the effort.

Use data to drive effective decision making

Our expert tips and solutions

Define your goal.

Although change can be complex, having a clear goal sharpens the focus of your approach and defines what to measure.

Collect data early.

Get a baseline measurement against your goal as soon as possible, even if the change has already started. Try using a brief survey, a feedback group or spot polls to collect your data with minimal effort for participants.

Collect data often.

Track progress against your change goal at strategic points along the change. Use the same questions as the baseline measurement to get an accurate indication of your progress.

Bring in the professionals.

Get expert help, if needed. Not everyone can or wants to be a data whiz. Contact us to find out how our diagnostic tool can help you make better decisions and guide you toward more impactful change.

Priority Three

Elevate your communications with creativity



Elevate your communications with creativity

The challenge

Clear and timely communications create the foundation of all successful change strategies.

Change practitioners, program managers, leaders and communicators must project a unified and aligned voice in the messaging.

But even when messages are well planned and flawless, the increasingly complex and noisy communications landscape can drown them out. We need to find new and creative ways to engage the busy, often overwhelmed, audiences we must reach.

“Continual communication is a leading factor in a transformation’s success. They must be clear and consistent, be honest that you don’t have all the answers, and articulate the ‘what’s in it for me?’”

HBR 2018

Elevate your communications with creativity

“The primary reason change initiatives fail is poor communication.”

Gartner 2022

What we heard

Participants agreed that great communication is essential to successful change.

“Consistent and open communications” was the top-rated tactic for successful change, with nearly every participant strongly agreeing (4.6/5).

They also agreed/strongly agreed that including engaging, creative communications and experiences was essential to make change happen (4.2/5).

“Repeat [information] several times in different methods to be absorbed by different learner types.”

“Mix of written, video, face-to-face communications.”

“Broad blend of supporting communications tools, delivered consistently across channels and through different tactics to reach groups of employees.”

“Honest, clear explanations of what is happening, why and how.”

Elevate your communications with creativity

Our perspective

At Forty1, we understand the importance of **creative communications and experiences** that cut through the noise of a busy communications landscape.

Knowing that 70% of decision making is based on emotion and 30% on rational thought ([Gallup 2019](#)), we need to go beyond those flawless, foundational communications and think creatively to engage people emotionally and **get the attention** our change initiatives need.

The aim is to create experiences that are inspired and inspiring.

Creativity shows up in many ways: an immersive experience to preview the future state, innovative learning to instil confidence to change, an emotional story to spark connection with others, changing by doing. As Aristotle said, “For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.”

A creative approach enables engagement, retention and deeper commitment.

Elevate your communications with creativity

Our expert tips and solutions

Use the powerful combination of Stories, Leaders and Moments.

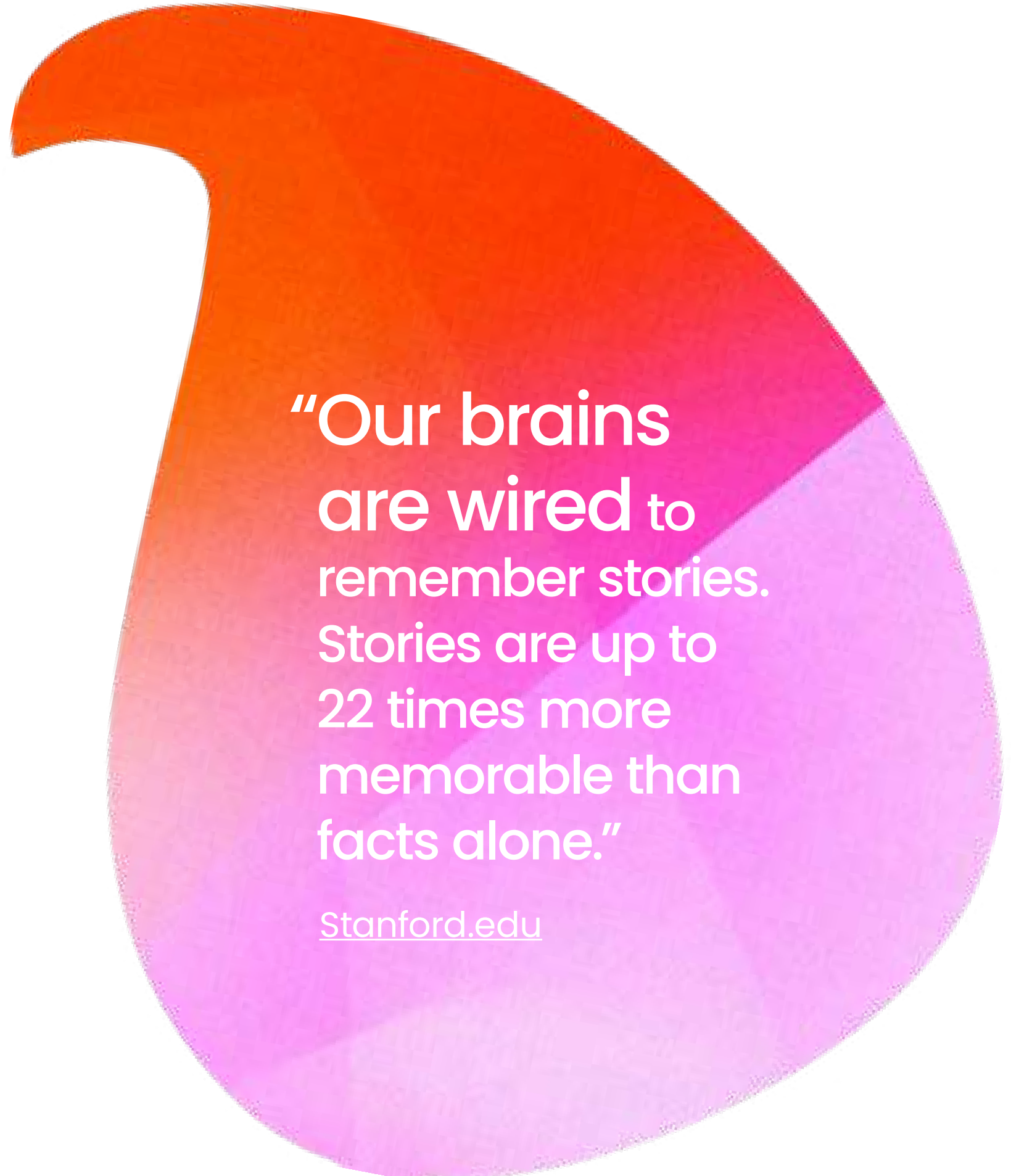
Use storytelling techniques to deliver your change narrative. Make people part of the story to show how they fit into the bigger picture. Equip leaders to model behaviours you want others to emulate. Create memorable moments that enhance your communications to create lasting change. Learn more about our Stories, Leaders and Moments framework at forty1.com.

Create change experiences.

Consider live events, immersive experiences, group activities and other interventions that will show (not just tell) what the change will look like. Experiences like these get people talking and are more likely to stick.

Challenge yourself with creativity.

At every opportunity, think outside the email, the townhall talking points, the PowerPoint toolkit. Don't forget to explore the "what ifs": What if that email was an infographic, or the townhall was an immersive hybrid event, or the toolkit was a gamified learning experience? Extend beyond traditional channels and formats to create experiences people remember.



"Our brains are wired to remember stories. Stories are up to 22 times more memorable than facts alone."

[Stanford.edu](https://stanford.edu)

Our participants also shared advice for other change and communications professionals...

We asked our participants what advice they would give to a colleague on leading successful change.

Here's what they said...

"Be clear and consistent."

"Be honest. You don't have all the answers, and that's OK. Change is a journey, often without a predefined destination."

"Be clear."

"Don't forget that the people you communicate with are often not as far in the change process as you are. So be patient!"

"Retain data or old policy materials that help draw a line before the change took place and why it took place."

"Listen to different perspectives."

"Be human."

"Be empathetic when communicating."

"Give people space and time to adapt and process."

"Focus on the why as much as the how."

"Make it relevant and be patient."

At Forty1, we harness the power
of data, behavioural science
and creativity to create the
people change experience...

How we define the people change experience

We believe effective change is participatory; it's an experience.

That's why we don't just do "change management", we create people change experiences.

Change is about cause and effect. Getting it right is a science.

We develop strategies informed by data and behavioural science.

Experience is about how change makes us feel. Getting it right is an art.
We create people change experiences that inspire lasting change.

When you leverage data, behavioural science and creativity with people at the centre, you get the people change experience.

How do we do that? Contact Forty1 to find out more...



We're here to help you change the way you change

If you would like more information on leading change using our scientific approach to behaviour and data, coupled with our expertise on people engagement and change communications, contact Carol Feinberg or Lottie Neal at [Forty1's Change Centre of Excellence](#).



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We are happy to explore how to harness data, behavioural science and creativity to deliver lasting change that people want to be part of.

Thank you for reading this report.

Use the research, expertise and practical insights within these pages to refine your approach to change. We're challenging you to think about leading change differently, through the lens of behavioural science and the possibilities of creativity.

Remember our three change priorities to deliver lasting and impactful change in your organisation:

1. Put people at the centre of change
2. Use data to drive effective decision making
3. Elevate your communications with creativity