CHANGE

A WHITE PAPER ON 'LEADING CHANGE' AND 'CHANGE MANAGEMENT'

Change is the only constant – so how do we make such a mess of it?

Typical thinking about change

If you think about it, the term 'Change Management' is slightly unhelpful. It's reactive. It supposes that the change has already happened and you now need to manage it; like managing nuclear fallout. Consider the difference between 'managing change' and 'creating change' or 'provoking change' – the latter are clearly more pro-active.

So if, in managing change, we are accepting that 'the horse has already bolted' and we are there to 'lock the stable door', what are the other unhelpful suppositions in relation to change management?

For change to be effective you need to create a burning platform. Deliberately creating negative conditions so that change is welcomed is like plunging your hand into boiling water just so that you can feel the relief of taking it out.

You may have been told, "When confronted with change, everyone goes through the change curve, but some go through it more quickly than others."

Is this really true? Let's look for some counter examples:

• How about if you won the lottery; would you still do 'anger' and 'blaming'?

• What about if you work for a progressive and innovative business – do the people at Apple go through a process of 'denial' when their flagship product is updated?

Probably not.

If you accept that everyone goes through the change curve in all cases, you will be imposing it; you will be expecting (and therefore

MORALE/PERFORMANCE (y-axis) vs **TIME** (x-axis): Shock, Denial, Anger, Resignation, Acceptance, Commitment

potentially causing) some degree of unhelpful emotion and drama.

So the first question to ask is when do you need to take people through a process to help them 'flatten the change curve' and when is it best to avoid fuelling the drama?

The change 'type' model

There are two differences that make the biggest difference:

1. Is the change welcome or unwelcome?

2. Is the change collaborative (you are included in the process and have some opportunity to influence) or is the change imposed upon you?

From these two clearly influential factors we can create the following model that identifies the type of change you are dealing with:
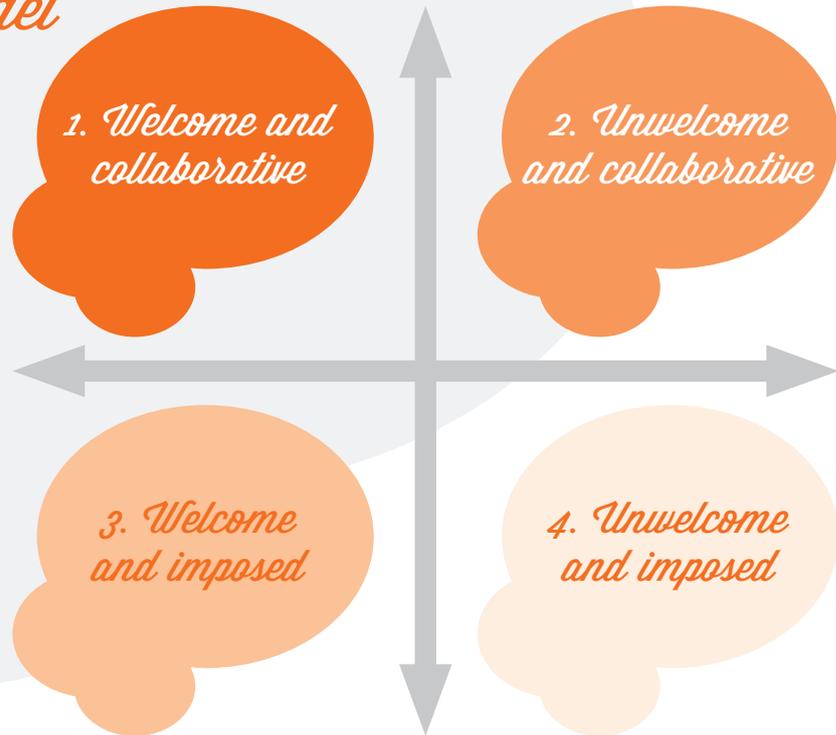
Fig 1: The change 'type' model – © Use Your Noggin Ltd 2012

1. Welcome and collaborative

2. Unwelcome and collaborative

3. Welcome and imposed

4. Unwelcome and imposed

The change 'type' model

1. Welcome and collaborative

This is the ideal world; you are making changes, everyone thinks you are doing the right thing and everyone is fully included/ engaged in creating/delivering it. Under these conditions organisations can achieve extraordinary things. It's very difficult (but not impossible) to create these conditions in large organisations if leaders can make the large organisation feel small enough.

Clarity of vision (what you want to do) and a subtle degree of ambiguity about how it is delivered provides individuals with the opportunity to create some aspects of their own future conditions. For more detail on communicating at level of intention rather than execution, and leaving latitude for collaboration please see our white paper on VALUES.

2. Unwelcome and collaborative

This is much harder work, and there will probably be some emotional resistance, but the collaborative nature of the change will necessitate future focus. People will be paying attention to what happens next and therefore move on more quickly. It's more difficult to complain about something when you are involved in creating it.

The more uncertain the future, or the more options presented for the future, the more engaging the future stuff is (leaving less energy to dwell on the past). If the future is presented as inflexible then attention will move back to the past.

As above there is a need to create the opportunity to collaborate, and the facilitators of the collaboration will need to be skilled in creative thinking dynamics - keeping attention future focussed and outcome focussed acknowledging everything that comes up and provoking more flexibility.

These dynamics create the opportunity to work through resistance rather than bypassing it. The resistance to change is gold dust if listened to and handled positively; working with the resistance will ultimately make the change more realistic and robust.

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The change 'type' model

3. Welcome and imposed

This is the 'lottery win' example. Changes that are entirely welcome should be communicated positively and celebrated. This is an opportunity for leaders to echo values, engender a sense of pride and connect everyone more deeply with what you are doing.

Acting with caution in such cases may unintentionally provoke concern or drama.

There is a raft of research that demonstrates explicit communication is typically greeted with low levels of attention (our inboxes are noisier than ever) or with cynicism (what is it this week?). People pay more attention to the environmental factors (the way their boss is behaving, conversations by the water cooler, the absent biscuits in the meeting room, the visible behaviour of the business leader).

If the change is positive leaders and managers need to demonstrate that through their behaviour - deliver it with gusto.

If the change is conceptual there is a need to back it up by creating an experience – otherwise it's just words. How can you make the change as real as possible? What will look different? What can you change environmentally?

If the change is positive leaders and managers need to demonstrate that through their behaviour – deliver it with gusto.

4. Unwelcome and imposed

This is the tricky stuff - the domain of the change curve when good communication and change management is a necessity. There will be fall out; how can you 'flatten the change curve'?

If the change is inflicted rather than planned, or if the organisation has not prepared people for the change so 'the horse has already bolted', communicating and managing change falls to the managers within the business, and they need a different type of skill to get people through the change curve as quickly and painlessly as possible.

3 developmental perspectives

1. Leadership development for change:

It is the role of leadership to provide clear vision and prepare the organisation for change. Great leadership communication is never more important than in times of change or uncertainty as people will look to their leaders for an indication of how to react.

How the message is delivered (authenticity, congruity, purpose, clarity and influence) and whether it is backed-up by the leader's behaviour will make all of the difference in the world.

2. Empowering people to prepare for change before it happens:

Steven Prokesch, a senior editor at HBR makes the following five observations about successfully training teams at General Electric in advance of change:

- Team training accelerated the pace of change by giving managers an opportunity to reach consensus on the barriers to change and how best to attack them.

- Participants were encouraged to consider both the hard barriers to change (organizational structure, capabilities, and resources) and the soft (how the members of the leadership team individually and collectively behave and spend their time).

- The eternal management challenge of balancing the short term and the long term—or simultaneously managing the present and creating the future—was explicitly addressed.

- Beyond providing new concepts that would make people look at their businesses and themselves differently, the course created a common vocabulary of change—literally words that became part of daily communications inside and across GE's businesses.

- The program was not an academic exercise; it was structured so that a team would emerge with the first draft of an action plan for instituting change in its business and would feel obligated to deliver on it.
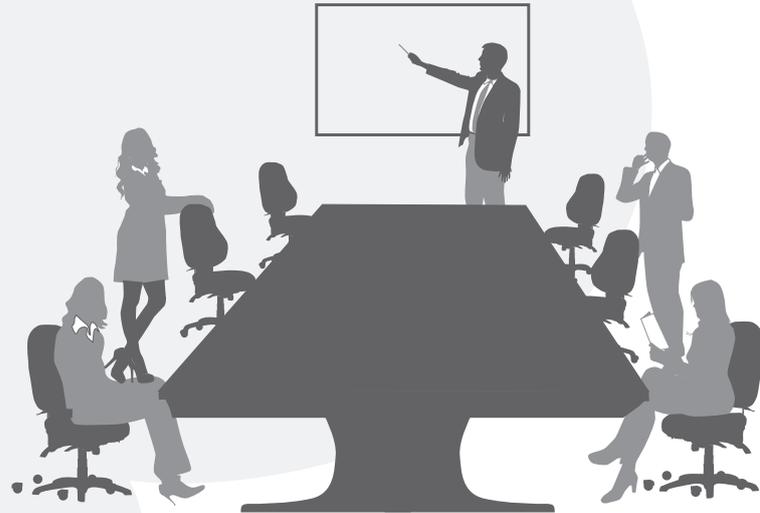
3. Empowering people to manage change after it happens:

Understandably, the primary focus of the managers tasked with being the messenger is the clarity of the message, and in such cases the messenger often gets shot.

It's not what you communicate (there is little latitude there) it's all about how you communicate it. If you are tasked with cascading this message you are caught between a rock and an emotive place. The quality of your communication will solve or escalate problems.

Managers can adopt a coaching approach to change, providing them with the ability to recognise how an individual is currently reacting to change and select which of several approaches will be the most effective in moving the individual on a stage or two.

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How can 'noggin' help?

DESIGNING CHANGE
create the strategy well in advance of the change, share vision and prepare the organisation for change.

LEADING CHANGE
Deliver messages authentically and make visible leadership actions/ gestures

COLLABORATIVE CHANGE
Communicate at an abstract level to allow space for collaboration. Set up and facilitate creative, collaborative dynamics to move attention to the future in advance of change or in response to change.

INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS OF CHANGE
Design the cascade of change messages to satisfy differing learning/processing styles and the psychological need for inclusion, self-determination and open dialogue.

FLATTEN THE CHANGE CURVE
When imposing change, provide managers with the skills to communicate the change in a way that moves individuals through 'the change curve' as quickly and painlessly as possible, and the skills to deal with the likely responses at each 'stage' as the individuals come to terms with change

INDIVIDUAL RESILIENCE
Increase individual's resilience to change by moving attention away from context and back to them; identifying what they need as individuals. By taking responsibility for their well-being and robust performance, individuals can thrive no matter what's going on around them.

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