

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE: CHALLENGES, TEAM BUILDING, AND CASE STUDIES

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It is widely accepted that all organizations change, often despite their best efforts to avoid or resist it. To combat forces from competition to technological advances, organizations realize they must initiate rather than respond to change. This means determining the scope, pace, and depth of their organizations' adjustments and developing a strategic approach to change management. In this paper, we will present topics and examples covered in a workshop that focused on giving participants a framework for understanding and managing change.

To begin, we must face the inevitability of the need for change, and that while we can talk about an organization changing, what is really required is for the people who compose the organization to change. Change is ultimately unavoidable and individual can become the learners and adapters who anticipate change or be/feel caught off guard by an imposed change. We believe that individuals will have to be proactive and reactive to change, although the more proactive response yields more productive outcomes.

To illustrate the reactive side to change we present two ideas. The first is a quote from an advertisement for Putnam Investment:

"You think you understand the situation, but what you don't understand is that the situation just changed."

Even those who are striving to manage a changing situation will be faced with a rapidly increasing pace of change. In another example we hear the story of a wise, old buzzard that was highly respected for his knowledge and skills for survival in his native desert:

Even though one night the old buzzard went to sleep, as usual, in his desert, the next day he awoke in a rainforest. Nothing seemed the same. He looked around at the plants, flapped his wings into the heavy air, watched moisture drip from everywhere, and looked around, but he saw no creatures that he recognized. He sat and surveyed the environment, but no matter how hard he tried, nothing made sense according to his established knowledge of the desert. After a long period of time surveying the

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surroundings, the buzzard still could not determine what he would eat and how he would survive. Finally, he began to grow concerned, so he decided he would just have to rely on his old skills even though the rainforest was different. So he began to fly and soar. As he began to circle above the trees of the rainforest, he could not see the ground well enough to spot food. Always before, in his native desert, if no food was in sight then it was wise to circle even higher in order to gain a wider view for food prospects. So he began to fly higher and higher, but no matter how high he went he still could see only the tree tops. As he neared exhaustion from flying so high, he began to panic because now he was sure he was 'gonna die.'

Even someone who is wise and experienced will have to face changes and learn new skills and behavior in order to thrive. In the story of the buzzard things get better only after he remembers what behavior he used to become wise in his native desert. When he again chose to be a learner, his prospects for survival rapidly improved.

In thinking about change it is important to accept that resistance to change is normal. This means that it is important to anticipate and manage the resistance, rather than condemn it. A model for visualizing the change process and the natural occurrence of resistance is shown in figure 1. This figure is based upon an adaptation of the archetype for growth limitation presented by Peter Senge in *The Fifth Discipline*. In the figure we have visualized a change for an academic program, but it is adaptable to many situations. This figure illustrates the natural occurrence of resistance that will arise even if you do things 'right' in order to build commitment for the change. In the left wheel, we note that successful pilot programs can be run with documented, honestly evaluated, and widely disseminated results. These efforts will cause the wheel of commitment to begin to rotate and gain speed. However, it is unavoidable that simultaneously the right wheel will begin to rotate in a manner that causes friction with the left wheel. The question is how much momentum will the resistance wheel on the right have? If we do not reduce the resistance, then, no matter how good the pilot program was, we will not gain the momentum in the commitment for change to succeed in institutionalizing the change.

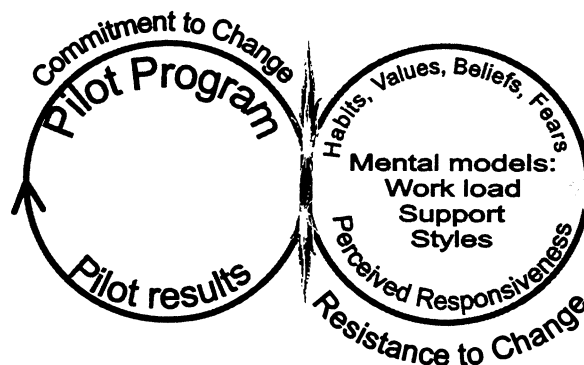


Figure 1 Model for Visualizing the Natural Resistance to Change

One consideration for how you must work with people to both reduce their resistance and raise their commitment for change is to consider the cognitive transition they must make. Figure 2 illustrates the idea that you can not simply make someone aware of your desire or plan for change and then assume they are committed to action with respect to the change. In this figure we note that you must go through steps in order to move people from awareness to interest. If you succeed in gaining people's interest, then you can garner their involvement and participation. If people will participate in the decisions being made concerning the change, then you build their commitment for, and hopefully even their accountability for the success of the change. Then, after this kind of transformation, you are ready to call for action. As soon as action is taken, you must move to evaluate and begin the sequence again with the same individuals or a new group.

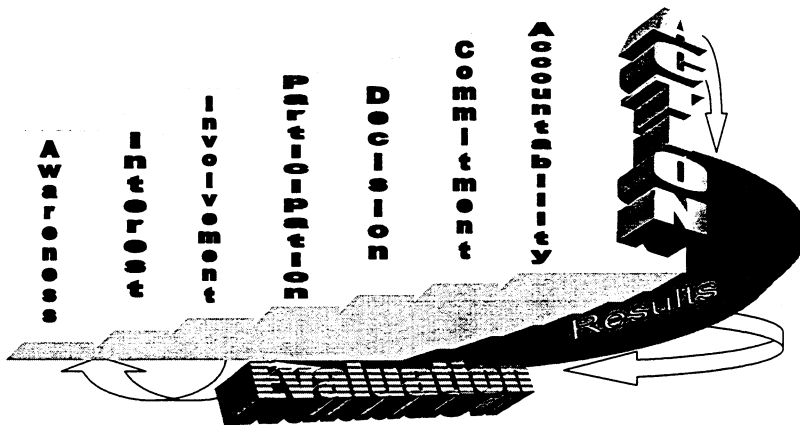


Figure 2 Individuals Transformation in Cognitive Commitment to Change

In a similar effort to show the value of attending to individual's natural needs before they will transform, we use the adapted story of 'The Spirit of the Squirrel, The Way of the Beaver, and the Gift of the Goose' from Blanchard and Bowles book *Gung Ho!*

Once a wise plant worker helped a new plant manager to understand how she might transform the failing plant she had been assigned to into a thriving enterprise. In this effort the worker would take the manager to observe certain animals as they 'worked'. First they observed the squirrel. He asked her what she noticed about the reason why the squirrels seemed so enthusiastic and motivated about work. After much thought she concluded that they were motivated because their work of gathering food was IMPORTANT to them. Then they began to observe beavers at work, and began to try to determine how they stayed organized. Who was in charge? After some time, it became apparent that each of the beavers was in control of their own work. Territory and individuals were MUTUALLY RESPECTED, and all worked up to their own abilities. Finally, they observed the geese as they flew. The question raised was about their communication. It was clear that the geese were working together, and smoothly transitioned to new formations as the situation changed or as leaders tired. The geese however did not seem to communicate in a busy chatter like the squirrels, nor in quick

warnings of danger like the beavers. After much thought, the manager concluded that the geese communicate to tell each other that *EVERYTHING IS OK*.

We note that commitment to your activities, of which one will inevitably be a commitment to change, is actually a gift you give to yourself. Some of the characteristics that are present in a committed worker:

- Master New Learning Patterns
- Demonstrate New Attitudes
- Measure Themselves by New Performance Standards
- Adopt New Definitions of Values

With this kind of commitment, an individual is in a position to control or choose their environment, rather than be forced into an environment.

One of the concerns a change agent has to keep in mind is the fact that it is individuals, not groups or organizations, that ultimately must go through the real change process. In this process the individual must first become aware of the need to change. However, this awareness usually starts with a sense that something is wrong. This sense usually represents some kind of betrayal or let down to the individual. Thoughts and feelings that maybe the system, or others, or skills, have failed to operate as needed. A common initial reaction to this sense of betrayal is denial, but eventually the individual will get to a low point and recognize a sense of urgency or crisis. Finally, the individual will recognize and embrace that they must change, and this is when good ideas to solve the problem start to be generated. In figure 4a we illustrate this cycle for an individual. Figure 4b illustrates the fact that different individuals or groups of individuals will be at different points in this cycle at any given point in time. Note that one individual or group may have progressed to searching for solutions, while another is still in denial, and a third is just getting a sense of betrayal. Reducing these negative feelings can be facilitated by processing the frustration and friction caused by these differences. Awareness and communication can help with managing these differences.

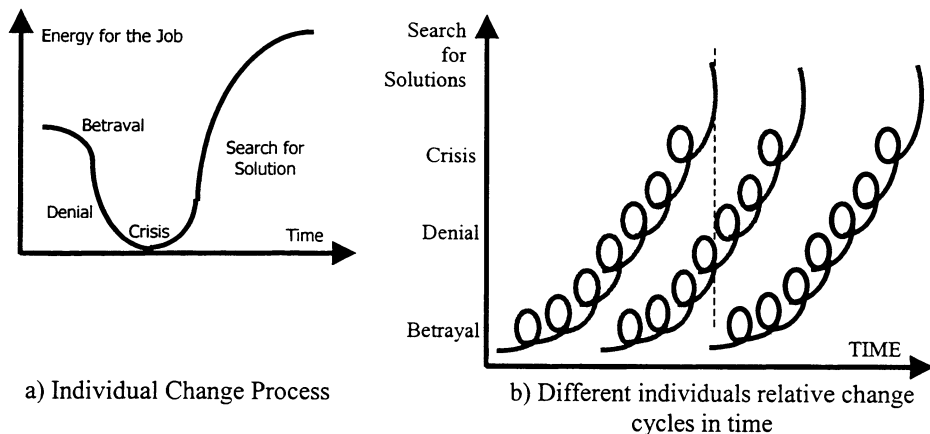


Figure 4 Cycles of Change process for Individuals

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In an exercise in the workshop, we gave groups of participants different change objectives and a scenario with a set of people they had to work with. We have described these people in terms of their dominant behavioral style from the DISC instrument. With this instrument we determine whether someone is more focused on tasks or people, and whether they tend to be assertive in their behavior. Figure 5 illustrates the relative behaviors using these instruments. In the exercise, the participants had pictures of the set of people they were to work with, thus they could determine some aspects of age, gender, and ethnicity as well. Each group then determined the kinds of activities they would undertake to raise the commitment to change and lower the resistance of the people they were given.

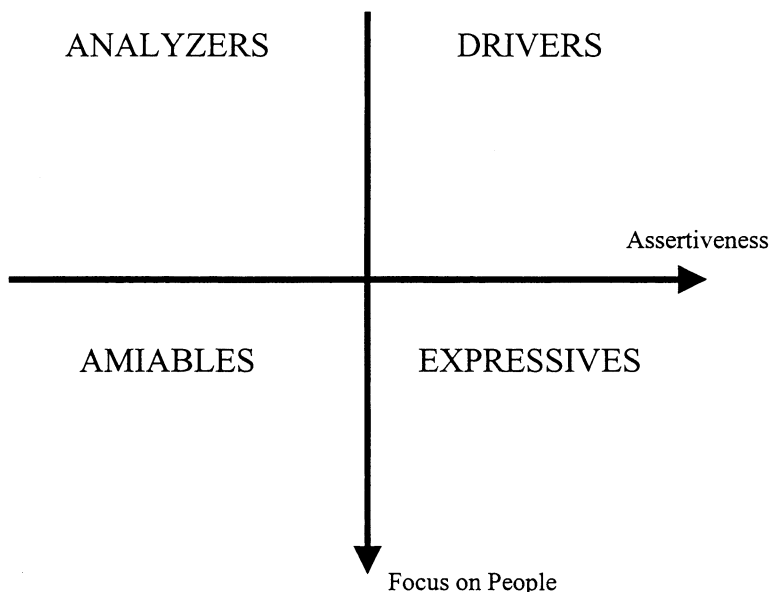


Figure 5 Major Behavioral Styles Profiled by the DISC instrument

Finally, in the workshop we emphasized that even when everything is being managed well, and communication is good, there are bound to be conflicts that arise. An important skill for promoters of change to develop is in conflict resolution. There are entire workshops available on conflict resolution. However, in this workshop we covered some of the ideas for resolving conflicts using different conflict resolution styles. The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode (see figure 6) Instrument can individuals determine their predominant style for conflict resolution. However, most individuals will use different styles in varying situations. Engaging in conflict is not necessarily problematic but using/choosing an inappropriate conflict mode can be problematic. It is important for an individual to recognize and consciously choose their conflict resolution style. Equally important, an individual should attempt to recognize the other person's conflict style. In

systematically choosing your conflict style and adapting as necessary and appropriate, the opportunity for productive resolution of the conflict increases significantly. Effective conflict resolution practices increase communication, collegiality, and productivity between and within individuals.

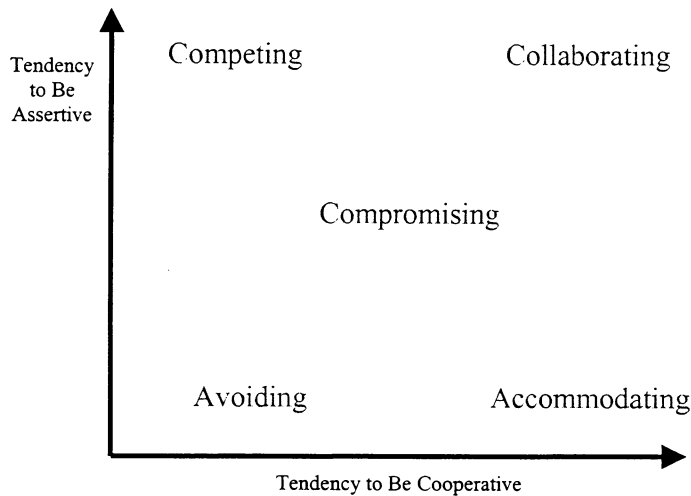


Figure 6 Thomas-Kilmann Indicator's Profile of Conflict Resolution Styles

In conclusion, the purpose of the workshop is to give individuals a better framework to understand the complex processes which people undergo during change. Change is typically a complex growth process, which can not be traced by a linear flow chart. It is important that someone associated with the change understands and then helps to manage these processes. Many people would call themselves change agents because they want, or even push for a change. We would assert that a true change agent is one who succeeds in influencing or causing a change. Such an agent is more likely to succeed if they are aware of the change processes and manage and focus the processes in the desired directions. The paper presents the major concepts related to change while the workshop was able to go into even more in depth examples for each of the concepts.