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EKSELENS INSIGHT · BUSINESS CHANGE

# Change saturation: how much change can your organisation absorb?

Most organisations approve change one initiative at a time and then wonder why adoption stalls. Measure the load on the people affected, and sequence accordingly.

THE EIGHT-PHASE METHOD

01 Discover
02 Diagnose
03 Design
04 Plan
05 Mobilise
06 Deliver
07 Embed
08 Optimise

**Ekselens Consulting**
ekselens.com · info@ekselens.com

**Changing how transformation is done**
The EKSELENS360 family

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Every change initiative is approved on its own merits. A new system here, a restructure there, a process redesign, a policy update, an AI rollout. Each has a business case and a sponsor. What nobody approves is the total load all of them place on the same teams at the same time.

That is how organisations reach change saturation: the point at which people can no longer absorb new ways of working, however good each individual change may be. Adoption stalls, performance dips, good people leave, and benefits that looked secure on paper never arrive.

## Why saturation is invisible at the top

Portfolio boards see initiatives. Frontline teams experience impacts. The two views rarely meet:

- each programme reports its own change impact, but nobody adds them up by team;
- go-live dates cluster around financial year-ends and contract deadlines;
- "business as usual" demands are assumed to stay constant while change is layered on top;
- the same small group of experienced staff are asked to be champions, testers and super-users for several programmes at once.

By the time saturation shows up in engagement surveys or operational performance, it is already costing money.

## Measure the load where it lands

The fix starts with a simple shift: measure change impact by the people affected, not by the project delivering it. For each team or role, build a view of:

- which initiatives affect them, and when;
- the size of each impact — from a minor process tweak to a fundamental change in how the job is done;
- the time each change will demand for training, testing and adjustment;
- the operational peaks the team already faces.

A heatmap by team and month is usually enough. It immediately shows where several significant changes land at once, and where a team has no capacity left.

## Sequence, do not just schedule

Once the load is visible, the portfolio can be shaped around it. Practical options include:

- **Re-sequencing** go-lives so that significant changes for the same team are spaced apart.
- **Bundling** related changes into a single, well-supported transition rather than several small disruptions.
- **Pausing or stopping** lower-value initiatives that compete for the same people.
- **Protecting capacity** by backfilling roles or reducing business-as-usual targets during major transitions.

These are portfolio decisions, not programme decisions. They need a forum with the authority to make trade-offs across initiatives.

## Make adoption, not go-live, the finish line

Saturation is worst where programmes measure success by go-live. If a programme is closed the week after launch, the adoption effort — and the impact on the people involved — is invisible. Define success as sustained adoption: people using the new way of working, at the expected level, a set period after go-live. That changes how programmes plan their support and how the portfolio judges capacity.

## Listen to the early signals

Saturation gives warning signs before it shows up in results:

- rising sickness absence or turnover in heavily affected teams;
- declining attendance at training and engagement sessions;
- growing workarounds and reversion to old processes;
- the same concerns raised repeatedly across different programmes.

Build these signals into portfolio reporting alongside schedule and budget. They are leading indicators of whether benefits will be realised.

## A practical first step

Take the next six months of planned go-lives across the portfolio. Map each one to the teams it affects and estimate the size of the impact. Most organisations find at least

one team facing several significant changes in the same quarter. Re-sequencing just one of those changes is often the cheapest benefit-protection action available — and it starts a conversation about capacity that every portfolio needs to have.

## Want to talk this through?

Book a 45-minute discovery conversation. Bring one challenge, leave with three prioritised next steps — written up within 24 hours.

**ekselens.com/contact**
info@ekselens.com
+44 (0) 20 7874 7217

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