

# Change Management for Leaders and Managers

A guide to managing change in organisations

Andy Turnbull

# BUSINESS



ANDY TURNBULL

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# **CHANGE MANAGEMENT FOR LEADERS AND MANAGERS**

A GUIDE TO MANAGING  
CHANGE IN ORGANISATIONS

Change Management for Leaders and Managers:  
A guide to managing change in organisations  
1<sup>st</sup> edition  
© 2018 Andy Turnbull & [bookboon.com](http://bookboon.com)  
ISBN 978-87-403-2211-8

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The advertisement features a black header with the CMO Inspired Conference logo on the left, which consists of a green speech bubble containing the letters 'CMO'. To the right of the logo, the text reads 'INSPIRED CONFERENCE' in large white letters, followed by '25 OCTOBER | DE VERE BEAUMONT ESTATE | OLD WINDSOR UK' in smaller white letters. Below the header is a photograph of a large, white, classical-style building with a fountain in the foreground. At the bottom of the advertisement is a collage of four images: a panel discussion on a stage, a woman speaking into a microphone, a large audience seated in a hall, and a man presenting at a podium. Below the collage, the text 'Join Over 100 Chief Marketing Officers & Digital Innovators' is written in green.

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andy Turnbull is an executive coach and business consultant, having spent well over 15 years in various senior management and leadership roles within national and international organisations. He has instigated, led and managed change in a variety of situations.

He has managed strategic change in a global context, working across continents, cultures and time zones. He has managed change in complex and challenging environments, working with multiple stakeholders who had conflicting interests. He has restructured teams and functions, introduced new approaches and concepts, and piloted new schemes. As a finance director he implemented many new systems, processes and procedures both in the finance function and across the wider organisation.

He now particularly works with managers and leaders who are seeking to change and improve their business and who wish to develop their own capacity to lead and manage change more effectively.

This book sets out the key themes, challenges and underlying concepts of change management. It includes the key theories of change; the common challenges and mistakes made during a process of change, and how to avoid them; and sets out some useful tools and practical approaches to use when implementing change.

In effect this is the guidebook he wished he had had alongside him through all the many change projects and programmes he has been involved in!

For additional change management resources and tools visit [www.andy-turnbull.com/change-management](http://www.andy-turnbull.com/change-management)

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# **SECTION 1 - UNDERSTANDING CHANGE**

# 1 WHAT IS CHANGE?

## 1.1 WHAT IS ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE?

Anybody who works in an organisation will at some point be involved in organisational change. You will either be on the receiving end of change, or you will be tasked with creating and implementing the change. They say that the only certainty in life is change – and never was that truer than in organisations.

This book sets out to give you a good understanding of the main issues involved in change. You may be an individual confused by the change programme that is happening at work, or you might be a manager who is being asked to be involved in a change management programme for the first time, or you may be in a leadership position looking for some ideas on your role and how to lead change effectively.

Change management is the process of taking an organisation from where it is, to where it wants to be.

For the purposes of this book, change management is more focused on the process of change rather than the process of determining what the end result should look like. A number of things could be driving the need for change, such as:

- a strategic review
- a drive to cut costs
- restructuring around a new system
- restructuring for expansion and growth
- restructuring for new products
- restructuring for geographic reasons
- or just to give the Chief Executive a way to make an impact!

The reasons and causes of change in organisations are many and varied, but they all result in the same thing: the need for the careful planning and management of change.

## 1.2 WHY MANAGE CHANGE?

An organisation is an intricate web of people, systems, buildings, processes, cultures, and internal structures, along with competition for things like resources, recognition and power. Organisations are complex creations and left to their own devices they are unlikely to deliver the expected outcome of a process of change because of all the many moving parts. Change needs to be managed if the desired end result is to be achieved.

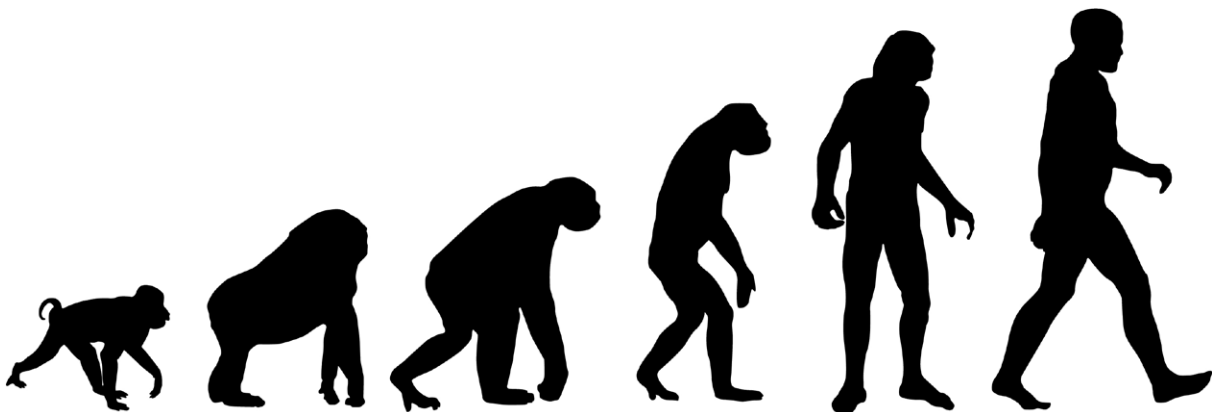
At the best of times, when organisations are running smoothly, people know what they are doing, the systems work, the processes are efficient, resources are allocated in the most profitable way and all the component parts work together like cogs in a finely tuned Swiss clock. However most organisations are always in a state of *becoming* better rather than actually *arriving* at this perfect state. Even when organisations are operating well, they do so because things are working together: the leadership and management is effective, the systems are controlled, processes are reviewed, revised and monitored, and line managers work closely with their teams.

During a time of change, many of the things that were once certain, known and well-practiced, suddenly become uncertain, novel and experimental. Change needs to be managed if it is to be successful, done efficiently and implemented effectively.

So in answer to the question can change be managed? The answer is probably “only just!” Experience with many organisations shows that change management is essential in any change process – even well-managed change processes end up with additional complications and unforeseen consequences. Research tends to show that the majority of change programmes do not fully deliver the intended change - the chance of failure seems to be quite high!

### 1.3 WHY CHANGE?

Any living organism needs to change in order to survive. The cells in a human body are constantly being replenished and renewed. From generation to generation DNA is mixed together to create a new generation with a unique DNA profile. Evolution understands that living creatures need to change and adapt in order to survive and thrive.



Organisations are in a very similar situation. Even an organisation that is not going through a change process is still changing. People are always joining and leaving, new customers arrive and old customers choose to go elsewhere. Organisations exist in a dynamic business environment. Even when they are stationary they are moving. Change is happening all the time.

A whole variety of internal and external forces are working on the organisation, creating a wide range of pressures. These pressures might build up over time and whilst not significant individually, they might build up and suddenly require a significant response from the organisation - a step-change in one or more areas. Change management is more about a co-ordinated programme of deliberate significant change rather than just the small random ongoing changes which are happening all the time.

Change is the only way to survive in a turbulent world which is volatile, uncertain, challenging and ambiguous. An organisation needs to change not to respond to the situation of yesterday or today but ideally to respond to the *anticipated* situation and environment of tomorrow. Change processes can fail simply because the amount of time it takes to plan and implement an effective, comprehensive change process means that the environment to which it is planning to adapt, has itself already changed!

One of the main drivers of change is the recognition that the world is volatile and fast moving. As it will not be possible to predict what the future holds or where the trend will lead, a strategic decision to have a flexible and adaptive organisation may be the main driver for change, allowing the organisation to adapt more quickly.

As well as a positive end result, a change process can be a positive experience in itself. One of the central features of a change management process is that a team develops. A number of senior people need to come together to collaborate, in order to realise a shared goal. The main difference between a *group* of people and a *team* of people is having a shared purpose.

A change management team usually includes a number of different disciplines. Drawing together people from across the organisation that do not normally work closely together. In this way a change management process opens up new lines of communication across the organisation and can create a greater sense of community and collaboration. These improved relationships can produce positive benefits even after the change programme has ended.

Change also provides individuals with opportunities to grow, develop and learn new things. In particular it requires people to consciously build an effective professional working relationship with others very quickly. These others are likely to have different backgrounds and different perspectives and this has the potential to be a great crucible for personal growth.

## **1.4 THE WHO'S WHO OF CHANGE**

There are usually a number of different people involved in organisational change. Most of these will be familiar to you, but others less so. Those that are familiar may have a different and specific part to play during a change.

### **1.4.1 LEADERS**

Senior leaders are the people who will (usually) have made the decision to undertake a programme of change. They will have seen the different forces acting on the organisation and taken a strategic decision to do something different. Whilst they may not understand all the details of what needs to happen, they understand the overall reason for it and can sell that 'vision' to others. We will explore the central role of leaders in change processes later in the book.

### **1.4.2 HUMAN RESOURCES (HR)**

The HR team will be focused on ensuring that the process of change complies with all the legislation, company policies and best practice to ensure that the people aspects of the change are managed appropriately.

### **1.4.3 ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (OD)**

The OD function may be an internal team, or an external OD consultant. They may be devising a plan to implement a programme of change, or they may be just there to give advice. They will be working closely with HR and with the leadership team to ensure that the change is successful.

### **1.4.4 CHANGE PROGRAMME TEAM**

This is a team of leaders, managers, heads of department, technical specialists, project managers and others who are pulled together into a team for the duration of the change process. Each person has their own defined role and responsibility. It is this team that will coordinate all the many different activities so that they work in the right way at the right time.

### **1.4.5 CHANGE CHAMPIONS**

These are individuals spread throughout the organisation who have gained a deeper understanding of the reasons for change and the vision set out by the leaders. They are there to share the message more widely with colleagues, to be able to answer questions and to feedback to the change management team any issues or concerns. We will explore the significance of change champions later in the book.

### **1.4.6 WIDER STAFF**

Everyone else in the organisation is potentially on the receiving end of the change process! For change to be successful these people need to understand their place in the process, what they need to do when, and what is important.

### **1.4.7 MIDDLE MANAGERS**

For a change programme to succeed the middle management – i.e. those people that have direct line management of the teams that perform the functions of the organisation – need to have “bought into” the change, as they are the main conduit through which change will be actioned.

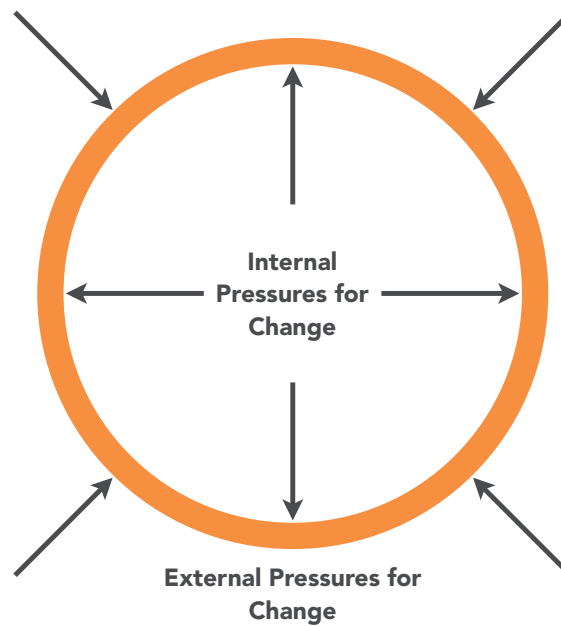
## 2 COMPONENTS OF CHANGE

Although every change process is unique, there are some recurring components that are worth exploring. In this chapter we look at typical drivers, various ways of looking at change in organisations and the typical risks that need to be managed.

### 2.1 DRIVERS OF CHANGE

There are many drivers or forces which create the pressure for change. These can be external or internal and could include:

- **Technology** – computers, artificial intelligence and robots and constantly developing, changing and becoming more powerful. Failing to adapt to these changes may put an organisation at a competitive disadvantage. Implementing new technology can create new possibilities enabling the organisation to cut costs and be more efficient or requiring it to restructure.
- **Business cycle** – there are natural economic cycles which create different pressures at different points in the cycle, for example an unexpected increase in interest rates for a company with high levels of borrowing may lead to a pressure to cut costs, whilst an increase in inflation may enable prices to be put up creating the resources to further grow the business.
- **Social trends** – it is well documented that different generations have different priorities and concerns. As time goes on, the older generations retire and the new generations enter the workforce. This can create new pressures for change, such as more flexible working conditions, more flexible structures and a greater appetite for technological change.
- **Supply-side** – sudden changes to the supply-side of an economy can create pressures for change. For example limits on the supply of resources such as oil or raw materials, or price increases due to currency fluctuations, or reductions in the availability of skilled labour due to a change in immigration policy. These may require a variety of responses, such as a change in where goods are manufactured, or the way they are manufactured.



**Figure 1** - Internal and external pressures for change

There are some pressures which affect many or all organisations and this results in some noticeable trends in the changes that are taking place. Organisations have generally been getting flatter, meaning there is less hierarchy with fewer levels. Organisations also try to streamline themselves to cut out waste. Customers now expect a more seamless service which often means a pressure to create more joined-up processes internally.

There are also certain megatrends which have been happening decade upon decade which create significant pressures for change.

- Globalisation means that products and services can be purchased all across the world and labour and capital can move much more freely than in the past.
- Rapid technological change and expanding scientific knowledge means there are constantly new ways of doing things.
- Disruptive business models, brought about by rapid technological change, are creating huge shocks to once stable industries.
- An increasingly connected world means that products and services have a shorter lifespan.
- Improved technology and communication means that people find out about new and innovative products and services much more quickly.
- Changes in the workforce, particularly generational changes with different values and priorities requires a reassessment of job roles and management approaches.

The pressures for change are always there, however there will come a point where the severity of those pressures, a particular combination of pressures, a change in awareness and perception of those pressures or an impending crisis requires a process of change to be initiated. There will then be plenty of opposing pressures which resist the proposed changes. Understanding them and how to deal with them forms a large part of change management – and much of the rest of this book.

## 2.2 DIMENSIONS OF CHANGE

Organisations are complex creations that are made up of a number of different elements. One, some or all of the elements may be changing at once and the elements that are changing also have an impact on the other elements of the organisation. As a consequence change usually happens in multiple dimensions.

We will briefly explore two models of an organisation to illustrate the potential complexity and to use as a practical tool when planning for and considering the impact of a proposed organisational change.

### 2.2.1 MINTZBERG'S FIVE STRUCTURES

In 1979 Henry Mintzberg suggested that all organisations have five basic elements:

- **Strategic apex** - the people responsible for the direction of the organisation
- **Operating core** - the majority of the staff who are delivering the product or service
- **Middle line managers** - the managers who are between the apex and the core
- **Technostructure** - the technical experts who design processes and workflow, for example engineers and accountants
- **Support staff** - those working in all the functions that support the other operations e.g. research and public affairs

At its simplest there are three main elements – the strategic apex giving direction, the operating core doing the work and the middle line managers who do the detailed planning, prioritise resources, allocate tasks and monitor activities. As organisations grow there is a need for the two other elements to be added: technostructure and support staff.

Change could happen across all of these five elements and changing any one of them could affect the others in different ways as each of them are inter-related.

## 2.2.2 MCKINSEY 7S FRAMEWORK

It can be tempting to think that organisational change is really about changing the structure of an organisation – after all it is easy to draw an organogram as it is now and another one for the desired state. But organisations are more than just structure. Tom Peters, a business consultant working for McKinsey, said that structure is not organisation: just as a picture of a pipe is not a pipe, so an organisation chart is not the organisation, but just a picture. Assuming that organisational changes are about changing the structure and nothing more is a mistake that many people make - and it's a very expensive one! Changing the structure without paying attention to all the elements of an organisation will mean that the change does not have the benefits that were expected.

To counter the idea that an organisation is nothing more than a structure, Tom Peters and his colleague Robert Waterman, came up with the “7S Framework” which identified an organisation as having seven key elements:

- **Shared values**
- **Strategy**
- **Systems**
- **Structure**
- **Style**
- **Skills**
- **Staff**

It's worth noting that although structure is listed there, it is only one of seven elements. It is also vital to understand that all of these elements are interlinked. This is a helpful insight into why organisational change is so complex and requires managing. Changing any one of those elements has a knock on effect to some and probably all of the other elements. Attention needs to be given to each of these 7 elements when considering the likely impact of the proposed change.

They also identified that some of the seven items are **hard** elements and some are **soft** elements.

The so-called hard elements are strategy, structure and systems. They are the “concrete” parts of the organisation. The soft elements are staff, skills, style and shared values. These are the more intangible and are thought of as soft.

However as Peters and Waterman pointed out, “soft is hard and hard is soft” – meaning that the softer elements of your organisation (staff, skills, style and shared values) are really the hard bedrock of it, upon which everything else is built.

It is tempting just to change the three hard elements as these are more visible and will probably be the easier ones to change. However a change process that focuses only on the hard elements such as strategy and structure, will fail because it does not take account of the softer elements such as staff and shared values.

Peter Drucker, another management thinker, made much the same point in the one neat phrase (that has been attributed to him) “culture eats strategy for breakfast”. He is saying that culture, a “soft” element is more powerful than strategy, a “hard” element.

### 2.2.3 CENTRALISATION VERSUS DECENTRALISATION

Another dimension of change is where decision-making power lies. A recurring theme of change is whether power should be centralised or decentralised. It can be thought of as an invisible structure of power distribution. Organisations seem to go in phases of centralisation followed by phases of decentralisation.

Centralisation means bringing power back to the centre (or the top). It means that local managers have very little autonomy. It is likely to provide greater control and greater specialisation and result in a more uniform approach to operations, processes and customer service. It is also likely to be slower at making decisions as they have to go along the chain of command for consideration. Those decisions are also likely to be less well suited to the local environment because of the inevitable limitations of knowledge and understanding at the centre.

Decentralisation pushes decision-making away from the centre (or the top) down and out to local managers. This can lead to faster decisions that are appropriate to the local situation. Local managers will start feeling more empowered and have a greater level of autonomy. The leadership at the centre can then spend the additional decision-making time on strategic issues rather than operational detail.

The success of either of these approaches depends on a variety of factors which could include how complex the organisation is, how big it is, how geographically dispersed it is and the availability and training of skilled personnel who can deal with the autonomy effectively.

In the book “In Search Of Excellence”, Peters and Waterman highlighted the idea of **tight-loose properties**. They suggested that successful companies were both centralised and decentralised in different ways. They held some aspects very tightly i.e. they were highly centralised, whilst other aspects they could delegate and so these would be decentralised because this enabled an improvement to the organisation’s overall performance. For example this could involve holding all aspects of the brand very tightly at the centre (a tight property), regulating how it can be used and what it stands for, whilst allowing the delivery of the service to be adjusted to suit the needs of the local environment at the discretion of local management (a loose property).

There are many different ways to structure an organisation and therefore many different ways to change it. The key thing is that the organisation needs to change and adapt to its environment so that it can best deliver the products and services to its customers on a profitable and sustainable basis. This means paying attention to all the parts of the organisation that will be affected by the change.

## 2.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR RISK

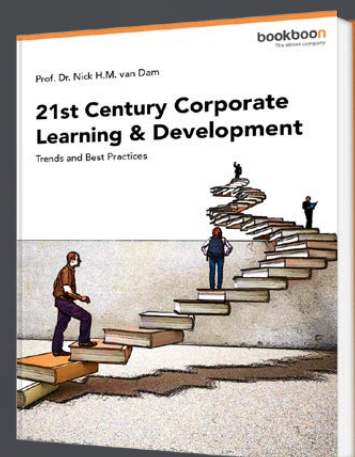
### 2.3.1 BUSINESS RISKS

Much of the literature on organisational change suggests that the majority of change initiatives fail and there is a wide range of reasons for that. Organisational change needs to be managed because it comes with significant risks. Indeed the first risk is that the proposed changes will lead to a worse outcome than the current situation! So before embarking on the change process it is worth clarifying how the proposed changes will actually result in a better performing organisation - that it properly addresses the identified business risks.

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Assuming that the proposed change actually addresses the underlying issues that the organisation is facing - rather than merely treating the symptoms - then the proposed end state should be a more positive and productive one. The risks then focus around implementation and management of the change process itself.



### 2.3.2 IMPLEMENTATION RISKS

Some common risks when implementing change are:

- drop in performance during the change process
- drop in morale during the change process
- increase in staff turnover as the change process prompts people to re-evaluate their place in the organisation
- poor implementation which leads to confusion, delays and costs overruns
- staff no longer fit well into their roles leading to inefficient use of resources
- loss of key customers as a result of problems with implementation
- a prolonged internal focus prevents the organisation from noticing and taking advantage of external opportunities.

The impact of these risks can be many and varied and will need to be mapped out using a risk framework, identifying the key risks, the likely impact and the actions to mitigate those risks (i.e. the actions that will be taken to minimise the impact of those risks or even prevent them occurring).

### 2.3.3 RISKS OF DELAY

If the organisation is risk averse, or has a short time horizon, it may be unwilling to see a short-term drop in performance in the expectation of a longer-term improvement. In this situation a change process could be delayed indefinitely. However there comes a point where change is the *only* option because the pressures arising from the internal and external forces become so great that change is inevitable.

Having avoided the risks of change a greater risk may have emerged - the risk of delay. Leaving change this late may mean that the organisation has already become obsolete and no longer has the time needed to change and adapt.

### 2.3.4 CHANGE FATIGUE

Too much change however can also bring with it a significant risk – that of change fatigue. Change fatigue occurs in staff when too many changes have been pushed through too quickly.

Too many changes means that people are overloaded with change, they cannot process all the new requirements, so they begin making mistakes and chaos follows. Old systems will not have been fully dismantled and the new systems will have been implemented incorrectly or incompletely. Giving people too much to process and learn all at the same time is likely to be noticeable very quickly as confusion and chaos leads to a rapid loss of performance. It is likely that additional resource is required to put things right.

Changes implemented too quickly can also cause change fatigue. Too quickly means that there is no recovery time and no time for one change to become internalised and normalised. No one gets “on top of” the new ways of doing things because not enough time has been allowed for it. This can lead to a much longer term drop in performance as it is less obvious to see. Although things are working, people are tired, they haven’t built up the required level of skill and expertise and new processes have not been refined and optimised.

### 2.3.5 CYNICISM

Closely linked to change fatigue is cynicism. Those who have been through poor change processes or change initiatives that they perceive to have been unsuccessful will understandably mean that they will be wary of any new changes proposed and skeptical that they will be successful or have the desired results. They are likely to resist another change when there is a track record of failure.

So to minimise these risks:

- don't change too much at the same time
- give enough time for people to learn and to bed in the new ways of doing things
- ensure that successful changes are well publicised
- ensure that poorly-handled changes are reviewed and learned from.

## 3 PEOPLE AND CHANGE

### 3.1 UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE

#### 3.1.1 WHEN PEOPLE CHANGE

The psychologist, Adrian Furnham, in his book, “The Psychology of Behaviour at Work”, says that “individuals don’t change themselves; they are changed by others.” He goes on to say that people are more likely to accept change when:

- they understand what it’s about and don’t feel threatened
- they have had a hand in creating the change
- the organisation has a track record of successful change
- there is something in it for them, such as a reduced work load
- the outcome is reasonably certain
- they have had a hand in planning what will be implemented
- the leadership of the organisation is visibly supportive of the change.

Individuals will have got used to a certain way of working, a certain way of doing things and are thinking “this is how we always do things, why do we need to change?”

This is where the vision of the leadership needs to be communicated clearly to obtain what is often called “buy-in” from the staff. Individuals will need to *stop* doing what they’ve always done and to *start* doing something new and different, fully establish that change, and then set that new way of working as the new normal pattern.

#### 3.1.2 PEOPLE AND POWER

Change can affect individuals in different ways - and their positions of power are an important consideration.

Senior leaders, or owner-managers in a smaller business, have a significant position of power and authority and so the ability for the organisation to change is significantly influenced by the attitude of these individuals to change. So leaders who enjoy change are likely to initiate change projects, whilst those that prefer stability and continuity will tend to be less likely to initiate change.

An individual in a position of power who gains personal satisfaction and self-esteem from that position, is unlikely to be willing to move to a more decentralised decision-making structure. Individual leaders are much more likely to be open to change when they are primarily focused on the aims and objectives of the organisation rather than consolidating their own position. So, for example, senior leaders in a not-for-profit organisation who are there because of their commitment to the cause, have the potential to be more willing to give away power and authority, if they can see that it would help further the aims and objectives of the organisation. Contrast that with an owner-manager who started their own business - particularly when motivated by reasons of autonomy and control – they are more likely to want to keep themselves at the heart of the organisation and maintain a more centralised structure.

### **3.1.3 PEOPLE IN BUREAUCRACIES**

Highly bureaucratic organisations with multiple levels of management hierarchy may find change very difficult.

Firstly it is difficult for those at the top to recognise the need for change because the multiple levels of hierarchy create a distance between themselves and the operational reality on the shop floor. They are also likely to be insulated from direct feedback from customers in the marketplace.

Secondly, when it comes to implementing the proposed change, there are many more levels of management to persuade which it will be important to do as they are likely to be able to impede change.

Thirdly, if the proposed change is about delayering, then managers are likely to defend against the loss of the various tiers of management that they worked so hard to climb up through.

### **3.1.4 PEOPLE AND PROFESSIONS**

Different industries and professions will also adapt to change at different paces – a highly mechanised factory-based business is more likely to change simply because the availability of new technology presents the possibility of driving down costs, coupled with the fact that their competitors will be adopting the technology to create a competitive edge.

Contrast that with a knowledge-based profession or business - these are more dependent on the knowledge, skills and experience of the individual professionals. They are insulated from pressures created by new technology as it is not central to their business. They are also well protected from competition because of the barriers to entry into the market - for example it takes many years for a lawyer to be trained. As such the professions are not used to managing change and are not geared up for rapid change in the way that other industries have to be. Having said that, the rise of artificial intelligence will create technological pressures to change in knowledge-based professions too.

### 3.2 CAUSES OF STRESS

Many people in an organisation are likely to experience some level of stress during a period of change. The things which were once certain become uncertain and the future that they thought was clear becomes unclear. Even in a stable organisation people can feel stress at work - and during a time of change these stresses can be compounded and exacerbated.



There are a variety of issues in an organisation which typically cause people stress. Being aware of them will help minimise or avoid them when planning a programme of change and so increase the chances of a successful implementation. We will explore a few of the key stressors.

### **3.2.1 ROLE CONFLICT**

Where someone is performing more than one role and there is a conflict between them, or there are conflicting demands within one job, this can be a cause of stress. During a time of change it is quite likely that the job role is going to change and it could be that any existing role conflict is intensified or a new set of conflicting demands are introduced.

### **3.2.2 ROLE AMBIGUITY**

This arises from an uncertainty about what exactly is expected. It will almost certainly be exacerbated during a time of change when new things are introduced. Even if a job description is well written, there can be some ambiguity about what it means in practice. If the job description has been written by the manager and the manager has a limited understanding of the detail, then the new job description may have a significant amount of ambiguity included. It may also be that some of the old ways of working that were never fully documented or understood get swept away in the change, even though the job description itself stays the same.

### **3.2.3 OVERLOAD AND UNDERLOAD**

It is likely that during a time of change there will be extra work required. The existing work still needs to be done, some new tasks may need to be added or some existing tasks may need to be transferred to somebody else. Either way there will be an increased workload and a likely cause of stress.

It is also possible that there is an underload during a time of change as work is taken away from one person or team, or is even stopped completely which creates a gap before the new role becomes fully clear. As a result staff can feel undervalued and uncertain about their role and future.

### **3.2.4 EXTRA RESPONSIBILITY**

During a time of change some staff may have the opportunity to become part of the change management process - maybe joining a change team or becoming a champion. This extra work, whilst exciting, can also lead to feelings of stress. It may be the individual's first experience of taking on responsibility for other people or performing any sort of management role.

### 3.2.5 LACK OF PARTICIPATION

Organisational change is often driven from the top and even in the most participative of organisations the change is probably initiated at the top. The result can be that people can feel that the change is being done *to them* rather than *with them* as they have had no chance to be involved in the decisions being made. This is perhaps particularly important for managers, who are used to planning and making decisions, and may expect to be consulted.

## 3.3 IMPACT ON TEAMS

When considering people and change in organisations it is important not just to consider them as individuals, but also as teams. A change which affects a team or creates new teams will inevitably have an impact on performance.

When new teams form they famously go through Tuckman's four stages of team formation. These are **forming**, **storming**, **norming** and **performing**. Whilst we don't need to go into those four stages in detail here, it is worth noting that there are three stages to go through before the team is actually performing as required.

During any change management process that affects teams or creates new teams, some form of teambuilding process or activity will be useful to get through those stages as quickly and efficiently as possible. People need to get to know each other, work out their roles, find their place in the team and establish an effective way of working before they are able to perform as desired.

In addition a team may be a major social group for its team members. They may spend time socialising outside of work and may have formed a close bond after having gone through hard times together. A change which breaks a team apart will leave emotional and psychological consequences, a sense of loss and maybe resentment - we will explore the transition stages that they might go through later in the book.

## 3.4 MOBILISING PEOPLE

### 3.4.1 EMBRACING CHANGE

Not all people react negatively to change. There are people who do enjoy change and will readily embrace an organisational change programme. These people may be interested in the opportunity for personal growth, to change their attitudes or to discuss their values. They may want to be involved in improving processes and removing inefficiency and will champion changes to systems and structure.

### 3.4.2 FACTORS FACILITATING CHANGE

Individuals are likely to adapt and change when surrounded by colleagues who are also willing to adapt and change. People are more likely to adapt and embrace change when some of the following conditions apply:

- they understand it
- they feel safe and not threatened by it
- they have had some kind of input into the decision-making or at least into the implementation plan
- there is something in it for them, such as easier or more interesting work
- there is an outcome that they can see and feel
- it feels achievable
- they can see their colleagues supporting it.

### 3.4.3 DESIRE FOR CHANGE

It is also worth noting that some changes are easier than others. Where an organisation is clearly dysfunctional, and it is widely recognised that things are not working, or if the organisation is at a point of crisis, then people will more readily join the change process. If everyone believes that “we can’t go on like this”, then there will be pent up energy in the organisation wanting to address the main problems.

However when things are just “okay”, then it is much more difficult to motivate and mobilise people. Taking an organisation from the ordinary to the extraordinary takes not just management, but significant levels of leadership. This type of change must be managed if it is to succeed because there is no naturally occurring pool of energy that has built up to demand change. Much of this book will explore ways in which this can be done.

To put it another way, questions about survival focus the mind and mobilise people more than considerations of how to get better.

## 4 UNDERSTANDING TRANSITIONS

In order to manage change it's important to have a good understanding of the likely stages and processes that the person or organisation will go through. A transition from state A to state B means that some old ways and priorities will be left behind and some new ways and priorities will be adopted.

There are three models that are often used in change management and they are very helpful in illustrating some of the difficulties of these transitions and highlights what leaders and managers must pay attention to when planning a change. These are: the three-step model of change by Kurt Lewin; the transitions model by William Bridges; and the change curve developed by Elizabeth Kubler Ross.

### 4.1 THE THREE-STEP MODEL

Kurt Lewin proposed a three-step model in 1951.

The first step is to **unfreeze** the existing organisation – this means to understand the status quo, to clarify the desired end state, to identify the forces promoting change and the forces resisting change.

The second stage is about **moving** – this is the change that comes about from people taking action.

The third stage is to **refreeze** the organisation, that is to make the changes permanent and embed the new ways of doing things.

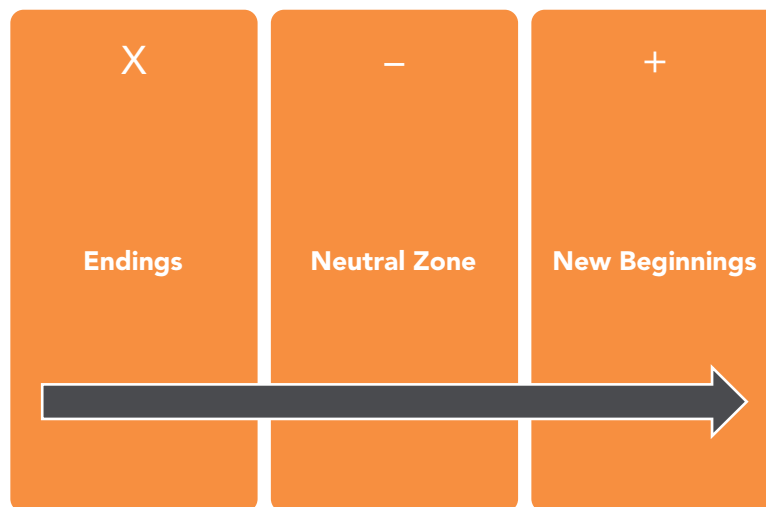
Underlying this model is an assumption that organisations tend to stay as they are, that an active effort is required to drive change. It also means that the refreezing stage is needed to prevent the organisation going back to the original status quo. Refreezing is achieved by reinforcing the new way of doing things.

A slight variation on this was set out by Paul Strobel in his 1997 article “Choosing the right change path”. He said that all organisational change goes through three basic stages:

- Unfreezing the organisation
- Making change happen
- Following up and preparing for the next change.

## 4.2 THE TRANSITIONS MODEL

In his book “Transitions, Making Sense of Life’s Changes”, William Bridges made a distinction between a **change** that is an *external* change of situation and a **transition** which is an *internal* psychological process of understanding and adapting to those external changes. The external change needs to be processed by the individual, what it means for them and so “taken on board by them”. Psychologically there is a sort of death of the old way of doing things and birth of a new way of doing things.



**Figure 2** - The Transitions Model

William Bridges said that a transition has three elements: an **ending**, a **neutral zone**, and a **new beginning**. One of the key insights that Bridges had was this middle area called the neutral zone.

The neutral zone is an uncomfortable place to be, because life is neither what it was, nor is it what it will become. It is a limbo land, a no man’s land, a place of uncertainty, confusion and anxiety.

If we look at an organisation going through change there are these five basic phases:

- an existing way of doing things - the status quo
- the ending of those existing ways
- a neutral zone
- a new beginning
- and finally a new status quo.

The internal transition has three elements whilst the external change process really has five.

### 4.2.1 ENDINGS

There needs to be a process of letting go of the old ways, both in the real world and also internally. It is a process of saying goodbye to things that were once important and now no longer are. Psychologically it could be more significant - saying goodbye to an old *identity* that was once valued and now no longer is. For some people, where their sense of personal identity and self-worth is tied up in their role and work, the ending of that can be personally very painful and raises a much larger questions of “who am I” and “what am I here for” than the mere change of job description, system or set of processes might imply.

For change to be successful, space should be left for there to be some kind of ending and ideally support given to individuals where the change might have a particular impact on them personally. It will certainly be useful to raise awareness with managers that some people will be going through this sort of psychological transition and may be affected more than they expect.

Such an ending may also affect an entire team – a simple restructuring may have a profound impact on the team members. For example when a company, which has teams of engineers covering several different geographic areas, chooses to reorganise those geographical areas (all for good reasons), the teams get broken up. People get assigned to new or different areas and it takes a while for the new team to form and build up to the previous levels of performance. There can be a lingering sadness - or even resentment - that the old team is no longer together with an impact on team performance and individual performance.

To become something else, the organisation needs to stop being what it is today. Its people will need to say goodbye and discard what they have been doing up until now in order to embrace the new.

One of the main mistakes the managers often make is not giving sufficient **time** to endings and saying goodbye to the old ways. People cannot just start doing something new from tomorrow because they will simply be consumed with the process of saying goodbye to the world of today.

### 4.2.2 FIVE ASPECTS OF ENDINGS

William Bridges identifies five aspects of an ending:

- disengagement
- dismantling
- disidentification
- disenchantment
- disorientation.

At **disengagement**, people need to start withdrawing from the old ways of doing things, this could be a long process or an instantaneous one.

Next comes **dismantling** - taking apart a piece at a time the things that need to change. This might be a physical external thing but also it is the internal psychological process.

**Disidentification** requires people to change the way they see their own identity.

**Disenchantment** is the process of unlearning how things are, coming to accept that the way you thought the world worked is no longer true, it's an unlearning of how things are – a putting aside of the old understanding ready for the new.

**Disorientation** occurs because new reference points need to be found. New ways of deciding which way is up and which way is down have to be found. The compass that used to be reliable now spins out of control, the landmarks that were used to navigate by are no longer there. A sense of disorientation will continue until the new landmarks are in place and become familiar.

### 4.2.3 NEUTRAL ZONE

William Bridges explains the neutral zone as being a bit like crossing the street. There is the pavement that you are on and there is a pavement that you are going towards and in between there is a wide street full of danger and risk. A certain level of courage is required to step off the pavement into the road. It is an act of faith that you can get safely across the street - and indeed it is an act of faith that there will be a safe pavement on the other side of the road when you get there!

The main point for a manager involved in the change process is to allow people time to make the transition through their own neutral zones, to be aware of the process that they may be going through and how some members of the team may be affected more than others. As a manager you may be certain that the other side of the street is there - your job is to help your team members to feel confident that it is there as well. Whilst a manager cannot really push somebody through the neutral zone quickly, they can provide support and an environment which enables the person to get themselves through it successfully. Inevitably in this period there is a hiatus, a chaotic interim period where people are confused, disorientated and feeling out of control.

#### 4.2.4 NEW BEGINNINGS

It is only after the endings and the neutral zone that the psychological transition to a new beginning can really take hold. The new beginnings tend to be underwhelming at first, starting off slowly and tentatively.

In any new process or system there is some experimentation, trial and error, new discoveries and new possibilities. There is then an end to the getting ready and the start of taking action. There is the sense of relief that it is not as difficult as had been imagined, that there are the resources to cope, and there is the support from colleagues to make it work.

To start with there needs to be a focus on **learning**. During this period, understanding the new process has to be more important than the results of the process – too early a focus on results merely highlights errors which are inevitable because there is a learning process going on. A manager should ensure that there is sufficient opportunity, time, resource and understanding to ensure that learning takes place before performance is measured.

This stage of new beginnings must start with a focus on the **process** for reaching the goal rather than the goal itself.

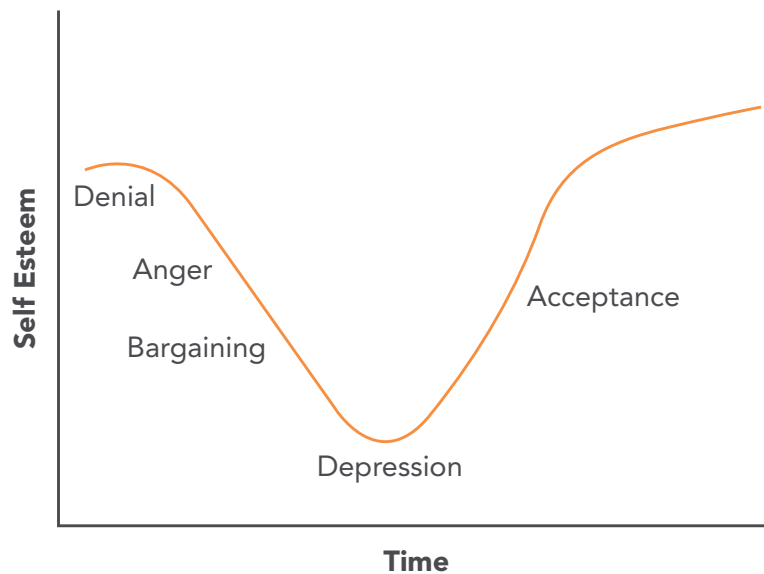
The transitions model is a helpful tool for managers to remind themselves of the likely hidden internal processes that are going on with their staff at a time of change. It is a reminder that time is needed for people to make their own adjustments to the new reality.

### 4.3 THE CHANGE CURVE

Dr Elisabeth Kubler-Ross worked with terminally ill patients and noticed that they typically went through five stages of grief. She wrote about them in her book “On Death and Dying” and these were **denial, anger, bargaining, depression** and finally **acceptance**.

Whilst organisational change hopefully does not result in many people becoming terminally ill, there is nevertheless a process of grief that people go through and an awareness of these five stages will help individuals make sense of their own feelings. It also helps managers and leaders be more understanding and to put in place practical support mechanisms to make the change process as effective as possible.

Clearly a major change will be felt more intensely than a less significant one and so the practical actions arising from considering the change curve should be appropriate to the intensity of change being implemented.



**Figure 3** - The change curve by Dr Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

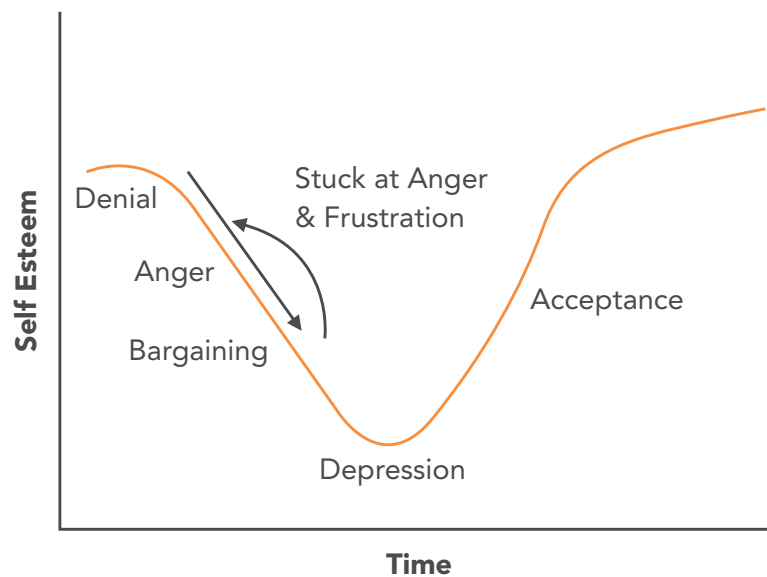
#### 4.3.1 THE FIVE STAGES

*Denial* means a sense of disbelief – waiting for the news to sink in. It is the shocked response to a change they hadn't seen coming. Communication is critical here to explain the change and its background, what is happening and how to learn more. People who feel overwhelmed will only be able to take on board a little information at the time. Those able to absorb more can be shown how to get hold of more detailed information.

*Anger* (and frustration) can occur after the news has been heard. It can be expressed as a frustration with not been consulted, or anger at having their world turned upside down by other people. Certainly at this stage there is too much emotion to enable the person to process this new information and its implications fully.

This stage is stressful for everyone and managers should aim to give support, listen and observe carefully and seek to understand any angry and frustrated responses in order to be able to move on to the next stage. Many of the likely impacts and objections will be quite predictable and can be dealt with upfront, however there will always be unexpected responses and issues that hadn't been fully considered.

It is important to ensure that people feel heard and proper action is taken to address their concerns. A change programme will be derailed if it gets stuck at this second stage, leading to a prolonged period of poor performance.



**Figure 4** - Becoming stuck on the change curve

**Bargaining** can occur after the anger has subsided and people are no longer blaming others. At this point in the process people may be looking for ways to prevent the change happening or to minimise its effect. It could be thoughts about what they could do to improve the situation or how to maintain the status quo. It is a desire to fix the problem and maintain some sort of control.

**Depression** sets in when the bargaining fails – when it is clear that the change is going to happen whether they like to not. There is the realisation that there is very little they can actually do to influence it. At this stage there is a genuine sense of loss and grief as they mourn the loss of the future that they had in their mind. At this point energy levels may be reduced as life can feel pointless.

**Acceptance** is the fifth stage. Finally people are prepared to accept the change that is proposed. They have to some degree processed their feelings, recognised their anxieties and mourned their losses. They start to look ahead at the change starting to unfold. It is a dawning of the new reality of the situation.

After acceptance there is then of course the opportunity for people to explore, experiment and test out the new possibilities that lie ahead, to discover the reality rather than simply to imagine the fantasy.

### 4.3.2 THE PERFORMANCE CURVE

For an individual going through a grief process, the shape of the curve is mapping self-esteem over time. In an organisational setting the curve is a good approximation of the variation of performance over time through a change process. At the stage of anger, energy is directed elsewhere and performance begins to suffer. At the stages of bargaining and depression, the focus will be elsewhere, apathy will set in and performance will dip.

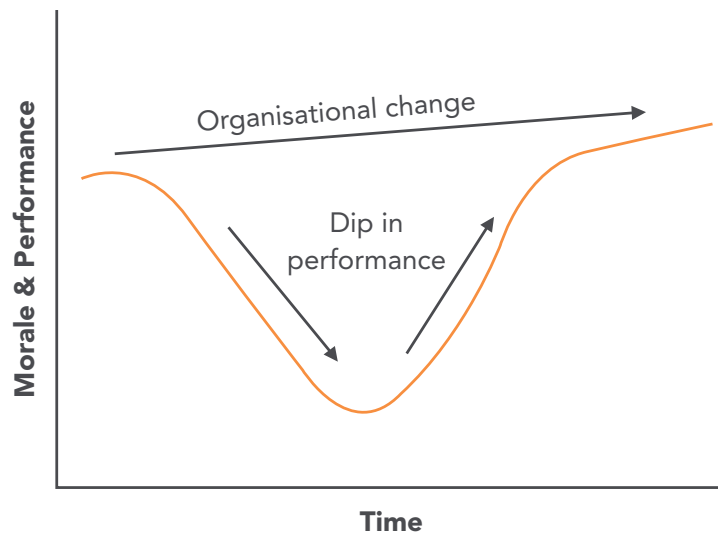


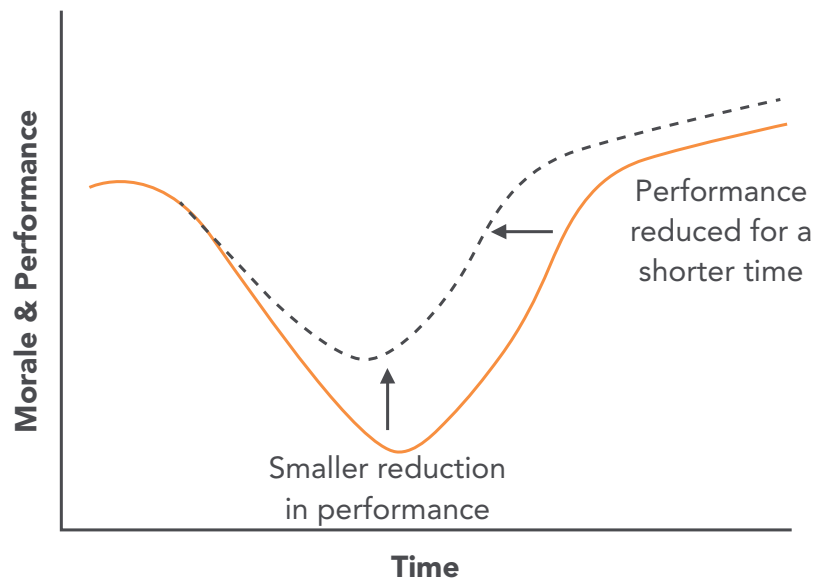
Figure 5 - The Performance Curve

### 4.3.3 IMPACT ON PERFORMANCE

Looking at this from a change management perspective, there will be a predictable drop-off in performance and a good change management process will seek to address and minimise it. There will be many ways that this could be done which are appropriate to the specific circumstances – it could be anything from choosing the best timing for initiating the change, bringing in extra staff to bolster resources or bringing in organisational development consultants and executive coaches so that teams and individuals can work through their feelings and responses together.

Involving people in a process where they can have a hand in designing how some of the changes are implemented helps to give people a sense of control and involvement, to share anxieties with other people, to not feel alone and to learn from other people who are embracing the change.

From a performance point of view, the key objective is to reduce the **amount** by which performance reduces and to shorten the period of **time** over which performance is reduced. To put it another way it is to build a bridge across the valley of depression and to speed people across the bridge as efficiently as possible.



**Figure 6** - Reducing the impact on performance

The amount by which performance falls can be reduced by providing support to maintain performance such as forums to discuss their reactions to the changes, and meetings with their manager to work out what it means for them personally. From a psychological point of view it is about maintaining their self-esteem, providing reassurance and working through the stages of grief. From a transitions point of view it is about recognising the endings and supporting them through the uncertainty of the neutral zone.

The period of time over which performance is reduced can be shortened by starting to move people into learning about the new ways of doing things and starting to put them into practice. It is an opportunity for testing and experimentation in a safe and supportive environment, without the pressure to hit immediate performance standards. Instead of the fantasies and the anxieties of what the future state may look like, they can focus on the actual realities of the changed situation. It is important that management accepts that a reduction in performance is inevitable at this point and indeed is desirable so that people have the opportunity to properly learn the new ways of doing things and unlearn the old ways.

#### 4.3.4 SUPPORTING PEOPLE THROUGH THE CHANGE CURVE

Moving people on too fast to these new ways of doing things will mean that the first phase of transition, the phase of endings, will not be completed. Different people will progress through the stages at different paces. It can be imagined a bit like runners in a marathon – they all start together but towards the end they are stretched out over a long distance. Therefore even when some people are implementing new ways of doing things, others will still be struggling with letting go of the old.



Managers will need to be attentive to where people might be along the change curve. It is easy for a manager to assume that everyone has the same understanding as them - with the passing of time it can be difficult to remember all the stages of understanding that they went through themselves. Going back to the marathon analogy, the managers may have finished and had a shower before much of the team have really got into their stride!

Managers need to enable those that are adapting quickly to make further progress, whilst identifying those who are struggling and providing extra support. This could be to team them up with colleagues that are already in the acceptance phase - it is likely to be more effective, and generate less anxiety, to learn from an equal who has already made the transition, than to receive further direction from a manager!

### 4.3.5 CELEBRATE SUCCESS

An additional stage after the change has been implemented would be to recognise and celebrate success. To look back and acknowledge the transition that people have been through, to thank people for their effort, to finally say goodbye to the old ways of doing things, to share what has been learnt in the process and to demonstrate to people that all their hard work and effort was worthwhile.

This is not only an opportunity to celebrate, but it paves the way for further future changes to be more readily accepted. People are more likely to trust that a new change will be well managed if that is their experience of previous changes.



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# **SECTION 2 - IMPLEMENTING CHANGE**

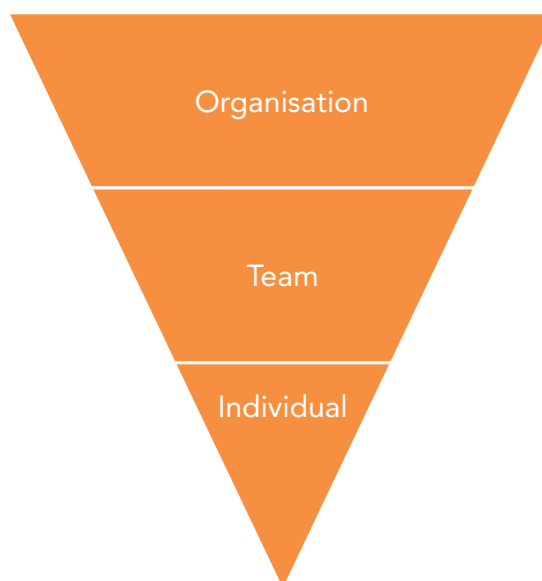
# 5 PLANNING CHANGE

Changing an organisation is about taking it from state A to state B. Having defined state B, it is then necessary to be sure about state A so that an appropriate plan can be formulated to change the right things. The current state of the organisation may not be fully understood - there may be a range of informal systems, processes and networks which are hidden from view and known only to a few.

The assessment of the current position needs to be based on some research and evidence, rather than assumptions. A change management plan based on assumptions about the organisation rather than facts is likely to produce a highly unexpected result!

## 5.1 LEVELS OF CHANGE

As well as change being directed at particular aspects of the organisation, such as structure or processes, change will impact the organisation at several different layers. Each layer needs to have an appropriate level of attention and planning if the change is to be successful.



**Figure 7** - The three levels of change

At the **organisational** level, strategy, structure, shared values and culture can be influenced.

At the group or **team** level, the composition of the team or department can be changed as can the leadership or management style.

At the **individual** level, managers will need to change and then support and encourage others to change. This might include modeling new attitudes, setting new levels of performance, teaching new processes and demonstrating new ways of thinking.

## 5.2 APPROACHES TO CHANGE

Change can be approached in many different ways. The approach chosen will be determined by the leadership style, the organisation's structure, the external situation and the level of urgency.

It could be quick or slow, autocratic or participative. It could be highly planned and centralised or the approach could evolve through dialogue between groups.

However one consistent determinant of the approach taken to changing an organisation is the way that people planning the change understand and picture their organisation. Change management literature particularly identifies the different metaphors used to describe organisations.

### 5.2.1 FOUR METAPHORS

There are four usual metaphors to describe organisations and each one has implications for the approach to take to change it:

- the organisation as a **machine** - where change simply needs to be planned and controlled.
- the organisation as a **political system** - where change only succeeds when driven by a powerful person supported by a coalition negotiated behind the scenes.
- the organisation as an **organism** - where change comes about as the organism adapts – i.e. change begins when people and teams feel there is a need for change.
- the organisation as being a **state of flux** and transformation - where change is unmanageable but can emerge by bringing the right people together.

These metaphors have given rise to different approaches to managing change, because of the assumptions of what an organisation is. Most organisations will exhibit elements of all of these metaphors at different times and in different ways. When planning change it can be useful to consider which metaphor fits the organisation best at that time as this will guide the planning and approach to be taken.

In particular, in a change management team it is worth discussing how each member views the organisation and which metaphor appeals to them most. Whatever the answer, it will be an interesting and important discussion and will help guide the team in choosing the appropriate approach. It is far better to have that discussion right at the outset than after several months of meetings and expending time and effort creating a change programme which won't work well because it is based on personal preferences and conflicting assumptions about how the organisation works.

### 5.3 RESOURCING CHANGE

An organisational change programme requires effort from both managers and leaders, and also from the employees who are having to make adjustments to their ways of working. The organisation will have spent years conditioning its staff to operate and behave in certain ways, to follow certain procedures and to operate certain systems. That conditioning has been reinforced with disciplinary processes, incentives and targets, performance appraisals, and recognition in the form of pay rises and desirable job titles. There has been a significant investment in conditioning the staff and the organisation to operate in a certain way.

A change management process may have to dismantle or change much of that apparatus.

That apparatus was put in place to support the old ways of doing things, and now it has to put in place new systems and incentives to support the new ways of doing things. If the change process does not dismantle the systems that support old way of doing things, then inertia and momentum will simply continue to reinforce the old patterns of behaviour that no longer fit the new model.

Change requires effort on the part of leaders, managers and staff. It needs a planned approach, with a sufficient timescale and needs to be properly resourced to be effective. The plan needs to be based on reality and not the way that people think the organisation operates. It is not just the formal apparatus that needs to be changed - the informal and hidden sanctions and incentives need to be discovered and altered as well.

As Albert Einstein said, keeping doing the same things and expecting a different result is the definition of insanity. So it is with organisational change - new things need to be put in place if a different result is desired. Leaders and managers need to actively change elements of the organisation (paying attention to the 7S framework for example) if they want the result to be different. Keeping the same systems, processes and procedures that were designed to drive the old behaviour will continue to drive that behaviour no matter how much they say it should be otherwise! Understanding these forces at work in an organisation is one of the key activities of an organisational development consultant – a process of investigation to ascertain systems and forces at work (the diagnosis phase) before embarking on an intervention (the action phase).

Change will only be successful if it is resourced properly - and usually people underestimate how much time and effort is required and how much complexity and detail needs to be addressed.

## 6 COMMUNICATING CHANGE

### 6.1 COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE!

In every employee engagement survey, or almost every survey, the results say that communication in this organisation could be better. If communication in a stable, well run organisation is seen as needing improvement, then what hope is there for an average organisation going through a change process?

If we assume for now, that change is initiated from the top, by the leadership, then they will inevitably have the deepest understanding of the problem that they are trying to fix, the clearest and most vivid vision of the desired future state and a pretty clear idea of some of the key things that need to change (even if they are unclear how best to go about changing them). They will no doubt have been on various away-days, sat in many meetings over many months or even years, had internal experts and external consultants to diagnose the problem and suggest a way forward. In short, they know the issues more thoroughly and intimately than anybody, they have been thinking about them for a long time, they have made a decision and now wish to get on and take some action as soon as possible.

This is where the problems begin!

Senior leaders have a head start on the rest of the organisation, to them it is old news and familiar territory, but to the rest of the organisation it could come as a bolt out of the blue, a complete revelation and a shock. Far from being an old familiar story, it is an entirely new chapter in the book - or maybe it's a completely new book!

The problem with something that is so familiar and known so well is that it is difficult to remember what it was like not to know it, it's difficult to put yourself into the position of someone hearing it for the first time. It is difficult to remember all the pieces of logic that brought you to this conclusion and it may even be difficult to summon the enthusiasm to go over it all again, when for you and your senior colleagues you've just got to the end of thrashing out all the issues.

The results can be that a chief executive, who is by now bored by the whole conversation, wants to get the announcement over and done with and move to action. Far from having arrived at the end of a decision-making process, they have simply arrived at the beginning of a long process of communication and change management.



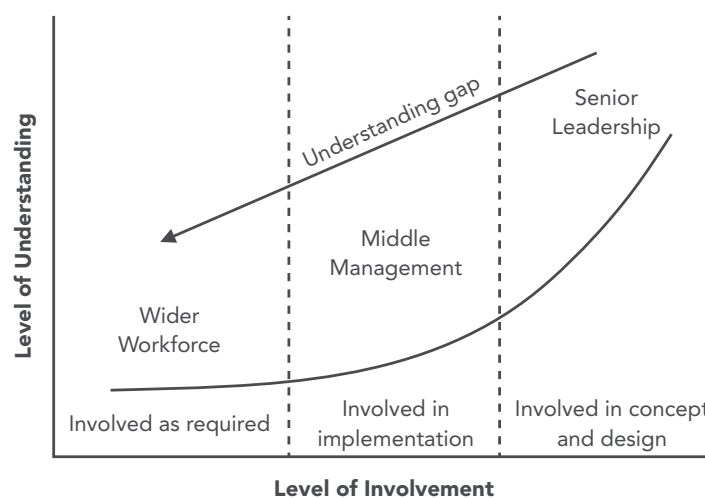
An additional frustration may be that all the complexities underlying the reasons for change need to get “dumbed down” and simplified in order to communicate the key points effectively. Far from the interesting intellectual exercise of creating a new vision for the future, there is now the requirement to say the same simple messages over and over again to different audiences until it begins to sink in!

It is almost impossible to over communicate a significant organisational change programme. What seems like overkill to senior leaders may barely be enough for the message to get through to a busy worker who is under pressure to meet their targets for yet another month. Whilst for senior leaders the discussions about change have taken up a significant amount of their time and headspace, for the majority of workers they will have little time and energy to devote to it. They may have limited interest in it and have difficulty in seeing its relevance and importance to them without help and support. Of course every organisation is different and the picture I have painted may not be true in your organisation, but the point still remains that there is a huge gap in understanding between senior leaders who have been involved in the thinking and everybody else who is hearing it for the first time.

As some organisational development consultants like to say, the workforce needs to “go on a journey” to get to the same point of understanding as the leadership, or at least a sufficient level of understanding to understand their place in the change process and in the organisation as it is envisaged to be.

## 6.2 MIND THE GAP

As leaders know the issues thoroughly and in detail and some workers haven't heard much and cannot see the relevance of what they have heard, it is likely that there will always be an "understanding gap". There will be a trail of decreasing understanding in the wake of the sponsors of change. The graph below illustrates the point – at any given moment senior leaders have a high level of understanding of the change required, middle managers and those involved directly in the change management process have a good but lower level of understanding and the rest of the organisation trails in their wake with a limited level of understanding – which may or may not be sufficient for their needs.



**Figure 8** - The understanding gap

To close this understanding gap there are three things that need to happen: communication, communication and communication!

Now communication does not mean simply a broadcast by email, although many chief executives seem to think that an email or two is sufficient for them to say that they have communicated the change process. Instead, proper communication needs to be two-way and regular, repeated in different ways and targeted to different audiences. Ultimately the purpose of communicating is to communicate effectively and to achieve the desired level of understanding, getting the right points across to the target audience. So enough communication is only achieved when everyone has received and understood the message at the level they need to take appropriate action.

### 6.3 CHOOSING THE MESSENGERS

Research studies have shown that of the top 5 factors for successful change management in a company, communication was included explicitly in 2 of the top 5 factors and implicitly in 2 of the others. So, in other words, 4 of the top 5 factors for success were partly or wholly about communication.

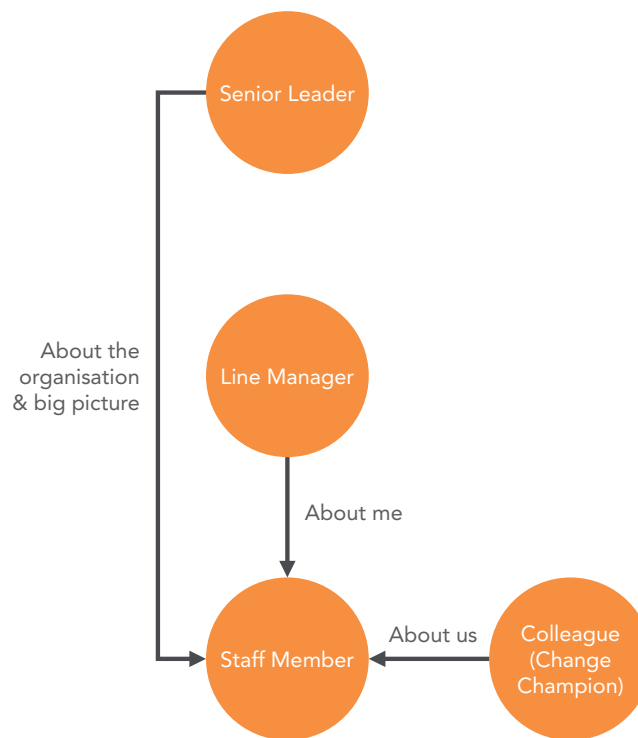
In particular, one of the main factors for success was for people to hear about the change from the leader at the top – either the chief executive of the most senior person involved in the change – giving them the overall business reasons and selling the strategy and the vision. Another main factor was to hear about the change from their direct line manager who explains what the change means for them, to make it personal and relevant.

The leaders need to not just communicate in words, but in deed. They need to act out the change, being role models and ambassadors.

Line managers are important when you take on board another fact which is that most people when they leave an organisation are really leaving their line manager not the organisation. To put it another way, an employee's experience of their organisation is highly influenced by their relationship with their direct line manager.

Communication needs to be carefully tailored – it needs to be continuous, reinforcing the key messages repeatedly, and carefully targeted to the different audiences with the appropriate level of breadth and depth.

The change management team, who are implementing and driving the change programme, are also a key source of communication as they will be networked well throughout the organisation with informal links across departments. This is where **change champions** can be so effective at carrying the message out to colleagues. In this way most people should hear about change from a senior leader, from the direct line manager and from one of their colleagues (a change champion).



**Figure 9** - Choosing the messengers - messages from multiple levels

John Kotter identified eight factors for change and one of them was about communication. Specifically he said the change would fail if the vision was under communicated. He said that the vision should be communicated using every approach possible, that new behaviours should be taught and modelled. Communication should continue to ensure that people feel informed and engaged. The aim is to have a shared understanding of the vision across the organisation and a commitment to that change.

## 6.4 UNDERSTANDING THE AUDIENCES

Communication is only effective if there is a transfer of knowledge and understanding to the recipient. This means that in any change process there needs to be an understanding that there are different audiences and stakeholders. Different messages might be more effective with some people than others and the way in which they are communicated ideally needs to take into account that people see the world differently and have their own preferred styles of communication.

### 6.4.1 MAPPING STAKEHOLDERS

One of the first steps when designing a change management plan - and particularly the communications elements of it - is to assess which groups of people are affected by the proposed changes and to see it from their perspective. To start this process it is often useful to map the different stakeholders involved – there are probably more people to communicate to than one first expects!

In an organisation where those who initiate change are a few steps removed from the “frontline”, it is particularly important to pay attention to the views and perspectives of stakeholders who are more in touch with the detail. It is often the case that those who initiated the change are not those most affected by the change! So for the practical purposes of gaining feedback and insight and also for reasons of engagement and consultation, communication with the right stakeholders is essential.

Those who are initiating the changes will see them from one particular perspective, whilst those being affected by the changes will see them from another perspective. In reality there are multiple stakeholders involved, each with their own concerns, challenges and perspectives – and those stakeholders could either be supportive of the change or seeking to slow it down or block it.

The first step in the stakeholder analysis is to list out all the different stakeholder groups who may be affected. Then consider how the changes may affect them, both positively and negatively, and how significantly. Then consider how influential they are – could they be significant allies in the proposed change, or might they be a significant blocker to change - or are they indifferent? Note that at this point some assumptions have to be made, so doing this with some colleagues - particularly those well networked throughout the organisation - will give a more rounded and more accurate perspective on the stakeholders’ attitudes.

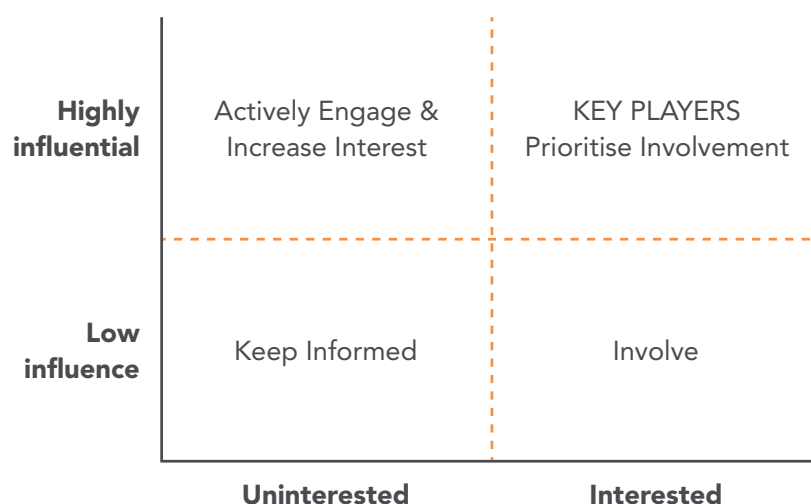


Figure 10 - Stakeholder map

The stakeholders can then be placed on the **stakeholder map** in the appropriate box and highlighted as likely to be either for or against the change. The map looks at two factors: how influential they are and how interested they are in the proposed changes. This then helps to consider which stakeholders are the most important to engage with and where most resources need to be placed.

Each of the four quadrants of the stakeholder map suggests a different response or treatment.

1. Those who are uninterested and with a low level of influence will not be a high priority, an appropriate response might be simply to keep them informed about the changes and where possible seek to engage them more.
2. Those that are highly influential but also have a low level of interest will need an appropriate plan to engage them further and increase their interest in the change. Their low level of interest may simply be because they do not see the relevance of it, or what's in it for them. The task of the communications plan will be to identify key messages that will resonate with them and to actively engage them in the issues that will affect them.
3. Those that are highly influential and have a high level of interest in the change will be **key players** in the change process. They may have the power to block or undermine the change. They could also be the most influential advocates for change. These stakeholders should be prioritised and consulted with regularly. One approach might be to include them in the overall change management team and invite them to attend decision-making meetings. If identified early enough and if they are powerful enough, then maybe they should be involved at a much earlier stage when the business case for change was starting to be developed.
4. Those that are highly interested but have a low level of influence will require a different approach. The stakeholders are potential ambassadors and change champions and are relatively low-risk because of their low level of influence. However they are highly engaged and can readily be involved and consulted, particularly in their areas of interest.

#### 6.4.2 INFLUENCING STAKEHOLDERS

If the key players are to be allies and champions of change, then they will need to have a deep understanding of the rationale for change, why change is needed now, the implications of not changing and most importantly a clear understanding of how it affects them. Put simply, the best way to engage any stakeholder is to see it from their perspective and help them to see “what's in it for them”.

A **stakeholder attitude analysis** can be put together to methodically consider for each key stakeholder or stakeholder group, how the change will impact them, both positively and negatively. Consideration can then be given to what actions they might take to prevent the change initiative or what activities they could be invited to participate in to support the change process.

When analysing their potential attitudes to the change, a variety of factors can be considered such as:

- impact on job security
- changes to terms and conditions, including pay
- changes to workload
- increase or decrease in the level of challenge and interest of the work
- introduction or elimination of cumbersome procedures
- changes to established working relationships
- impact on perceived power, status and position within the organisation
- implications for future career development
- how the changes may affect their identity and self-esteem
- potential new opportunities
- whether the changes address problems that have previously been raised
- whether the changes challenge or reinforce deeply held values and beliefs.

In addition to the likely new reactions that you can predict and plan for, there will be a whole range of issues and challenges that will only become apparent when entering into dialogue with those stakeholders and stakeholder groups.

Within each group, individuals will also respond differently. People are not isolated in the organisation, they have relationships with colleagues and have a range of other issues going on outside the workplace, all of which may have a bearing on their response to change. It is quite possible that a key player, who up until now has been committed to the organisation, finds that they are prompted to re-evaluate their role which leads them to conclude that it is now time to move on. Change always has unintended consequences! People naturally ask themselves if this organisation, or this role, is still right for them. Some will choose to stay “on the bus” and others will choose to get off at this stop!

Another way to look at stakeholders’ likely response to change is to consider their likely answers to the following questions (adapted from an article by Michael Vinitzky and Adam Kling):

- Is there a clear need for change?
- Will the proposed solution properly address the problem?
- Do I believe the change will be implemented successfully?
- Do I trust the leaders who are driving the change?
- Do I know what I'm supposed to be doing differently?
- Have I (and we) got the skills and knowledge needed to succeed?
- What's in it for me? Is it worth me changing? Will I benefit?
- Do my colleagues support the change?

Where they cannot respond positively to some or all of these questions, they are likely to have a higher resistance to the proposed change. It is wise to assume that the natural reaction to a proposed change is resistance. The resistance could simply be a neutral one born out of inertia and a natural desire to maintain the status quo, or it could be an active resistance because they cannot see what's in it for them.

A word of caution - looking at change as simply about getting the buy-in of the most influential stakeholders and using them to drive through change is an over-simplification - and potentially just manipulation! Mapping out stakeholders and their influence is just one tool in the change manager's toolkit, based on the reality of many organisations, where office politics and power dynamics are significant.

## 6.5 TAILORING THE MESSAGES

Messages that feel interesting and relevant to the recipient are more likely to be heard. Most stakeholders will want to hear how they will be affected and what's in it for them. But this is just the *content* of the message. Communication can also be tailored to suit different preferred *styles* and personality types.

### 6.5.1 UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION STYLES

It is said that people have preferred communication styles – that is, there are certain ways that they prefer to consume information. This is true both of those initiating the communication and those on the receiving end. All things being equal, there will be a tendency for communications to follow the style of the person who is sharing the message, rather than the style of the person receiving it.

Communication is only effective when the recipient gains the level of understanding that was intended. It therefore makes sense to try and communicate in ways that suit the recipient. In an organisation with many different people, there will be a whole range of preferred styles and so paying attention to all of those styles would be useful.

Having said that, it is also likely that an organisation specialising in one industry area is likely to have a large number of staff with a similar outlook and perspective - and so quite possibly a similar preferred communication style.

There are three principal communication styles: visual, auditory and kinaesthetic.

A **visual** communication style means that somebody prefers to see an image or a picture in order to quickly grasp the meaning of a communication. This could be helpful diagrams presented in a PowerPoint presentation, or an explanation delivered via video or sequence of graphics and headlines with compelling images on posters around the office. They are likely to say that they “see what you mean”.

An **auditory** communication style covers two things – the written word and listening to someone speak. This suggests that the sequence of emails might be useful, or a printed or electronic document. It could also include listening to a presentation or joining a conference call or webinar to hear the message presented. They are likely to say that they “hear what you say”.



A **kinaesthetic** communication style is more physical. This could involve doing some kind of physical activity. This could include anything from walking along talking to a colleague, or chatting to people whilst making a coffee in the kitchen. They may best learn new ways of doing things physically, such as practising a new activity repeatedly (instead of reading how to do it). It could also mean including some sort of physical movement in a staff meeting, such as asking people to move to different corners of the room to indicate the level to which they understand the change being discussed. This style also relates to feelings, and so they are likely to say that they “feel comfortable with what you have said”.

A senior leader who is very happy with the written word, may think that sending an email or two is a sufficient level of communication. If she were to receive those emails that may be sufficient, simply because it is her preferred style. It may be that in an office-based organisation, where everyone is comfortable with and prefers the written word, that a large proportion of the communication can be done this way. However in an organisation made up of creative and artistic people, such as a video production company, a plain formatted text email is unlikely to make much of an impact! It is more likely that an engaging video that uses the skills and creativity of the organisation will be more engaging and more congruent with the organisation and its culture - and more effective at getting the message across.

A good communications plan will simply have a variety of different ways to communicate the message that covers a range of possible ways that someone might prefer to consume the message. Seeing a presentation, reading a follow-up email, watching a video and then discussing it all with colleagues is likely to be more effective in getting the message across than a sequence of three emails.

In short, use all the communication tools available to you if you're serious about communicating organisational change effectively!

### **6.5.2 UNDERSTANDING PERSONALITY TYPES**

Just as different people have their preferred communication style, so they have the own unique personality. Organisations use a wide variety of different psychometric tools and techniques in order to classify individuals.

For the purposes of building an effective communications plan, considering the different personality types in the organisation will help to shape the way that a message is conveyed.

The Myers Briggs Personality Type Indicator (MBTI) was based originally on the work of Carl Jung. There is no need to go into the detail of how this works here, but the outcome of it is that there are some distinct traits which are worth paying attention to.

Some people think in broad conceptual terms - they enjoy dealing with the big ideas and abstract concepts. They like to think things through, building a rich internal world of thoughts, theories and possibilities. These are called the **thoughtful innovators** and they generate ideas about how things should be.

Other people are action oriented - they want to experiment by taking action rather than to spend time thinking about it. The only way to find out is to try and they just want to take immediate action to make things better. These are called the **action oriented realists** and have the energy to get things done.

A third type of person is also quite thoughtful, but much more practical and grounded. They have a pragmatic approach, observing what's actually happening and being willing to change the things they observe as not working. These are called the **thoughtful realists** and they are cautious about change.

Finally a fourth group enjoys finding new ways of doing things and would like to team up with other people to come up with new ideas and then to put them into practice. They see implementing change as a group activity. These are called the **action oriented innovators** and are keen to explore new areas.

It is quite possible that there is a dominant personality type in different departments, locations or management levels in any organisation. For example senior management could be mainly thoughtful innovators, whilst the field engineers are more action oriented realists. As a result there is a danger that the communications from senior management are framed in the language of ideas and abstract concepts which the field engineers find difficult to relate to! The field engineers may just want to go and try out something new, but cannot understand from the theoretical presentation what it is they are actually supposed to do differently tomorrow.

The communication plan could consider any areas in the organisation where a particular personality type is dominant. Consideration can then be given to how best to communicate to those different personality types. There is no point in only talking about abstract concepts and broad statements of principle, if the audience is only really interested in the practical on the ground implications and the specific steps that they will need to take.

An easy way to check how effective a communication or explanation will be is simply to run it past somebody of a different personality type and ask them how best to reshape it to make it more accessible and relevant.

Finally the best way to check that the message has been received is to talk to people about it or even ask them to summarise the main points back to you.

# 7 LEADING CHANGE

You may already have realised that the leader has a critical role to play in a successful change management process. Those in leadership positions cannot simply come up with a good idea after a few away-days, produce some documents and a PowerPoint presentation or two, hold a staff meeting and then expect the proposed change to be implemented!

We have already touched on some of the aspects that a leader needs to pay attention to and in this chapter we will draw those threads together and explore the other main factors that uniquely fall to the role of leader.

Although this book is about managing change, leading change is an essential component of the whole process. Change needs to be both led and managed – leaders need to paint an inspiring and compelling vision of the future. Managers need to make sense of that vision and work out the practical application for them and their teams.

## 7.1 ROLE OF THE LEADER

An easy way to see the unique role of the leader, is to contrast it with the responsibilities of management. A crude summary is that the leader is the instigator of change, sets light to the blue touch paper - or fires the starting gun - and then management design ways to implement the change and bring the vision to life. In a sense, change is the core component of leadership – the leader leads people to new places and across new territory, setting the direction whilst leaving management to plan the logistics of the journey.

In terms of the change curve, a priority of the leader - and the change management process itself - is to get the organisation from state A to state B as efficiently as possible whilst minimising the drop-off in performance during that change.

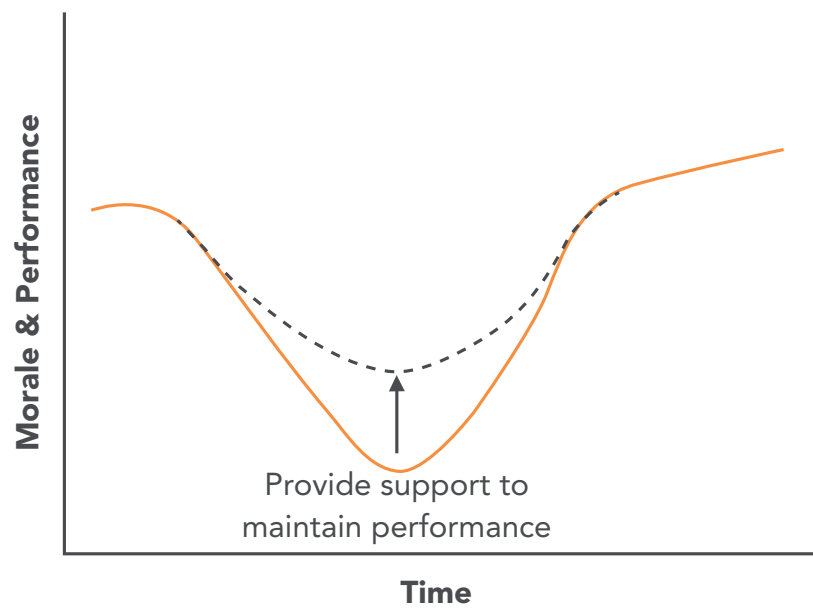


Figure 11 - Minimising the impact of change on performance

## 7.2 THE BIG PICTURE

One of the main purposes of the senior leadership of an organisation is to paint the broad picture, to create a narrative that enables others to quickly grasp a vision or intended outcome. In creating a narrative of what is going on, a leader is also creating **meaning**, giving people a sense of their place in the organisation and its story, a sense of purpose. There are times when one hear consultants talking about “storytelling” - sometimes to such an extent that it becomes a meaningless cliché - but the point of it is to help people make sense of what is going on.

There is the often told story of the US President J.F. Kennedy visiting the NASA space agency. He saw a cleaner and asked him what his job was. The cleaner replied “I’m helping to put a man on the moon”. The cleaner didn’t reply by saying that he swept the floors - he understood his place in the wider vision, creating a greater sense of meaning and purpose for his role.

A leader can use storytelling to illustrate, by way of examples, some of the new behaviours and activities that will be required after the change process. This quickly brings to life what might otherwise be a difficult and abstract concept. The leader’s role is to sell the change to the organisation and mobilise people to take action. The more they can bring abstract concepts to life, make it meaningful and relevant to people the greater the chance of success.

### 7.3 EIGHT STAGE MODEL

In 1996 John Kotter wrote the book “Leading Change”. In it he set out an eight stage process for leading change in organisations. He starts the book by outlining some of the errors that are made when implementing change. Leaders tend to overestimate how much change they can drive through an organisation and underestimate the effort needed to move people in a different direction, consequently they lose patience and give up too easily.

He believes that people underestimate the power of a compelling vision – without one, a series of well-meaning initiatives becomes a confusing and contradictory morass of activity. The compelling vision is the guide for all actions – an initiative either takes the organisation towards that vision or it doesn’t. It also has the potential to unlock **discretionary effort** – the extra effort that people will willingly give in order to bring about a change that they believe in and want to see. It needs to be sufficiently clear for people to understand the implications for their role.

The vision has to be communicated and a common mistake is to underestimate how much communication is needed for people to understand and internalise the vision. When an organisation is functioning at an equilibrium, the usual methods of communication such as emails and regular staff meetings may be sufficient to deliver the small messages and reinforce well understood principles. At a time of change, communication needs to be stepped up several gears, using new methods and sustaining the communications for longer than one might expect.

For a leader, communication is in word and deed. People see what leaders do and judge it against what they say. Deeds are much more powerful than words. An action that is not in line with the vision and values that they talk about will be seen as hypocritical. This inconsistency and incongruence is a mistake that undermines many change processes.

Another error is for the leadership to believe that the change has been successfully implemented much sooner than it actually has. Celebrating quick wins is one thing, but declaring the change management process to be complete is another. It could take years of reinforcement to fully bed in a significant change and without reinforcement old habits can creep back in – they feel familiar and welcoming like a pair of comfortable old shoes!

Many organisations neglect to embed the change in the culture – most people’s experience of what should be done comes from listening to and observing what their immediate line manager says and does. So new behaviours and attitudes need to be rooted in the shared values (at the centre of the 7S Framework) and reinforced on a daily basis by line managers.

So with those common mistakes and errors in mind, let’s now explore his eight stage process.

The first four steps are all about preparing the ground for change, warming up the organisation for the change process that is to come. It is worth noting that *half* of the stages are about *preparing* the groundwork. These four stages are:

1. establishing a sense of urgency
2. creating the guiding coalition
3. developing a vision and strategy
4. communicating the change vision.

The next three stages are about introducing the new practices to bring about the vision. These three steps are:

5. empowering broad-based action
6. generating short-term wins
7. consolidating gains and producing more change.

The final stage is all about making change stick:

8. anchoring new approaches in the culture.

Let's take each one in turn.

### **7.3.1 ESTABLISHING A SENSE OF URGENCY**

Most organisations like to project an image of success. Good news is publicised and shared, buildings are designed to be impressive and new initiatives are launched with great fanfare. Everything is made to look like it's going well. *It looks like there is no reason to change.*

Staff are too busy delivering the current work to think about alternative possible long-term futures - and they are not looking for extra work to do like a major change programme. Life ticks along as normal. *Nobody is looking for change.*

Most organisations do not face immediate crises which are obvious and visible to everyone, instead there are often incremental reductions in profit and drops in performance which individually may not seem significant but add up over time. Even if the problem is recognised, it could easily be put off until tomorrow, but tomorrow may never come. *There is no immediate pressure for change.*

In these situations if change is to happen – and happen any time soon – there needs to be a felt sense of *urgency*. Ways to do this are to present the true facts of the situation, to highlight that a potential crisis is just around the corner or that major opportunities are being lost.

There are also a number of actions that can be taken to indicate that things are not going as well as they should be. For example:

- reducing fringe benefits
- being seen to cut costs
- setting higher targets that are difficult to reach
- allowing small crises to happen
- communicating more honestly about poor financial performance
- communicating more openly about declining levels of customer satisfaction
- highlighting opportunities that have been missed because the organisation does not have the capability to pursue them.

People need to *feel* a sense of urgency if they are to take action today, particularly when on the surface things look alright.

### 7.3.2 CREATING THE GUIDING COALITION

It is impossible for a CEO to initiate change and drive it through by themselves. Even if they have the power to make decisions and do things differently, sustaining the required energy over time is not viable. The way to make change happen is to assemble a group of people with the power and leadership skills needed to initiate and maintain change and then get those people to work together as an effective team. Kotter sets out four characteristics for an effective guiding coalition:

- **Position power** – enough key players are involved such that the managers not involved cannot stop the change going ahead
- **Expertise** – all the key points of view, skills and experience are represented so that informed decisions can be made
- **Credibility** – the people involved have a sufficiently good reputation that employees will listen to what the team proposes
- **Leadership** – there is sufficient proven leadership capability to drive the change process, and sufficient management capability to actually implement it.

This coalition needs to be built into a strong team by building trust amongst its members and having a clear common goal that appeals to their head and their heart - i.e. it's logical, feels right and mobilises their energy.

### 7.3.3 DEVELOPING A VISION AND STRATEGY

The vision is a compelling picture of the future. It sets the direction, motivates people and helps coordinate action. All decisions can then be measured against this yardstick with a simple question - “is it in line with the vision?”

Having established the vision, the next step for leaders is to create strategies for how to bring about that vision. A strategy is the logic for *how* that vision can be achieved. It is the means by which a dream can be turned into reality. A strategy needs to be feasible, credible and practical.

Creating a realistic vision is likely to be an iterative process which may evolve over months and years. It needs to be grounded in the reality of the marketplace and supported by a feasible strategy.

An effective vision, according to Kotter, has six characteristics, it has to be:

- imaginable
- desirable
- feasible
- focused
- flexible
- communicable.



### 7.3.4 COMMUNICATING THE CHANGE VISION

There is no point in the vision being understood only by the guiding coalition and leadership. For change to succeed, everyone needs to have a common understanding of the organisation's goals and direction – and this means understanding the vision.

To begin with, people need to hear and listen to the messages about the new vision. This is a challenge in itself as most managers are already bombarded with information and have little space for anything else - let alone a major new initiative. This is where the sense of urgency comes in – if people realise that “we can't go on like this” then they are already primed that there is a problem and so are going to be more receptive to hearing about a potential solution.

The guiding coalition will have spent a significant chunk of their recent working life coming up with the vision and strategy. They've gone through an intellectual and emotional exercise looking at many different possible futures and questioning the implications of all of them, both for themselves as individuals, their teams, their customers and the organisation. There is a danger that they know too much and struggle to boil it down to something that can actually be communicated and understood – yet this piece of work is essential.

Kotter sets out seven key elements of an effective communication of a vision, these are:

- simplicity
- metaphor/analogy/example
- multiple forums
- repetition
- leadership by example
- explanation of seeming inconsistencies
- give-and-take (two-way communication).

In short, say it directly, say it simply, say it repeatedly, say it using different channels, reinforce it with illustrations, reinforce it with congruent actions, reinforce it with additional explanations and enter into dialogue about it.

### 7.3.5 EMPOWERING BROAD-BASED ACTION

If you have been successful in communicating the vision, if you have won over the hearts and minds of your faithful and committed employees, then they will want to join you on this exciting journey of making change happen. However, even with the best will in the world, they simply may not be able to participate. The 7S Framework illustrates the main component parts of an organisation, all of which have been designed to reinforce operations

in a certain way. The existing structures, systems, strategies and shared values may leave them very little room for manoeuvre. Kotter says that these “barriers to empowerment” need to be removed in order for people to feel empowered to act in support of the vision.

Structures need dismantling, at least in part, if they are preventing people from being involved in change. New skills will be required and so training needs to be provided. But it may also be that new attitudes need to be introduced and there are great examples of companies running innovative and creative workshops, using tools such as learning maps, puzzles and scenarios to stimulate new thinking and create a shared language and shared experience.

Systems, both formal and informal, will need reviewing and changing if they are a barrier to change. Particularly attention should be paid to performance management processes as they may be rewarding the wrong behaviour.

Finally, some staff will be reporting to managers who are unwilling or unable to change. The best approach is to identify and tackle these managers as early as possible and engage them in dialogue – realistically they will need to either come on board or move on. The stakeholder mapping exercise will help to identify some of these key individuals and groups. Addressing these challenges early in the process will greatly increase the chances of success by removing otherwise very significant obstacles.

### **7.3.6 GENERATING SHORT-TERM WINS**

Success breeds success and visible results create a feeling of progress. This encourages people to believe that change is possible and indeed is actually happening. Kotter says that a good short-term win has three characteristics:

- it's visible
- it's unambiguously a win
- it's directly the result of the change process.

There will always be some small changes that can be made relatively quickly. These can be planned and run as mini projects. For example they could include a drive to reduce costs, a reorganisation in one area or a change in systems. Within a few months there are visible positive changes which can be celebrated and those involved can be rewarded.

### **7.3.7 CONSOLIDATING GAINS AND PRODUCING MORE CHANGE**

This is potentially a dangerous point in the process: people have got used to the idea of change, they have seen a few quick wins, they feel that things are heading in the right direction, they are tired from the extra effort...and so they start to relax. The sense of urgency has passed and yet the real change has not yet happened. Much of the old 7S infrastructure is still in place and so without further impetus the organisation is likely to drift back to how it was.

At this point some new energy is required. The credibility of the team has been built, but the energy may be waning. It is time to introduce some new people to reinvigorate the process, to generate some new projects and involve more people. Leaders who take a long-term view of the vision and are personally committed to it are essential - their timeframe exceeds that of most staff and managers who may be starting to move on in accordance with their career plans.

### **7.3.8 ANCHORING NEW APPROACHES IN THE CULTURE**

Finally after all this effort the culture, “the way we do things around here”, might actually have started to change! The shared values at the centre of the 7S Framework have actually started to shift. The process of managing change only really begins to end at this point.

However the original leaders who instigated this whole process may well have moved on, so succession planning for senior leaders is essential if the torch is to be handed on and progress towards the vision maintained.

Ultimately though, success comes about when the hoped-for improvements in performance become real, that they are clearly the result of the new ways of doing things and these new ways of doing things are generally accepted as an improvement on the old ways of doing things.

John Kotter makes the case that all eight stages are required for a successful change management process, particularly when it's a major change or a change in a large organisation. These changes involve a lot of people, take a lot of time, require sustained effort and present plenty of opportunities for failure allowing the old patterns of behaviour to re-emerge.

## 7.4 THE PLACE OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

Authentic leadership comes about when the leader is both true to themselves and true to the vision. When there is very close, or complete alignment between the leader's values and the organisation's shared values then that leader can bring a true, authentic and wholehearted commitment to making the vision become a reality.

An authentic leader is much more likely to be congruent in word and deed. This means that their actions, both in private and in public, are going to be consistent with what they say. Their communications will be credible and they are likely to be trusted by others. They will speak with genuine enthusiasm and passion which people will notice and respond to. Authentic leaders will feel energised and motivated by the vision and will be excellent champions and ambassadors for it. Indeed these may be the right people to lead and spearhead some or all of the change management process.

Authentic organisations can emerge when the vision and strategy reflects the true shared values of the organisation, and the organisation is led by authentic people who are aligned with the shared values, believe wholeheartedly in the vision and are committed to the strategy.

A change management programme has more chance of success in an authentic organisation led by authentic leaders. You can read more about authentic leadership in my book "[Understanding Authentic Leadership](#)".

## 7.5 LEADERS LISTEN

We have already explored the importance of communication and seen how valuable it is for leaders to support the change. Many people will be expecting to hear about the big picture vision from a senior leader – if they are not setting the direction and painting a picture of the future, then what are they for?!

Communicating the vision is an ideal opportunity for a leader to interact with people in the organisation, including those they would not normally have the opportunity to meet. Meeting people is vital to the process of gaining legitimacy and buy-in to their vision and is also an opportunity for a reality check! A leader can expect to receive some useful insights drawn from the practical realities of life on the frontline.

Listening is likely to yield much more long-term benefit and engagement than simply making a slick presentation. It is an ideal opportunity to hear directly about people's hopes and aspirations for the future. It is also a chance to check whether they share the same view

of the organisation's current situation, and can see that the proposed plan of changes is an appropriate response for a better future.

At one level, listening is about getting feedback but it is also an opportunity to ensure that people *feel heard*. When people feel heard, they are also building some kind of personal connection with the leader - it is a good investment of time, particularly if there is a real and authentic dialogue.



By instigating a change process, the leader is setting in train a psychological transition for a significant number of people and an acknowledgement of that, supported with some active listening, will be appreciated. The leader should recognise that their *role* carries more weight than them simply as an *individual*. It is The Director, or The Chief Executive Officer that is listening to them, not John or Mary - it is their moment to be heard and recognised. It could be a pivotal moment for them as they work out whether this is the right place for them in the future.

The leader of course needs to be well practised in presenting and explaining the vision. They will need to inspire confidence and make it accessible with simple clear messages which

are repeated consistently. Those hearing it need to go from a vague awareness, through a process of understanding and engaging with this new information, through to feeling a level of personal commitment to it and internalising it as the norm.

An explanation should really cover the following points:

- what the change programme is about
- why it is important
- what the future will look like and why it will be better
- how we will get there and your part to play in the transition
- the support that is being put in place to help the transition
- how to give feedback, make suggestions or raise any concerns.

It has been said that repetition is the mother of all learning - if a leader is to play their part in helping people to learn, they need to be prepared to consistently share the same message over and over again. If the message to the change management team is communicate, communicate, communicate, then the message to the leadership is repetition, repetition, repetition!

## 8 CONCLUSION - MAKING CHANGE WORK

We've covered a lot of issues and challenges of change in this book. However change can - and does - work. Each change process is unique and yet the ingredients are familiar.

They say that the only constant is change, and in change the only constant is resistance! **Resistance to change** is perfectly natural, which is why change needs to be managed. Just as a car takes a lot of pushing to get it moving in order to overcome the inertia, so an organisation will need a significant amount of energy to start moving along a path of change. If you stop pushing the car when it's moving, then, sure enough, the friction built into the system, as the rubber hits the road, will mean that the car will grind to a halt. When the change process has begun in an organisation, there are also natural forces of resistance which will need to be continually overcome if the organisation is to keep moving along its change pathway. The leaders need to set off a chain reaction of activity – painting a picture to their immediate senior team, setting up a change management project team who in turn create initiatives to move the wider organisation in the planned direction, supported

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by change champions and key stakeholders. People who can see what's in it for them will willingly cooperate, whilst those who feel alienated, distant and out of the loop will at best not hinder the change and at worst actively undermine it.



The **role of a leader** is to ensure that there is a good change management process in place, to act as the sponsor of the change management programme, to communicate the vision and present a meaningful and persuasive business case, giving the context for the change and painting a compelling, clear and inspiring vision of the future.

The other inevitable results of any change programme, however well-planned it is, are the unforeseen and **unintended consequences**. These unintended consequences simply cannot be planned away. The best that can be hoped for is to cover the obvious and most significant issues in the planning and be ready to be agile and adaptive as the messy and unpredictable process of rolling out change gets underway.

The change process is a journey into the unknown, it is disturbing the equilibrium of a settled system and the system will react as it chooses. Ultimately people and organisations change when they are ready to change and when they are not, they resist it. A **readiness to change** may exist because people can see the opportunities that lie ahead and have been waiting for this moment, or things may be going so badly wrong that it is blindingly obvious to everyone that something needs to be done differently! Just because the decision-makers can see a need for change, it does not mean that the organisation has a readiness to change.

Change can work if you do the right things - here's a reminder of some of the key points:

- have a clear compelling vision of the future
- have a strategy which explains how to get there
- be authentic and genuine in your communication of the vision
- keep communicating - you can't over communicate!
- keep repeating the key messages
- act as a role model - actions speak louder than words
- engage with people and actively listen - they will be going through a psychological transition not just an outward change
- maintain energy and focus on change
- expect unintended consequences and be prepared to respond
- stay close to the key players - the most influential stakeholders
- be aware of the understanding gap and the understanding trail
- remember that a complex system has been disrupted and it will try to maintain the status quo
- make sure people hear the key messages from the chief executive, their manager and a colleague
- giving up too early will probably lead to failure
- keep going until the new ways are really embedded
- celebrate success and make sure people realise that the change process has worked and the situation has improved as a result
- thank people for their efforts
- learn from the process and prepare for the next change!

Finally, given that there are so many challenges to change, what is the best way to start? The answer seems to be to **start small**. Don't plan a huge programme of change and then wonder why it is so difficult to implement. Start small, gain some traction and build from there. Test the appetite and readiness for change and build some credible successes. **Be realistic** - it will take longer and need more resources than you first think. It will be more complex than you expect. You will discover new things about the organisation as you go. Keep leaders involved and engaged in the change process as it rolls out - remember people will observe their commitment or lack of it. And finally, enjoy the ride!