

# How to Make Change Easier in Organizations

By Lea Belair, PCC

## The challenge

Whenever an organization embarks upon a change it is because they feel the pain or sense the gain. Therefore there can be great enthusiasm to begin the change process. Many changes are begun, flounder, and become a sad and bad history. Since the organization exists to perpetuate itself, the change can be seen as a conflict of interests if there is a perception that the change agenda will upset the status quo to a point of instability or uncertainty. The challenge then is to work with an organization so that the change serves the underlying needs of that organization, keeping its members enrolled and compelled.

### *Evolutionary vs. Revolutionary*

1. The meaning behind the organization needs to be preserved while structures are crumbling and being reassembled.

Not everyone has fully integrated the fact that the new landscape of global economy is constant change with increasing complexity. When people and organizations realize that they can preserve what is important while moving forward into an uncertain future, they are more likely to change.

2. Organizations, like people, need to clarify, define, and articulate what is important to them. In discovery, one way to do this is to examine what is true about the organization vs. the myths and the old story. Spending time examining the unexamined myths and stories and coming up with a new story that rings true is a first step in creating cohesive change – change that sticks. The new story is then shared and integrated within teams. This process fuels the desire to stick through resistance and tough times.

3. Change driven by “results” seems undoable, is chaotic, and creates a recipe for quick fixes and burnout.

Organizations are more likely to move forward with change when they identify what is available now to make change happen. Investing in people, information flow, and horizontal as well as vertical collaboration makes the best use of resources already at hand. In authentic change, results are the by-product of the change vs. the driver.

4. Lowering risk Strategic culture change seems risky until the decision makers in the organization see both the dangers of not having systemic change and the evidence of what systemic change can look like. Creating successful pockets of change and champions of change lowers the risk in making systemic change over time while creating an environment to support and sustain change.

### **The pattern of change**

Chaos is the lack of perception of a pattern. People and organizations need to understand where they are in change. Once they leave the shore of the known, they can no longer use the old landmarks. Before they can reach the point of seeing the new shore, the waters of the open sea of change are full of doubt, complaints, resistance and skepticism. Recognizing the change pattern provides something to hold on to and develops new landmarks.

#### *Belief vs. Knowledge*

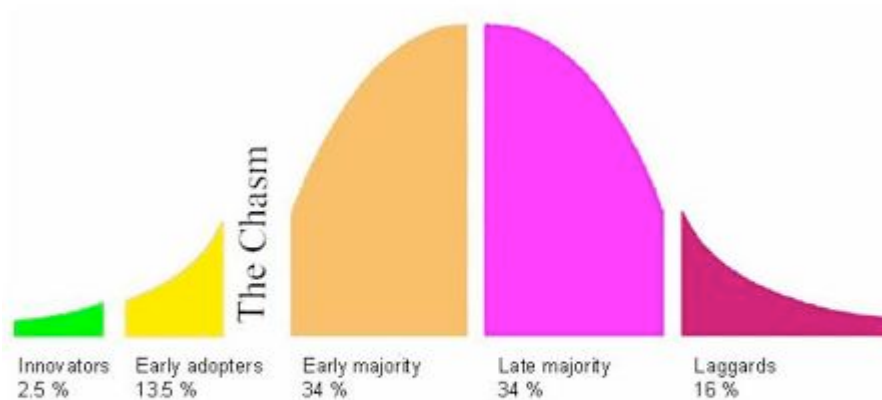
1. The first stages of making a change are fragile. That's because structures and behaviors are changing. This is when thinking and beliefs may no longer match current experience. To get through this stage of change the people in the change must find evidence to support the change. The opportunity here is to begin to collaborate with the new environment and create flexible new structures that continually learn from the environment and adapt.
2. The middle stages of change are where discomfort leads to innovation. The messages and information available in the moment provide evidence and knowledge in moving forward. Once the new orientation to the change has been established, the focus shifts from the stages of doubt to a basis for certainty – not in the results but in the direction. This allows the people in the organization to come up with what's needed.
3. The final stages of change are where integration occurs, beginning the pattern again. Integration means that the organization has navigated the uncertainty of the change and created a new focus, new priorities, and new ways of doing business that continue to make the organization profitable. However, as there is no end to change, once the organization begins to assimilate the next change is already beginning. If done right, now there is a commitment to change.

### **Innovation diffusion – the change game**

In innovation, everyone in the organization plays a role. Experiencing the differing agendas and roles of the players helps people get a look and feel for the change –its rhythms and patterns - so that a new culture can take root. The change game is driven by how people show up in the change. Here, adaptability, diversity, and leadership from all levels of the organization demonstrate value.

To understand how innovation gets adopted and diffused in an organization we can look to the model created by of Everett M. Rogers in his 1962 book, *Diffusion of Innovations*.

## Roger's Innovation Adoption Curve



Trying to convince the mass of a new idea is *useless*.  
Convince *innovators and early adopters* first.

The change game is initiated by the innovators, taken up by the change agents, diffused to the mainstream, tolerated by the resisters and laggards and continually influenced by outsiders.

### **Nurturing and sustaining culture change**

Once the people in the organization have shared the new focus, practices and a common language around the change they need ongoing support for a new level of accountability and performance.

#### *Motivation vs. Inspiration*

1. Motivation is no longer good enough in an environment of constant change and innovation. Motivation is the affect of an external stimulus. The effect of motivation is short term, because just like momentum motivation loses steam. To keep the members of the organization compelled and enrolled, they have to feel recognized and valued. This direction is from the inside out and keeps people inspired.
2. Visibility and transparency help to bring out the best in people. Contribution trumps the status quo. When people feel safe in continuous innovation it happens. Decision makers can see patterns more easily and collaborate in change.
3. The environment always wins. This is a good time to upgrade work environments to not only reflect and sustain the change, but also to intentionally make room for what is inevitably next.

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