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THE M&A CAST OF CHANGE CHARACTERS

With a merger or an acquisition, change ensues. People can show a different side of themselves when they are uncertain of the future. These ten characters can emerge in that uncertain post-deal environment. I encourage you to not judge any character but work to understand their motives. The identifying characteristics below help you understand the challenges each personality holds and the opportunities to bring them along.



The Former Rock Star

- Considered a critical talent who contributed to the company's success.
- **THE CHALLENGE** : Can struggle when the metrics for success change after the deal.
- **THE OPPORTUNITY** : Highlight ways their prior approach can be adapted or evolved.



The Great Unifier

- Seen as the smart, compassionate leaders who are well-liked in the organization.
- **THE CHALLENGE** : Can miss the political shifts happening as strategies evolve.
- **THE OPPORTUNITY** : Keep them informed and provide leadership opportunities across teams to heighten collaboration.



The Know-it-All

- Usually have an answer for everything and can be dismissive of others input.
- **THE CHALLENGE** : Can be collaboration-killers as they believe they already know the solution.
- **THE OPPORTUNITY** : Demonstrate that it's okay to not have all the answers and to work with others to find solutions.



The Know-Nothing

- Typically well-liked, but the role they play or value they provide is not immediately obvious.
- **THE CHALLENGE** : Can be privy to information they don't know is useful or may know more than they let on.
- **THE OPPORTUNITY** : Take the time to engage them as they can be a repository of valuable knowledge.



The Black Widow

- Present as allies, but are more focused on their own survival.
- **THE CHALLENGE** : They don't value others as much as they value their knowledge.
- **THE OPPORTUNITY** : Know people's true skill set and experience so others can't overplay their hand.



The Missing in Action

- Don't volunteer or lead projects and no one truly knows what they actually do.
- **THE CHALLENGE** : They hold back, waiting to see what will happen and too many of these can hinder the change initiative.
- **THE OPPORTUNITY** : Recognize the importance of their work to the overall mission as a way to engage them into action.



The Specialist

- The "subject matter expert" who is especially smart on a specific subject.
- **THE CHALLENGE** : They can be paralyzed with doubt, wondering if their expertise still has value.
- **THE OPPORTUNITY** : Their expertise is rooted in how quickly and deeply they learn a subject, not simply in what they know.



The Opportunist

- Continually gauge who is in power and flatter them to curry favor and hold their job.
- **THE CHALLENGE** : Can oversell their qualifications or put more energy into flattery than actually doing their job.
- **THE OPPORTUNITY** : Demonstrate that respect and responsibility is earned by doing the work.



The Ostrich

- Can struggle to embrace that the company is changing.
- **THE CHALLENGE** : Have a difficult time understanding how they can still contribute to the new vision.
- **THE OPPORTUNITY** : Have them reflect on what they are afraid of and the consequences of not taking action.



The Dominatrix

- Focused on execution and end-results, not consensus-building.
- **THE CHALLENGE** : Use fear to achieve their goals which can undermine success long-term as people burn-out or leave.
- **THE OPPORTUNITY** : Can play a critical role to get change set in motion so reward for being collaborative to encourage that behavior.