



‘Bad egg’

Bad eggs are individuals or small groups that strongly oppose change initiatives. They act malevolently to sabotage and undermine change. Left unchecked, bad eggs significantly hinder change progress by creating a pervasive toxic environment.



**Change
Challenger** # 4

What is a 'Bad egg'



A “bad egg” in the context of change management refers to an individual or small group that strongly opposes change – so much so that they start to act malevolently – this is much more than more run-of-the-mill resistance.

Their resistance often manifests as deliberate sabotage, vocal opposition, or passive-aggressive behaviour, undermining the change initiative and potentially influencing others to adopt similar attitudes and tactics. This small but vocal minority can hinder progress and create a toxic environment discouraging broader acceptance.



EXAMPLE

“Every silver lining has a cloud”. Jan summed up Eddie’s participation in the most recent team planning session.

At first, she did her best to ignore it, but then she noticed that Eddie’s behaviour was **impacting** some of the **wider team**. Not everyone had an extreme reaction, but there were **two general schools of thought**:

1 Those who **sympathised** with Eddie’s position were being won around when Eddie started to share how these changes could lead to some less desirable changes for them personally.

2 Those who rolled their eyes had little patience with Eddie’s position. Some team members even displayed a sort of “**toxic positivity**” and seemed to disagree with Eddie no matter what he said.

Most people, though, fell somewhere in between. However, Jan tried to power through, not addressing things head-on.

How does “Bad egg” manifest



Sabotage and undermining

Taking deliberate actions to delay or disrupt the change, such as withholding crucial information or spreading misinformation.

Passive aggressive behaviour

Pretending to comply while covertly opposing or ignoring new processes.

Vocal dissent

Publicly criticising the change initiative, influencing others to resist or doubt its value.

Undermining leadership

Casting doubt on the competence or intentions of the leaders championing the change.

How does it affect change



The impact of a bad egg can be profound and detrimental to the overall change process:

Erosion of trust

Vocal criticism can build doubt, eroding confidence in the change initiative and leadership.

Lowered morale

Constant negativity dampens the enthusiasm of others, decreasing motivation and leading to frustration.

General disruption

Can undermine teams and disrupt ways of working, leading to increased frustration and diminished productivity.

Delayed implementation

Continuous resistance slows the adoption process, requiring more resources and time to achieve buy-in.

‘Toxic positivity’

People can respond to strong resistance with equally strong support for the change. This can be challenging because people can overpromise on what will happen.



Tips to mitigate the impact of a bad egg.



Identify and understand



Recognise the individuals or groups opposing the change and understand their motivations to address their concerns directly.

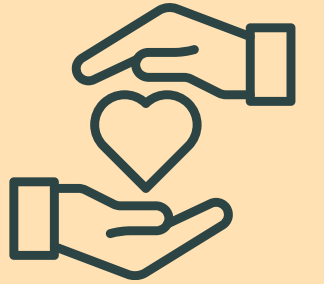
Engage constructively



Involve them in discussions early, seeking their input to give them a sense of ownership and defuse their opposition.

Offer tailored support (where appropriate)

Provide training, resources, or coaching that addresses their concerns and equips them to adapt.



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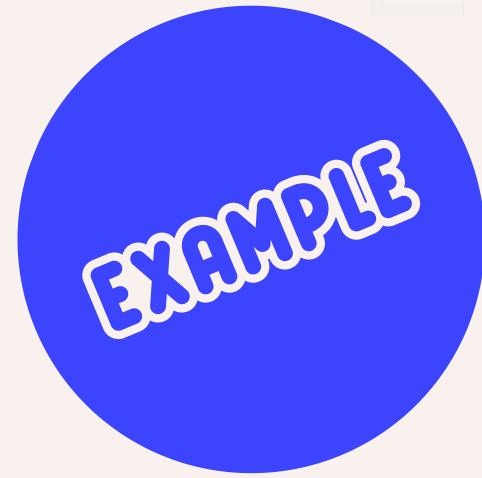
Highlight accountability

Communicate the consequences of resistance, ensuring a structure is in place to enforce accountability.



Back to Jan and Eddie





For a long time, Jan tried to push through. She did her best to ignore Eddie, appease him, or bribe him along—anything but dealing with the challenge head-on. Ultimately, things came to a head when Kate, another team member, handed her notice in—she was leaving the team.

The thing that shocked Jan most was Kate’s rationale: “Work had become mentally exhausting.” She felt trapped in a vacuum of negativity and challenge, and no matter how often it was raised, no one seemed to do anything.

Jan had to confront the issue. In this instance, one bad egg had caused rot to spread. Jan had to confront Eddie. When she did, she was initially met with someone who resisted strongly. Surprise, right? This wasn’t going to be solved in a 30-minute one-on-one.

What happened?

Over the coming weeks, Jan took time to engage with Eddie and others on the team to understand their concerns. And, whilst she couldn’t make changes to solve many of their concerns, she could be more present in addressing them. She had to lay out her expectations for engaging with the change moving forward. If people couldn’t get close to that behaviour and disagree more constructively, there would need to be further action.

So, in this instance, Jan had to communicate her expectations and follow up with consequences and accountability. Whilst Eddie’s behaviour was the initial challenge, Jan’s lack of ability to confront it head-on exacerbated the issue over the long term.



Sometimes, a bad egg has genuine concerns about the change initiative or fears about their job security. Listening empathetically and finding ways to align the change with their interests can transform them into advocates rather than adversaries.



Change is inevitable, but it doesn't have to be disruptive.

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