

Leadership Lab Book

A Discovery Guide for Leading Change

Change

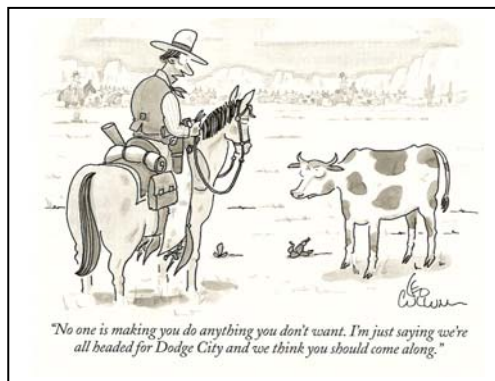
Over the past decade many authors writing on change and how to manage it effectively have assured us that the postmodern world in which we live will be marked by constant whitewater and their sage advice, "Get use to it." This may sound reasonable while reading in the comfort of a warm bed late at night. It does not, however, offer much consolation when faced with a bunch of hostile and recalcitrant coworkers in health care or education who are not really ready to "embrace the challenge" of a constantly changing world.

The ideal crew to handle constant change would embrace the task ahead, be ready to support one another through any weather, willingly reframe their work to address the mission and be capable of restraining individual desire for collective effort. Instead it is likely that your experience managing change more closely resembles this:

A challenge you must meet for the patients, students or customers you serve that will require a significant change among faculty, researchers, practitioners and staff. Though these changes are necessary adjustments, not merely made up by the "leadership suits," you have been met with reluctance, confusion, heckling, anger and finally rejection, either active or passive, to the proposed course of action.

You want to be the leader; they just do not seem to want to follow.

Or as David Nadler has put it, "Change is persuading massive numbers of people to stop what they have been doing and start doing something that they probably don't want to do." This leadership module is about how to manage and lead the change process.



Change Work = Leadership Work

Leadership = Vision + Task + Relationship

Complicated and Complex

Complicated issues are hard, but the particular solution is ultimately knowable or solvable. Think of a statistics problem. **Complex issues** are also hard, but the ultimate answer is not within our immediate grasp, because it unfolds as the process goes forward and the various perspectives begin to interact with each other producing a final decision. Think about a group solution to a problem in which everyone has an active interest. Complicated issues are more likely found in the natural realm where measurement and fact have a more predictive quality. Complex issues are usually in a social context or in organizations such as Maria's case. Complexity also exists in natural settings where there are an enormous number of highly interactive variables which outstrip our capacity to process the volume of interactions. Think about the answer to the question will it rain here tomorrow.

Another way of thinking about this is the difference between policy and politics. **Policy solutions** produce the best answer within the constraints of what is known and for what we can provide analytical proof. **Political solutions** may be informed by policy analysis, but they conclude with what is doable given the pattern of interactions, trust, influence, power, prestige, reputation, wisdom and a host of other variables that key actors bring to the interaction.

Authority works best in stable settings even though they may be complicated, where definitive policy type answers exist and there is considerable acceptance of the organizational structure by the actors within the organization. **Influence** is the better leadership choice when the internal and external environments are fluid and the answer will be a function of the interactions of the various individuals and groups that are engaged in the process.

One way of capturing this dynamic is by examining the ways in which diversity and interdependence interact. We will use John Kotter's classic definitions here to help focus the work.¹

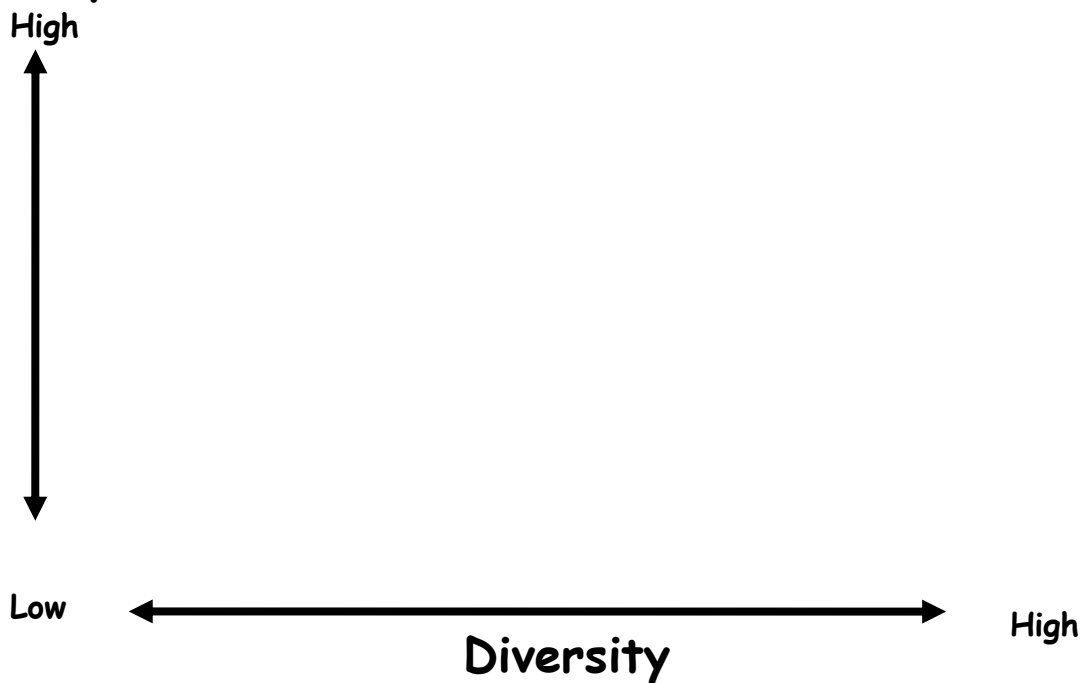
Diversity = differences among people in goals, values, culture, assumptions, life experiences, skills, professional training, position in the organization.

¹Kotter, John. Power and Influence. New York: Free Press, 1985, 17.

Interdependence = a condition in which two or more people have power over each other because they are to a greater or less extent dependent upon to other in achieving a desired end.

First do the exercise yourself. Use the graph below and chart where different activities in your operation fall. If it is a solo activity without much diversity it goes in the lower left; tasks involving multiple perspectives that cannot advance with out each other go in the upper right.

Interdependence



Now, working with a small group, synthesize your different perspectives into a single grid.

One Model for Change

Because change is a complex undertaking there are many ways to frame it for consideration. One basic change formula looks like this:

$$\text{Change} = \text{Benefits of the Status Quo} < A * B * C$$

When:

A = Pain of maintaining the status quo

B = Vision of a different world

C = Small steps to achieve that vision

Focusing Change: Three Things to Consider

1. Types of Change - There are likely to be three types of change problems or opportunities that will present themselves to you. They are:

Compliance- some one or some organization requires you to do something. Examples are your hospital has decided to work with a consulting group to change the processes around patient-provider interactions. Perhaps CMS, Joint Commission or the CDPH has promulgated new guidelines for safety or quality, mandating a change in procedures or process. These types of changes have the advantage of having the force of internal authority, "the suits" or external legality. We have to comply because it is the law or because they are the bosses. However, these types of changes may not have a much internal authority and credibility and are often traps for mid-level leaders and change agents. Many times these changes are more costly in the short or even long run and the benefits for making the change may not be immediately evident to those directly involved.

Improvement - Something is broken and you want to fix it. With improvements we can assume that most of the internal participants in the process have bought into the goal that the current process provides and

that there is support for these outcomes. However, there is also likely to be a considerable stake in doing this in the way in which it has always been done. Change resistance will likely come from those that are most immediately invested or impacted by the change. To go forward these stakeholders will need to grasp the measured value of doing something in a different way, but they will also have to be assisted in the emotional adjustment to giving up the security of doing it in the "tried and true" manner.

Enhancement - Finally, there are changes that leaders will want to make that are an enhancement of that improves on a process that is working well now, starts a new undertaking, engages a new customer, provides a new set of services. The resistance to this sort of change comes from the entropy that surrounds new ventures. The rejection might be by individuals or the entire organization.

Is your change more of a compliance, improvement or enhancement?

It can of course be a blend of these and often, wise leaders will use the power of multiple motivators to push a change.

2. Know Your Change Another element if focus sounds simple, but isn't really. You have to know what you are talking about. A lot of changes falter, because the change agent has only a passing familiarity with what is being proposed. This is often the case when a leader takes a new initiative from up in the organization and has not pushed to fully understand the change and its implications. Too often a change agent is pushing for something that they themselves do not really believe in. Nothing will scuttle change faster than such a weak commitment.

Here are some questions to ask before you go public with a change process.

1. What is your commitment to and understanding of the change?
2. What is the level of the change you are making?
3. How will the world be different?
4. What are the particulars of the change?
5. What commitment do you need from others to go forward?

3. Enhance the Sense of Urgency - Once the leader has focused the problem and has a sense of the nature of the change, then it is essential to make a case for its importance or urgency. This is of course the "burning platform" that change agents seek to establish.

Not all changes are threats to our existence and in fact many important changes are more of the enhancement variety. Moreover, many professionals in health care are not accustomed to responding to threats that could shut the doors.

Another way leaders can make their desired change take on a sense of urgency is by helping others see that the change will make their work, unit, organization or profession more coherent. As health care becomes more complicated and strange, establishing this sense of coherence for those who need to be engaged in change will move the change process forward.

To make a change coherent the leader must link the proposed change to other realities that the stakeholders use to make sense of their world. In other words, the leader must get the attention of the participants in the process. Establishing a "burning platform" is just one of the ways, albeit a dramatic manner, of gaining attention. Other ways include:

- Embedding the change into the core values of the stakeholders - patient care, quality, safety, team work, unit harmony
- Aligning the change with the organization - vision, strategic business directions or performance goals
- Understanding the change in the context of external changes - Health Care Reform, need to reduce costs, consumer demands, new technology
- Enhancing work experience - makes work easier, more efficient, improve unit harmony, enhance team work.

The key to this part of focus is being able to answer their question, spoken or not,

"WHAT IS IN IT FOR ME?"

Leading Change

We have established that people do not like to change their frameworks, ways of doing business, patterns and habits. To get them to start the change process the leader has to have a compelling reason for the change to take place. We sometimes call this argument the burning platform. These platforms burn in different ways and at varying heats and intensities that can range from the motivation to "be the best" to "we have to do this to survive" and a lot of places in between. Regardless, the leader has to be the advocate for getting off of the status quo and changing the paradigm. To do this they need a story that offers a compelling case - a burning platform.

Now let's use the information that was just a part the last exercise. Give brief answers to these questions and discuss them with your colleagues at your table?

1. What are your personal feelings or reservations about the changes you must make?
2. How is your group, hospital or company positioned for moving forward toward strategic success?

3. What are the barriers from where you sit to moving forward?

4. How could a richer and deeper set of partnerships help in this transition?