Checklist – Managing the Neutral Zone

- Have I done my best to normalize the neutral zone by explaining it is an uncomfortable time that (with careful attention) can be turned to everyone’s advantage?
- Have I redefined the neutral zone by choosing a new and affirmative metaphor with which to describe it?
- Have I reinforced the metaphor with professional development, policy changes, and rewards for people to keep doing their job while passing through the neutral zone?
- Am I adequately protecting people from inessential additional change during this time?
- If I can’t protect people from further changes, am I clustering and presenting the changes effectively?
- Have I created the temporary policies and procedures that we need to get us through the neutral zone?
- Have I created the temporary roles, relationships and organizational groupings that we need to get through the neutral zone?
- Have I set short-term goals and checkpoints?
- Have I set realistic output objectives?
- Have I provided the professional development that we need to deal successfully with the neutral zone?
- Have I found ways to help people feel that they still “belong” and are valued by the organization?
- Have I taken care that perks and other forms of privilege for some might be undermining the solidarity of the entire group?
- Are people willing to experiment and take risks, or do they avoid risks because they fear punishment for failure?
- Have I stepped back and taken stock of how things are going?
- Have I worked to transform losses into opportunities to try doing things in a new way?
- Am I checking to see that I am not pushing for certainty and closure when it might be better to live a little longer with uncertainty and questions?
- Am I using our time in the neutral zone to replace “bucket brigades” with integrated systems throughout the organization?

Final Questions: What actions can you take to help people deal more successfully with the neutral zone in which you currently find yourself? What can you do today to get started on this aspect of transition management?


Leadership and Coaching for Systems Change