Leadership Worksheet – Risk to Change Canvas

Use this canvas to map out potential obstacles and unlock practical next steps for change.

Instructions

For a specific change initiative or transformation effort, reflect on each risk dimension. Write brief, specific notes in each section. Use the guiding questions to prompt your thinking. Once complete, highlight the area with the greatest tension, and consider targeted actions to reduce risk or increase engagement.

1. Complexity (Is this understandable?)

"I don't get it."

Guiding Questions:

- What level of complexity will this change involve (Use the Cynefin Framework)?

- Is the change explained clearly, or does it feel abstract?

- Can people grasp how it fits into their day-to-day work?

- Are there confusing elements, jargon, or contradictions?

- What's making this feel complex?

- Can we simplify the message or process? Should we? If we can't, how can we manage the complexity?

2. Incompatibility (Does this feel aligned?)

"This isn't how we do things here."

Guiding Questions:

- Does the change align with current habits, values, and culture?

- Is there a mismatch with team identity or work rhythms?

- Is it challenging sacred cows or invisible / unwritten rules?

- Where do we see value clashes or friction?

- How might we reframe the change as an extension of existing norms?

3. Observability (Can I see it working?)

"Nobody else is doing this."

Guiding Questions:

- Are there visible examples or role models demonstrating the change?

- Is success easy to notice or measure?

- Are people hearing stories of progress?

- What's currently invisible that needs to be seen?

- How could we surface wins, case studies or early adopters?

4. Trialability (Can I try this safely?)

"What if this goes wrong?"

Guiding Questions:

- Can people test the change on a small scale first?

- Are the consequences of failure low and recoverable?

- Is there permission to experiment?

- Where does fear or exposure block experimentation?

- What's one 'safe-to-fail' experiment we could offer?

Next Steps Summary

- **Which of the four risk areas feels most urgent to address?**
  Highlight one: Complexity / Incompatibility / Observability / Trialability

- **What one small action could you take this week to reduce that risk?**
  Write here:

Do you want help interpreting your canvas or designing interventions?
Let's talk.