

# **Short Change.**

**An Introduction to Managing Change.**

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## Short Change. An Introduction to Managing Change.

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Short Change is a short and accessible introduction to managing change. It is useful for undergraduate or postgraduate students as well as practitioners handling change in their organizations and private lives. Further illustration, argument and case study material can be obtained from the author. Contact email address is [richard.badham@mgs.edu.au](mailto:richard.badham@mgs.edu.au).

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## Letter to Readers

It does not make sense to adopt a formulaic approach to managing change. You do not learn about managing change in the same way you receive instruction in financial techniques, personnel legislation, logistics equations or marketing methodologies. Amongst other things, it involves informed personal reflection. It surfaces the assumptions, prejudices and habits that you share with others and which make deliberate change such a problematic enterprise. As the Renaissance Italian political philosopher Nicos Machiavelli aptly observed, "There is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success nor more dangerous to manage, than the creation of a new system." This insight is ignored at your peril.

This "Short Change. An Introduction to Managing Change" introduces you to the world of organizational practice that makes change so complex and uncertain. It is a messy and confronting world underlying the formal rational PR rhetoric that organizations so love to promote about themselves. Yet how you handle the challenge of making things happen in this world will determine your personal success and fulfillment at work. Careers are built on reputations for successfully executing change initiatives. The more significant the change, the more beneficial success is to you – but also the more vulnerable you are to having your plans and ambitions derailed.

The message of Short Change is that successfully Managing Change in practice is a discipline that has to be learnt and exercised. Organizations, like the individuals within them, give voice to many intentions and aspirations that they fail to realize. The aim of this book and associated course is to help you reduce this gap. It introduces you to Managing Change as the discipline of influencing yourself and others to ensure that such purposes are achieved. It requires learning to think, feel and act in a manner contrary to what appears easy and natural. It involves surfacing and addressing prejudices and habits that are little understood, controversial and often go unspoken or are actively denied. And this applies as much to oneself as to others!

This short introduction hopefully contains and delivers a message that you enjoy and find personally stimulating and enriching. If you find the introduction valuable then you can get more information about Managing Change from the author's course and associated website. Information about them can be obtained by contacting the author directly at [richard.badham@mgsu.edu.au](mailto:richard.badham@mgsu.edu.au).

The Managing Change course uses a variety of educational techniques. The course employs stories, film and art to communicate what are fundamentally rather simple ideas about change and its management but incredibly difficult and challenging practices of putting these ideas into action. In particular, it addresses:

- ◆ why so many change initiatives fail, and what you can do to avoid the traps;
- ◆ how you should understand and map out the nature and dynamics of change;
- ◆ the ways you can influence change by managing, leading and inspiring people; and
- ◆ what you can and should do to grapple effectively with the challenging, uncertain and complex nature of managing change.

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## INTRODUCTION

### The big why

Why read this book or take a course on change management? There are now well over a million articles and books on change. Google gives you over 12.5 million hits for managing change, over 5 million hits for organizational/organizational change, and a whopping 165 million for change management. In a pornography-dominated medium, sex only has 137 million!

An immediate response might be that an authoritative and selective introduction is necessary, and the book provides this. Love is hard to find on the Internet. A credible reflective guide to managing change is equally scarce. There are a plethora of introductory texts on managing change. Many are good, and their value should not be underestimated. You can find multiple overviews of existing perspectives and many step-by-step guides to typical change activities. These are, at times, supported by interesting anecdotes, detailed case studies, and multiple techniques – on stakeholder analysis, change readiness assessment, culture mapping and so on. But what they fail to address is what this book focuses on: how we move to 'do management'!

### 'Do management' and our God complex

The aim is to provide something that other introductions do less well. The book is centrally focused on what is probably the crucial issue surrounding change. Individuals and organizations often have quite good ideas about how change should be managed, it is just that they don't do it! As one Australian manager in a large manufacturing company put it,

*"Our problem is not change management – it is do management. We have meetings. We talk about change. We just don't do anything. And when we do, we don't do it properly."*

In order to confront this problem, change management needs to be introduced as a discipline, and discipline is not something that is instilled through simple instruction or formal programs. It requires training and instruction, but also needs self-reflection, practice and will power. In a sense, effectively managing change is not natural. How many of us have ideas, aspirations and purposes that we never get around to carrying out – or just give up or forget about after an initial dalliance? Managing change is all about follow through, getting things done, successfully persisting in the face of frustrating barriers and aggressive opposition. Being successful at this activity requires adopting a mindset and doing things in a way that runs contrary to many of our preferences and expectations. Hence the need for discipline.

What kind of 'unnatural' activities are involved? In a sense, we all have a tendency towards a 'God complex' that creates three blind-spots: automatically thinking that our ideas are right and correct, that our energy and willpower can push change through, and that what we initiate and plan will have the consequences we foresee and desire. When faced with a world

that doesn't acknowledge our divine status, and go according to plan, we regard it as sacrilege, and promise or pursue vengeance and Armageddon! After all, we are the freedom fighters, they are the terrorists!

*"Patriotism is the conviction that one country is superior to all others, because you are born in it."*

*Bernard Shaw*

I cannot emphasize too strongly, that despite our best intentions, we – at least the inhabitants of the modernized world – relapse naturally into this God-like mentality, and that it makes us ineffective as change agents. Not only is it based on a faulty view of how the world works; it also makes us rash, counter-productive and irrational when our hopes and expectations are dashed.

Let's briefly look at the three blind spots.

Firstly, we often assume that our ideas for improvement are obviously correct and desirable, and that opposition is irrational. Not so. Our ideas, right or wrong, have to be sold – to ourselves as well as others! And they have to be pursued in the face of inevitable difficulties and distractions. What if we fail to recognize this simple fact? We get frustrated, stressed and unconstructively aggressive when things do not turn out as we desire or plan. And we do not put in place the energy necessary to motivate, persuade and enroll those upon whom the success of the change depends.

Secondly, we often attempt to 'push' change, based on our ideas, interests and enthusiasms. When faced with opposition, we then push harder, often getting more authoritarian and aggressive as time goes on. But, if we follow the spirit of Sir Isaac Newton, we should be careful of the 'equal and opposite reaction' that can accompany any attempt to apply force to a force field. It is no accident that the founding father of contemporary change management, the German émigré Kurt Lewin, emphasized the central priority in change of uncovering and collaboratively working on removing the negative, hindering, barriers to change. We need to be sensitive to the limited power and energy that we possess, and the central importance of mobilizing the energy and support of those people and things we are trying to 'change'. We need, in a sense, to 'work the grain against the grain' of any organization or system, use one part of the system against another. If the world or system is 'all bad', and it is only you who are the 'good' shining light of reason and progress, then beware – of your own prejudices as well as your power to bring about a change!

This is what the Harvard Innovation Professor Abrahamson characterizes as 'kludging' – the activity of finding examples of innovation in the past, focusing on what the organization is already doing right, and using positive examples, thoughts and experiences in one area to challenge rigidity and opposition in another.

Thirdly, in the energetic pursuit of our purposes, we often push into the background our awareness of the inherent difficulties that we face. We are all aware of plans going awry,

creating the opposite of what we intended, achieving goals and finding them unsatisfying or realizing that it was, in fact, something else that we desired. We also push into the background the broader context of our strivings, that in the end we are not immortal, our projects have only temporary outcomes and so on. If we mindlessly pursue change, ignoring such factors, then we are liable to blinker ourselves to things going wrong. We can assume that the thought and effort put into making change happen will be sufficient and neglect or even angrily deny problem signs. Finally, we may exaggerate the finality of the end state, expecting clear signs of success, and receiving recognition and reward, as a direct result of our intelligence and application. Then, when the outcomes appear messier and more complex than this, success more contested and controversial, we relapse into disillusion and resentment rather than being prepared for this, and making the best of the situation at hand.

One of the key features of these blind spots, and the 'God complex' that lies behind them, is that we all, given the chance, relapse into them. While a recognition of their existence is essential to successfully managing change, it is an effort and, in many ways, not natural. This is why it is essential to understand the importance of managing change as a discipline, a discipline that enables people to recognize the counter-productive effect of these temptations, and take action against them.

What this book does, therefore, is to promote the understanding of managing change as a practical discipline not a technical specialty. Like other areas of professional practice, it means acting counter to expectations and normal responses. And to put this into effect requires practice and discipline. If we take the metaphor of the martial arts instructor. (S)he shows students how to use the weight of their opponent, overcoming the urge to fight it. The managing change expert, when worthy of the name, helps students to strengthen the pull for change rather than simply pushing. This involves uncovering and removing resisting forces, forces that may be hidden or little understood, emotional or political. It means overcoming the urge to simply push a rational agenda, whether this is through instruction, coercion or 'winning' hearts and minds.

As argued above, this is not natural. We all act on the basis of our own taken-for-granted assumptions and expectations about how others will and should behave. In a formal change situation, we are often convinced of the rationality and value of our initiative. It then becomes difficult to understand, appreciate and effectively address contrary opinions and interests. We then want to instruct, educate and, where this fails, to bully and coerce. In a sense, we resist the resistance, responding emotively to the emotive responses of others.

If unrecognized, and left unchecked, this has disastrous effects. We have to use their weight rather than fight it! The martial arts instructors appeals to one part of our common sense understanding – the efficiency of using the force and weight of others if we can do it – against another part of our common sense response – the urge to simply hit and push back at the feared antagonist. The same with change. It is not our energy that will overcome opposition – and who are we amongst so many – but their own.

Now, in what sense is this a discipline? Because once we have understood this intellectual point, it does not mean that we act on the basis of this understanding! As the cliché goes, there is a yawning gulf between 'theory' and 'practice'. We all too rarely 'practice what we preach'. The understanding has to be put into practice, practiced, refined and improved. Insofar as managing change can be understood as an intellectual discipline, it needs to have this disciplining effect.

This effect is not achieved by acquainting you with the multiple perspectives on change. Nor is it achieved by dogmatically instructing you to use particular methods or follow a prescribed set of steps. It can only result from you practicing how you manage change, and having the motivation and ability to reflect on and improve this practice. This book contributes to you achieving such a goal. It begins by, hopefully, stimulating your interest, showing you the value of this activity and revealing what is involved. It also provides intellectual support and practical guidance on how you can better understand and improve your ability to manage change. A key part the book is to integrate and make useable the vast literature on managing change through the 5M framework.

The purpose of the 5M framework is not to dogmatically prescribe the way to manage change, but to provide inspiration and guidance for adopting a more disciplined approach to how you manage change. It shows the importance of cultivating the ability to be Mindful of potential mistakes, unforeseen circumstances and dangers, when our assumptions, plans and programs give us a blinkered myopic view of what we are embarked upon. In the face of what appears as insufficient time, inadequate resourcing, incompetence, and irrational resistance, it reveals the significance of Mobilizing energy, resources, enthusiasm and emotion – rather than complaining, lashing out or giving up. It helps prepare the groundwork for successful change, by showing how to intelligently Map out desired outcomes, strengths and weaknesses, and initial ideas of the best route to take – at a time when the uncertain guesswork involved, the complexity, lack of time, and obsession with the 'technical', all make such an exercise extremely difficult and frustrating to undertake. It then reveals the central importance of influencing people, by effectively performing a range of influencing roles, activities that involve effectively taking on and taking off a variety of Masks. Most of us become attached to particular roles or persona, and find it difficult to move outside them or reflect on them. In a sense, we are controlled by the masks that we wear. Yet bringing about change requires the adoption of multiple situationally appropriate influencing styles. Even more than this, it involves credible performances. A key aspect of this involves standing back from the parts that we play, showing ourselves and our concerns to be more than simply that of the functionary or the zealot. As a discipline, therefore, it involves a balancing act, being both in and out of the roles that we play, in a sense living in an uncomfortable liminal zone 'betwixt and between' comfortable roles, personal and certainties. Finally, the 5M framework shows how managing change involves ongoing evaluation and reflection on what are essential complex experiments, provisional action plans ultimately based on hypotheses, assumptions and guesswork. It requires looking into variety of Mirrors, seeing what



is there, and acting upon it. Yet, as recognized in our enduring fascination with mirrors, what we see and what is actually there are often two different things. We often see what we want to see, deny what challenges our assumptions and create or look for the mirrors that affirm our self-image. There is a discipline involved in seeking out and daring to face facts!

The approach adapted to managing change adopted here requires a mental shift. Using the 5M framework is not a technical rule-governed enterprise. It is to be employed as a rough guide or set of heuristics to assist you in disciplining the manner in which you influence yourself and others to achieve the purposes that you set. The discipline of managing change addresses a perennial problem or 'gap' – the fact that despite the beneficial, desired or rational nature of our goals and purposes, and even despite the presence of clear, rational or agreed means appropriate for achieving those goals, results are still not achieved. It is the gap between the desires that we have and those that we realize. Effectively addressing this gap requires us to step outside the classical modern view of organizations and our role within them as a rational, economic, functional and practical sphere of human action. It involves recognizing their essentially emotional, political and cultural character, the comic, tragic and ironic nature of the organizational drama.

### **This book and the course that it introduces**

One of the first aims of this short book and the course that it introduces is to illustrate how most ideas about change are, in fact, quite simple. One of the problems of many books and courses is that they overcomplicate this fact. Academics often feel comfortable introducing multiple frames, perspective, metaphors or models. They rest secure in their wide knowledge, revealing the complexity of the subject, and avoiding any charge of oversimplifying the subject. It is no accident that many student evaluations mark down lecturers and subjects, while at the same time saying that the lecturer is 'knowledgeable' in the subject! This creates a significant problem. Not just for lecturer evaluations but for real learning on the part of the student. As one wit put it, 'there are many approaches, but few arrivals'. Or as another remarked, 'all the isms are now wasms'. What is needed is a guide to the core issues of change and its management not a listology of perspectives, each with their own esoteric language. This book attempts to dig beneath the surface and show how the core issues are actually quite simple and easily communicated – at least in their theory!

The devil is, however, in the details. It is the complexity of practice that holds the challenge, and the key for managing change. Even an excellent, short and insightful summary of ideas of change and its management inevitably falls short. We all live in a practical world in which we need techniques to guide us on how to use techniques, and theories on how we apply theories! Again, however, it is at this point that the introductory texts are at their weakest. Traditional academic overviews are caught up in expounding theoretical perspectives, and introducing the student to a change variant of the whole world of organizational behavior ('leadership and change', 'politics and change', 'groups and change' and so on). In contrast, those more concerned to put forward useful principles and guidelines, often do so in a non-

reflective manner. They present their recommendations in as authoritative manner as possible, supported by anecdotes and illustrations masquerading as case studies. They do not encourage critical reflection on their particular prescriptions. And certainly there is little questioning of what are often quite restrictive assumptions about the purposes and benefits of managing change, what can be achieved and what cannot. In crude terms, we are caught between complex theorists and simple practitioners. What this book seeks to do is simplify the theory, increase understanding of the complexity and challenges of practice, and provide both students and lecturers with inspiration and guidelines about what to do about it.

As I emphasized at the beginning, this argument for the value of this book and course is not based on dismissing existing textbooks. Many have gone through multiple editions, refining and developing useful insights into how to manage change. I am thinking, in particular, of UK books such as Bernard Burnes' "Managing Change", Colin Carnall's "Managing Change in Organizations", Barbara Senior's "Organizational Change", Patrick Dawson's "Managing Organizational Change" and John Hayes' "The Theory and Practice of Change Management" as well as the US/Australian text by Ian Palmer and Richard Dunford "Managing Change: A Multiple Perspectives Approach". After reading this book, and if you undertake the course it introduces, these texts may be usefully read to illustrate, expand and develop upon many of the points that have been raised. What this text seeks to add, however, is a fresh, dynamic and personal approach. It is an approach that is strongly focused on improving practice, how you actually do things, rather than simply talk about them. To do this, the study of change has to be fun as well as instructive, and really and directly relevant to how you run your life and your career. If it fails to do this, then it is unlikely that you will follow through with the discipline. It then becomes yet another course in theory that does not get applied.

As the title of this introduction suggests, the book, and associated course, is deliberately short and, hopefully, deceptively simple in its approach. This is essential to provide you with the support necessary to concentrate on the real issue: experimenting with change, reflecting on what happens, and improving what you do. Like any effective message with a practical intent, the course uses videos, stories, pictures, quotes, and song rather than monologue and academic prose to get its points across. And what is the message? Simply this – that change is a rollercoaster ride of highs and lows, triumphs and disasters, excitement and depression. Any attempt to 'manage' this process occurs within rather than outside this chaotic ride. As one commentator aptly remarked, managing change is a little like trying to change a car's wheels while the vehicle is in motion. We all want the rush, the pressure and the chaos to slow down or stop, so that we can manage change 'properly'. The renowned US writer on innovation and learning, Donald Schon, aptly observed that he, like many others, had always been waiting for that 'stable state' in his life, when all would be sorted out. This gold at the end of the rainbow always appears to be just round the corner, over the hill, after the next job, following the marriage, after the children (or after the children have left home!), retirement and so on... But, in reality, it never arrives. Change, to bastardize John Lennon, is what happens to you while you are planning other things. To intervene in this

process requires enterprise and discipline. In the ensuing struggles with barriers, opposition, vested interests and emotional upheavals, it is also personally challenging and confronting. A text on managing change does not do you any favors if it does not stress this point, and help prepare you for what can be an exhilarating but also scary ride!

If you underestimate the emotional and political dimension of change, no amount of conceptual knowledge and technical instruction will help. Even talking about the personal drama of change, as we are doing here, but in a language that is neither personal nor dramatic can send the wrong symbolic message. The rational may still appear to be dominant. The emotional is what happens to others, something that can be handled rationally and impersonally. Change management may still be seen as some kind of 'master technique', to help put the other techniques in place. We may talk about emotion, politics, confrontation and uncertainty, but continue to avoid much of this when we are 'thinking' about change. We need to mind this gap. As one manager of a large manufacturing put it to me, when I enthusiastically informed him that his managers were keen on coming to my "Managing Change" course. "Fine, do what you like. But you do realize that this is an exercise in avoidance, don't you?". I looked puzzled, and somewhat disheartened. He continued, "Because they are feeling the anxiety of uncertainty, the discomfort surrounding the conflicts. They are hoping that if they go to your course, you will provide them with techniques that will remove this. What they need, crucially, is to get into the mud pit and start wrestling."

## 1. The discipline of change

### 1.1. The problem.

*"I have come to believe that the whole world is an enigma, a harmless enigma that is made terrible by our own mad attempt to interpret it as though it had an underlying truth."*

*Umberto Eco*

When things go awry, we blame others. We rail against what the historian Barbara Tuchman called The March of Folly – the stupidities of people and organizations, their lack of common sense, their selfishness, their irrationality and so on. Yet the problem lies deeper, in our expectation that things will be otherwise. As Shakespeare put it in Julius Caesar (Act 1, Scene 2), "The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our stars, but in ourselves." Let me explain.

#### *WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?*

*The US Harvard Business School (HBS) Professor and expert in managing change, John Kotter, argues that 50% of all change programs fail in the first stage. His eminent HBS colleagues, Samuel Beer and Nitin Nohria, argue that 60-70% of all change projects fail. In the UK and Australia, David Buchanan and Richard Badham observed that these figures of 50-70% failure rates are consistently quoted across a wide range of managerial change programs, including business process reengineering, total quality management, information technology and so on. Such figures are always controversial. The consistent observations do, however, indicate something significant. Organizations find it easier to create strategies than to implement them, easier to establish change programs than to gain successes from them. When they try to remedy this situation, they struggle more than is necessary, create greater pain and disruption than is required, and fail to take up all the opportunities that are possible.*

#### *WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?*

*At root, the source of the problem is a simple one. It is not because organizations, and the people that make them up are not rational or, as some have suggested, that they are too rational in their approach to change. It is, rather, that they are not rational enough to recognize their own exaggerated faith in rationality! This may sound rather abstract but bear with me. As the acknowledged founder of change management, Kurt Lewin, remarked "There is nothing as practical as a good theory." If so, this is probably the most practical theoretical insight that you will find in all the literature on managing change. But it does require some explanation.*

### 1.2. The explanation.

*"It has been said that man is a rational animal. All my life I have been searching for evidence which could support this."*

*Bertrand Russell*

### 1.2.1. *Our rational world.*

At the surface level, modern organizations are presented and present themselves as rational and efficient enterprises. Always! This is the case of even maverick innovative companies such as Southwest Airlines, which celebrate their dynamism, tolerance of mistakes, attention to fun, emotion and people. Such companies still present this as the sensible correct way for them to do business. They will, in short, justify what they do as being reasonable and rational. At heart, we also believe this about ourselves. Most of us in the modern world like to see ourselves as sensible, rational and reasonable creatures, bringing order and improvement into our lives and the lives of others. Culture is not something external to us but the air that we breathe, often without noticing it.

In the organizational sphere, this is the view that you will find in official policies and procedures, statements to customers and the public, and written up and verbalized in formal meetings, agendas and minutes. It is what the sociologist Tom Burns described as the 'front-stage' public performance of organizational life. It is the view that we present, and like to present, to stakeholders and ourselves about the rationality and efficiency of what we do.

It embodies a specific type of language, what the decision-making analyst James March characterized as the 'rhetoric of administration'. This is the view that what happens in organizations (or should happen!) is the systematic pursuit of clear and distinct organizational goals, the selection of the best and most appropriate means for achieving these goals, and the work of capable and willing organizational members in undertaking these tasks. Management is understood as applied science. It is no accident that in the earlier decades of this century, the acclaimed management consultant Lyndall Urwick recommended the use of 'administration' rather than 'management' for this intellectual discipline – for the latter term was deemed too controversial! Nearly three centuries ago, the celebrated French philosopher of industrialism, Henri de Saint-Simon coined the principles of the new industrial era as 'from the government of men to the administration of things'. In the early twentieth century, the famous historian and social scientist Max Weber characterized 'legal rational' authority as the dominant legitimating rationale for all modern bureaucratic organizations. Whether or not what actually happens is efficient and organized, what we do and how we legitimate it is commonly understood, espoused and seen to be 'rational'. This is the dream as well as the claim of the modern rational worldview. And we might just as well try to escape this as deny gravity.

### 1.2.2. *Our other side.*

*"I find it rather easy to portray a businessman. Being bland, rather cruel and incompetent comes naturally to me."*

*John Cleese*

At another level, our organizations are characterized by what Tom Burns described as a 'backstage' activity. In this sphere, we find a different language spoken, often what James

March described as the 'rhetoric of realpolitik'. It is a world of commentary upon the formal organizational performance, a sphere in which tales are told of confusion, intrigue, incompetence, vested interest and even chaos. It is what is talked about in bars, over the water cooler, and in the coffee breaks in ritualized meetings. It is what is discussed in the down to earth, heart to heart, getting to the guts conversations of the forceful leader trying to get things done. It is also the view of what happens in organizations captured by the leading American writer on organizational culture, Joanne Martin, as the 'differentiation' and 'fragmentation' perspectives. It recognizes the personal nature of organizational life, the inequalities of power and the widespread prevalence of political behavior. It acknowledges the ambiguities and uncertainties, ambivalences and paradoxes, emotional stresses and strains of organizational life as it is lived and experienced.

### 1.2.3. *Grappling with this divide.*

*"The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function"*

*F Scott Fitzgerald, 1936, The Crack Up*

It is one thing to acknowledge these separate worlds. It is quite another to think through what it means, and use this knowledge to improve the effectiveness of how we act.

Even acknowledgement is difficult in many situations. Where things have been set up to present a rational public performance, any revealing of the 'other side' can be highly disruptive, and regarded as tantamount to treason! It is always necessary to be aware of when and how the presence of this duality in organizational life should be discussed. As the Greek philosopher Aristotle put it in remarking upon 'anger',

*"Anyone can become angry – that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way – this is not easy."*

The same applies to surfacing the duality of organizational life. The dangers are commonly recognized. As the Turkish proverb puts it,

*"He who would tell the truth, should have one foot in the stirrup!"*

The highly influential American writer on organizational development, Chris Argyris, has spent a lifetime analyzing the 'defensive routines' that organizations set up to prevent discussion of cultural undercurrents and perpetuate a gap between 'espoused theories' and 'theories in use'. He emphasizes and re-emphasizes the difficulty of raising such matters, stressing that there are very real forces making them 'undiscussable'! Fools, as the saying goes, may rush in, where angels (and even devils!) fear to tread!

But the issue of how to treat this divide is even more fundamental than the difficulty of giving voice to its existence.

The first important point is to recognize that what happens in organizations is, and will always be, the result of the intertwining of these two dimensions. It is not about an 'artificial' world of a rational public performance and superficial rhetoric versus a 'real' world of politics, and ambiguity. Nor is it about a real 'public' organizational world where rationality applies (or should apply) and a separate or closeted 'private' world of emotion and self-interest. To revert to such distinctions is misleading, dangerous and demeaning.

This is an important point for, in a rational society, there is a tendency to relapse into treating organizational action as a rational enterprise, and leave the emotion, politics and intrigue to 'after the fact' reflections and discussions. When, for example, one does, say, a 'stakeholder analysis' at the start of a change project, this is not a neutral technical 'rational' exercise. It can be personal and confronting, in terms of how to understand people and interpret their actions, but also how to address the interests, perceptions and disagreements within the group doing the stakeholder analysis (as one set of stakeholders!)

This is not merely a personal 'relapse' but a systematic social process. The US policy analyst and sociologists Daniel Bell, who initiated the global 'post-industrial' debate, talked of what he called the 'cultural contradictions' of modern society. We are led to believe that our lives are divided in an 'economizing' mode in our work life, an 'egalitarian' mode in our political life, and an 'individualizing' expressive mode into our private life. This, however, is how we are taught to subdivide our lives. It is not about how they are lived. In reality, they are all intertwined. To forget this fact in the face of change in organizations means to misunderstand what processes, forces and dynamics are at play.

To restate the point, at the danger of seeming pedantic, the 'other side' of organizations is not a 'private' world separate from the 'public' nature of organizational life. It is part of the basic makeup of what organizations really are. When the American-Israeli anthropologist Gideon Kunda produced his celebrated rendition of life in the Silicon Valley company Tech, he defined the 'organizational self' as the stance that people take to prescriptions about what and who they should be. Not, and most decidedly not, what people are 'meant' to be. Similarly, one of the most insightful UK analysts of trust and control in organizations, Alan Fox, emphasized this central point: organizations do not consist of a 'formal' world and an 'informal' world – what they are is how people actually behave. And this behavior is the outcome of the intertwining of both these dimensions of their lives. And it is how they actually behave, and how we wish to influence this actual behavior, that is the key stuff of managing change.

Secondly, the modern world, and the rationalized organizations that populate it, actually create the conditions that undermine any simple view of organizations as rational entities. It is not just that the attempt to rationally administer organizations fails to capture all of organizational life. It is the fact that this very attempt creates the seeds of its opposite! As Zygmunt Bauman, the most eminent social philosopher of post-modernity puts it, the rational ideal is one of order, coherence and unity in the pursuit of this end, the world is analyzed,

classified and separated into categories. Tasks are broken down into their component parts, analyzed, improved and reassembled into a more 'efficient' whole. People are allocated to specific roles, as cogs within a machine, and their actions and responsibilities clearly outlined. Ambiguity, ambivalence, uncertainty and conflict are seen as problems, threats to order that have to be removed.

Yet this very attempt creates the opposite. Modernity creates a world of high complexity, both inside and outside organizations. As a result, organizations have multiple, shifting and ambiguous goals. The 'best' methods available to achieve these goals are also a somewhat moveable feast. Not only are new information systems and organizational methods continuously made available, but organizations are pressured to update and experiment, and multiple sub-cultures and interests within the organization have different views on these different methods and techniques and the best way to proceed. As the Harvard Business School professor and guru of change management, Rosabeth Moss Kanter puts it, the reality of organizational life is more akin to the Queen's Croquet Game in Alice in Wonderland, than it is to a rule bound rational process.

To restate the point, the very commitment to rationality and efficiency creates a dynamism and complexity that undermines two of the foundations of the orderly rational worldview: the idea of clear and distinct goals and objectively efficient means for attaining these goals. James March, the most sophisticated interpreter of the challenges this poses for real-world organizational decision-making, argues that change programs are more like a 'garbage can' of favored solutions looking for a vehicle than a coherent planned venture. He recommends greater attention to pay ethics and a 'technology of foolishness' in the face of such uncertainties.

The 'rational modernity undermining itself' theme has an additional important dimension. Rational organizations presume, or attempt to create, committed, willing and able agents for achieving their purposes. In reality, however, organizations are staffed with members who possess a wide range of degrees of discretion and varying degrees of distance from the requirements and demands of their employer.

Modernity further exaggerates and complicates this situation. Organizations differentiate and split up into separate divisions, levels and sub-cultures. Society spawns a greater plurality and range of institutions and groupings with competing demands on individual's time and identity. As the American classical sociologist Louis Coser observed, 'greedy institutions' respond to this situation by seeking and demanding 'total' commitment from their members, but are doomed to fail in a healthy plural modern society. In the presence of such conditions, obtaining loyalty and allegiance is a more messy, partial, temporary and logrolling process than the traditional rational metaphor of marshalling troops or aligning systems in a manner that makes organizations operate 'like clockwork'. As the UK Leadership expert, Keith Grint, puts it, the task of organizational leadership involves the art of collective sense-making and forging a sense of identity, not of simply giving expression to a 'real' communi-



ty. In the Peter Drucker School of Management, the UK management guru Charles Handy, spoke of his one insight gained from Drucker, that of viewing organizations as a 'community with a purpose'. Our point here is that in modern organizations establishing such a purpose is a more temporary, more partial, more fragile and more creative activity than orderly rational views of the organization acknowledge.

#### *1.2.4. A Critical rational approach.*

It is the argument of this book that it is the inability to recognize and address this duality and tension within modern organizations that is the true character of irrationality – not the failure to accept and implement a system of rational administration. The rational approach to organizational action (and 'managing change'!) is one that does not deny or ignore this duality and tension but recognizes and handles the ambiguities, ambivalences and paradoxes that it creates. This applies to all features of organizational life. It is, however, particularly relevant to the complex and chaotic process of managing change.

If the assumption is made that change can or should be rationally administered, then the activity of managing change will founder on the failure to recognize this intertwining of the rational and non-rational dimensions of organizational life. It then threatens to become, in March's words, an implausible and ineffective 'rhetoric of administration'. This is not to say that the rhetoric of rationality, and the establishment of disciplined management processes, does not have a role to play. They have. They are important as an inspiration, as persuasive rhetoric and as a means for influencing behavior. But they are only part of a comprehensive approach that recognizes the intertwining of the dual nature of organizational life.

A relapse into a similarly partial view of change as merely a matter of political intrigue, chaotic complexity or emotional dynamics and trauma is also, ultimately, ineffective. As individuals, and organizations, we cannot avoid seeking to influence people and events. In doing so, in the modern world, this will inevitably involve seeking knowledge to assist us in this task, and seeking to create a degree of manageable order in the potential chaos. This occurs in many areas, involving such activities as: creating meaningful agendas that inspire and guide ourselves and others; mobilizing energy, time, and resources to realize these agendas; mapping out what has to be done; and exercising influence over other people in realizing our plans. As such a list indicates, however, this is far from a simple-minded leap into an acceptance of complexity, irrationality or politics and resistance. It is a proactive stance that addresses the intertwining of rational and non-rational issues, practices and agendas.

The problem of change 'failure' does not, therefore, lie with the first common scapegoat – the arrival of a radically new era. Despite the simple-minded mantras of change pundits, it is not a temporal matter of 'acceleration of change', operating on a new 'edge of chaos' or the web of interdependencies in a complex 'risk' society. These impressions are important, as are the conditions that lead to them. However, they are surface phenomena.

Suspicious about such claims are raised by historical comments such as the now celebrated statement of the Roman Petronius Arbitur (200 BC), "We trained hard ... but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form up into teams we would be reorganized. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganizing; and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency, and demoralization."

Recognizing innovation, complexity and interdependence is an important factor to be taken into account in developing a strategy for change and in managing change in practice. However, if we attribute such 'problems' to contemporary developments, then we risk missing some of the key challenges of change. It can lead us into thinking that we merely require a rational technique to control this wayward, accelerating, problematic phenomenon. In doing so, however, we will neglect the whole 'other side' of organizational life, and how this has to be addressed in practice to get change issues onto the real agenda and implemented in practice. It also leaves us unprepared for our own and others inevitable 'resistance' to change – or at least the problems created by change. We are always going to be faced with a tendency to think in 'rational' terms, and develop a 'rational' response to the change problems we face.

This is not a new problem nor one that can be 'solved'. We will get annoyed, frustrated and irritated at what appear to be the irrational and unjustified acts of others. We will be tempted to go into 'blame' mode, lash out and/or develop traditional 'rational' ways of addressing the problem: using instruction and rational explanation to solve the problem, create 'external' monitoring and regulation systems to 'control' the problem, resort to blatant or insidious attempts at bullying and so on. All we can do is to recognize such problems in ourselves and others, and adapt more quickly to redress their dysfunctional effects. It is thus essential that we do not set up artificial expectations about how the world will behave 'rationally', and then ignore or deny our own inability to properly address the 'non-rational' dimensions of change. The rhetoric of a new era of 'rapid change' may be useful, as a legitimating and focusing device, but it is important not to be taken in by this rhetoric. "Sincerity," the sociologist Peter Berger observed, "is belief in one's own propaganda." The point I am making here is that the result of such beliefs is potential ineffectiveness.

Nor does the problem lie with the second of the usual suspects – the failure to address the 'soft' people and execution areas of organizational life with the same degree of rationality as we do the 'hard' areas of strategy and systems. This is the focus of arguments, techniques and methods for conducting 'planned change' – the traditional territory of organizational development (OD). Such failures are an important issue, but the source of the problem and its solution lies deeper. It is not simply a matter of more or less social engineering. There is, as such analyses argue, a tendency for purportedly rational organizations to focus on systems, structures and processes as the main source of innovation and progressive change and neglect the potential for human change or the need for human change. Once this is recognized, and

attention paid to human motivation and emotion, there is a tendency to use the same rational mindset to intervene in this area – the same planning approach, the same mechanized thinking, the same focus on objective techniques, the same idea of manipulation, the same analysis and synthesis. Despite the best efforts in this regard, the result is a backlash. Human beings are often more aware of manipulation and sensitive to its effects than many manipulators recognize. Human understanding, action and influence are inevitably an interpersonal process. It becomes restricted, sterile and often transparent when it is reduced to an engineering model of giving instruction, imparting knowledge or manipulating with or without integrity. As one electrician observed of a supervisor, whilst being instructed on personality types and the need to understand others, 'The reason he is such a rat is not because he is an I.S.T.J. (explanation in margin) but because he is an S.H.I.T.!'

All the features of the 'other side' of organizational life – the backstage reflections, the ambiguity and uncertainty, the ambivalence and the politics – are just as present in 'soft' leadership as it is in 'hard' management. Going beyond traditional command-and-control management, and recognizing the importance of facilitative leadership is a desirable and sensible addition to the armory of management and the exercise of influence. It is not enough, however. If it is treated as a rational exercise in social engineering, without acknowledging and addressing the 'backstage' issues, concerns and interests, then the problems remain. It fails to effectively address the 'up close and personal' issues that characterize interpersonal relationships, and individual and organizational politics. It remains distant and non-engaging in its artificiality, and even threatens a backlash against what may appear as insidious and disingenuous manipulation.

*"A protest march had been scheduled, and she felt driven to take part. Fists raised high...She liked the slogans, but to her surprise found herself unable to shout along with them. She lasted no more than a few minutes in the parade...behind Communism and Fascism, behind all occupations and invasions lurks a more basic, pervasive evil and that the image of that evil was a parade of people marching by with raised fists and shouting identical syllables in unison."*

*Milan Kundera, 2009, "The Unbearable Lightness of Being", Harper, New York, p.100*

An important dimension of addressing the personal dimensions of change – and really winning the hearts and minds of people – is personal involvement and real commitment to others, acknowledgement of uncertainty and ambivalence, mistakes and paradoxes, incompetence and vested interest. This involves critical self-reflection, surfacing restrictions and barriers to communication and development, having the courage to challenge authority and convention, the confidence and creativity to craft out a meaningful agenda for oneself and others, and the openness to do this through involvement and collaboration. As we shall see, this is far from a 'soft' option!

In sum, modern organizations combine a 'front-stage' public presentation of unity, order, efficiency and administrative rationality with 'back-stage' activities that comment on this

performance, conduct politics and grapple with ambiguity, uncertainty and paradox. Organizational behavior – or routine ‘misbehavior’ as the UK critical writers Stephen Ackroyd and Paul Thompson would have it – is a complex amalgam and intertwining of these two domains. The effective management of change requires us to acknowledge and address rather than ignore, avoid or repress this reality. Why? Because managing change requires the effective exercise of influence, and confronting challenging barriers to successful implementation. This requires addressing the realities of how people think, feel and act – beyond the simplistic stereotypes. Only in this way is it possible to sustainably engage oneself and others in what is a potentially arduous and dangerous journey.

*STOP! A critical note and discussion point*

*Surely, it is possible to carry out a simple change without raising all these issues? Are there not examples of people who follow the Nike way and ‘just do it’? Are there not successful cases of leadership where relatively straightforwardly addressing ‘people’ issues and concerns has worked? Is there no difference between simple routine short-term incremental changes and complex episodic long-term radical transformations? If so, is the above argument not too simplistic and one-dimensional in its prescriptions? Are we not in danger of simplistically setting up another ‘one best way’ of managing change? This critical observation is an important one and opens up many of the issues that are central to address in any change. It should, therefore, be explored rather than closed off as a subject for discussion.*

*In a sense, this book and the attendant course is an attempt to answer this question. Any quick response at this time is, therefore, inevitably inadequate. The importance of the question does, however, merit a provisional statement. My answer is, simply, ‘yes’, to all of these questions. The depth of consideration given to the matters discussed above is much greater in the face of more complex, controversial and radical change. We will argue, however, that the basic principles are the same and, moreover, that it is beneficial to not arbitrarily separate ‘real change’ activities and issues from more or less ‘routine’ management or innovation. Also, and importantly, there are examples of just making do, successfully struggling with administering one’s way to the achievement of outcomes. There are also numerous instances where major gains in commitment have been obtained through the effective manipulation of group dynamics, establishing of effective communication and involvement mechanisms, developing inspirational presentations and storytelling and so on. The intention here is not to deny the relevance of such activities. In fact, a recognition of their existence is crucial. The point I wish to make, however, is that they are not sufficient – either as a description of how deliberate change is effectively created or as a prescription for how change should be managed.*

*As a description, if one looks below the surface of cases of managed change, one can always discern the ever-present effect of the ‘other side’ of organizational life. The ambiguities, uncertainties, ambivalences, tensions, politics and intrigues are always involved, and are influential and addressed in some manner – however, half-cocked, fudged, guessed at, messed up or little*

*understood. Managing change always involves intervention in what the renowned anthropologist called the ungainly 'octopus' of culture, whether or not this is deliberate and effective or ill-informed and mishandled.*

*As a prescription, we shall examine in more depth in the discussion of the 5Ms how managing change involves a degree of standard disciplined process management. Leading change, it will also be argued, inevitably involves creating a purposive community with a meaningful agenda, guiding coalition, empowered devolution and supportive leadership. However, the purpose of change, its ultimate value and meaning, depends on also achieving personal and organizational development. In many ways this traditional argument has recently been updated and given a contemporary form in prescriptions of Jim Collins to shift From Good to Great, of Stephen Covey to develop an 8<sup>th</sup> Habit of 'Find Your Voice, and Inspire Others to Find Theirs', and the proliferating arguments on the search for and value of 'authenticity' in organizational life).*

*Whatever form it takes, this general area of change inevitably involves critical reflection on existing habits and conventions, examining how these are holding back individual and organizational advancement, and pursuing agendas that promotes development. If pursued meaningfully, this raises some serious issues. What if the personal development needs of individuals conflict with those of the organization? What exactly do people mean when they talk of 'authenticity', and the need to realize this in the workplace? What if people do not adequately consider or realize what is in their developmental interests? While realizing that people may not realize or even deny what they really want, what right does anyone else have to speak for them? The difficulty of such issues should not, however, distract from the practical value of addressing them. Insofar as they explicitly address the dual nature of organizations, and raise and incorporate the 'other side' into the debate, they have the potential to move managing change beyond an unproductive standoff between apparent manipulation and critical resistance.*

### **1.3. Education not Indoctrination.**

*"A mind is like a parachute. If it doesn't open, you're f\*\*\*ed!"*

*Don Williams, Jr, "The Write One"*

There is a systematic bias in rational organizations to formally prioritise theory above practice, strategy above implementation, planning above realization, thinking above feeling, and technology, systems and structures above people, culture and politics. If discussions of managing change are to have any enduring value, they have to question and challenge this bias.

This task must begin with how this subject is taught. As the Zen Buddhist saying goes, "Ethics is not what you do after you have done the dishes. It is how you do the dishes." To make this point in the present context: the principles and processes by which managing change is discussed, communicated and taught should embody what is being recommended. In Marshall McLuhan's classic phrase, "The medium is the message."

This may sound somewhat trite. 'Oh, yes.', we say, and move on. But stop and think for a moment. The point is an absolutely central one for any attempt to successfully stimulate reflection on managing change.

The classical 'organizational development' (OD) interventions in improving self-awareness and group dynamics adopted exactly this rule. People would learn more from experiencing and reflecting on the experiences they were going through than from abstract discussion. This was the essence of the classical 'T-group' sensitivity training sessions. The results, as anyone can attest to who has been through 'encounter group' style experiences, can be extremely powerful.

Drawing on such principles is essential in kick-starting the personal reflection needed to improve our abilities at managing change. It is now a platitude that it is far less easy to change oneself than it is to spend time getting others to change (and complaining along the way!). But if we are to understand and influence others, we need to recognize our own difficulties with change. If we deny and resist altering our own habits and perceptions. If we react strongly against 'being changed'. If we find that rational argument and intellectual persuasion has little effect on us. If we try to bring about changes in our own lives (getting fit, giving up smoking, changing our clothing style, improving our relationships, getting educated and so on), and find it very difficult, and end up slipping back into our old ways – we need to recognize this, reflect on it, and use it to improve our understanding of how we and others react to change.

As we shall discuss further in this book, we are all in varying degrees bad at managing change in ourselves and others. We tend to rely on rational thought, instruction and just 'doing it', and then get frustrated, dysfunctional and lash out when others (and ourselves) do not do the 'right thing'. We more or less instinctively ignore or avoid the need to persuade, the attention to overcoming psychological and social barriers, addressing and communicating sincerely felt anxieties and other emotions, and so on. When it is pointed out, it does not take much for any of us to 'know that' this is the case. Getting us all to seriously reflect on and address such issues, so that we can better 'know how' to act is a far more challenging task. In order to get people to fully understand and be involved in altering their habits, more is required than rational instruction. It is no accident that there is a growing proliferation of Forum Theatre acting groups using the shock of self-recognition in dramatized role plays to break through restrictive habits, blinkered perceptions and lack of self-understanding and analysis.

If we do not 'kick start' such reflection, then all the instruction on change management theories, models and techniques will be of little value. They become part of right brain planning actions that do not get implemented. They do not grab our hearts and a large section of our minds, and are, in a sense, part of the problem rather than the solution. How then are we to go about education on managing change?

As we have said, there are multiple techniques concerning change management processes that it is desirable to understand and use. There are many principles, approaches and methods for improving our leadership capabilities. A quick use of Google, a flick through You Tube, the selective use of Wikipedia, and following up advertised methods for managing change, will give you at least a sight of the tip of the iceberg of information and advice available. Try exploring. Put 'managing change' and 'change management' into You Tube and look at what is on offer. A textbook that duplicates such information is, in a sense, fairly redundant. While it may package this up into a handy format, it does so at the expense of your own initiative and exploration.

The concern of this book is deliberately different. It's focus is on stimulating critical reflection not on technical instruction. This is the same orientation that it is recommended to adopt in managing change. The focus is on surfacing what people currently understand and how they behave, uncovering what is perceived to be holding them back, and identifying and working with the knowledge, frustrations and aspirations that challenge their 'status quo'. Only in doing so, can one effectively unleash the energy for change – in our perceptions of how to manage change just as much as our views of our organizational roles and responsibilities?

The beginning question for such reflection on education is a simple one. What type of knowledge are we dealing with here? Is the role of this text, and the lecturer, to instill into the reader or student our existing knowledge of the subject? This is what has been referred to as the injection in the head model of education. It is what, drawing on its traditional Latin derivation, is meant by indoctrination – from in doco: to force in. Or, as we argue here, is it about inspiring and supporting reflection on what, in a sense, we already know, and encourage its further development? This is the traditional meaning of education – from educo: to lead out.

As Albert Einstein observed, in essence even 'hard' science is 'nothing more than a refinement of everyday thinking'. In humanities and the so-called social sciences, this is even more obviously the case. What they deal with is the meaning of the world for people, most importantly how they understand and interpret the actions of others and themselves. What does it mean, however, to say that knowledge of managing change is 'nothing more than a refinement of everyday thinking'. There are important implications.

Firstly, we begin not with an objective reality but existing cultural beliefs and values. We are not 'forcing in' expert knowledge inaccessible to the ignorant public but discussing shared understandings. Change management concepts such as 'resistance to change', 'visionary leadership', 'coalition building' and so on did not lay fallow waiting for a psychologist or social scientist to 'discover' them. They are something that we already 'know'. The first component of education in managing change is to bring out what is already part of our common heritage. It is about giving people the confidence to listen carefully to what they know and give them an opportunity to express and discuss it.

## ACTION

*Try brainstorming as a group in the following way. Thinking about your own lives and experiences, what you would see as the main issues in managing change? What do you think are major change concepts or ideas? What do you see as being possible change techniques? Check the list with the areas and topics covered in a change textbook or course? Have you covered them? Have you even added to them? What does this say?*

Secondly, our cultural values and beliefs are not simple or unambiguous. They are, as we noted above, somewhat like an ungainly octopus. We are forced to live with the ambiguities, paradoxes and ambivalences that make up our often murky cultural life. What this means is that there are tensions and contradictions between different values and beliefs, and they change character over time and. We spend much of our lives grappling with the dramas these create for us. The American change guru, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, notes as one of the paradoxes of managing change, that one has to do far more work, yet still be a good partner, parent and friend in one's private life! Our culture values success, and the money, power, material lifestyle, and occupational status that comes with it. Yet, it also values, putting one's family and friends first, living life to the full, and not being overly preoccupied with job and career. We craft and play out the drama of our lives in cultures that are riven with the tensions and anxieties created by such contradictory values. A second dimension of 'education' in change, therefore, is to uncover such ambiguities, tensions and contradictions in how our culture understands 'managing change', as a basis for grappling with them.

*"The elements of a culture are not like a pile of sand and not like a spider's web. It's more like an octopus, a rather badly integrated creature – what passes for a brain, keeps it together, more or less, in one ungainly whole."*

*Clifford Geertz, 1973, The Interpretation of Cultures, Basic Books, New York, pp.407-408*

Thirdly, education is not simply about elaborating what your values and beliefs are. It is also about stimulating critical reflection upon them. One part of this is the initial 'surfacing' in the face of barriers. Many of our common-sense understandings are tacit rather than conscious, implicit in our action and behavior rather than something that we are normally aware of. In change, for example, we are often very good at seeing 'resistance' in others, and not so good at seeing it in ourselves. We talk about the importance of engaging emotions, but then in practice restrict ourselves to rational argument. We accept the importance of passion and vision, and then proceed to outline a change program as an instrumental and practical activity. And so on, and so on. Once pointed out, people not only realize what they are doing, but are agreed about the problems that it creates. Yet, prior to such surfacing, they are often only half-aware of their tendency to do such things during change.

In various ways, however, we also actively neglect, ignore, avoid, deny or repress what we believe, know or value. This may be something individual, part of our personality, upbringing and so on. We may, for example, act aggressively towards people locked into established



routines, for we are angry with our parents for not changing when we tried to influence them as a child. It may also be social, a systematic pattern due to the bias inherent in all cultures or situations in which power is exercised. The U.S. organizational learning expert, Chris Argyris, gives us a nice simple exercise. Imagine yourself in a meeting. Draw two columns. In the left hand column, write down what we said to each other. In the right hand column, write down our thoughts and feelings. In modern organizations in which rationality is respected and emotion often not formally acknowledged, there is frequently a major disjunction between the two columns. The 'silencing' is systematic not individual. Education is about finding ways to overcome such barriers, and make explicit what is less well-understood or, for various reasons, not fully acknowledged. In the classroom, everyone might recognize that in many life situations, they feel unable to or fearful about giving voice to their thoughts and feelings, and acknowledge that they should do so. Yet turn this focus on the classroom at that time, and try to raise the unspoken issues, power relations and so on...and people become very quiet and uncomfortable, or smile and laugh nervously.

Yet education, as critical reflection, involves even more than surfacing these issues. It concerns what is done with them. It is about questioning the assumptions that we hold, the patterns of behavior that we observe, the values and beliefs that are widespread or the practices that we uncover. Do they hinder effective action? Do they hold us back – from who we want to be as well as what we want to do? In our private lives, for example, we all openly desire and pursue warm relationships, intimacy, fun and entertainment. Yet in our purportedly rational organizations, we are often not allowed to openly express and pursue such meaningful activities. Yet we all know that such aspirations are there, and most agree they are worth pursuing. So what does this say about how we should conduct ourselves at work? Should we shift how we behave? If we then bring in the issue of managing change, this general issue has more immediate saliency. If managing change involves 'winning hearts and minds', do we not have to merge these areas of our life more? How do we combine our own search for meaning with the collective sensemaking of an organizational community? And if we do merge such activities, what are the potential dangers as well as advantages? Such reflection is the immediate subject matter of education as critical reflection.

#### **BEING CRITICAL AND BECOMING AUTHENTIC: A PROCESS VIEW**

*It is increasingly argued that people in organizations should be more authentic in their behavior. As a leader, as a change agent, as a person capable of coping with the stresses of confrontation and uncertainty, there is an argument for better aligning who we pretend to be with who we are, and who we are with who we want to be. But how do we know who that is? And, if we know, why do we not follow it in any case?*

*As befits the study of change, and how to act in the event(s) of change, two schools of thought help us to capture the social dynamics of this process – pragmatism and expressivism. Pragmatism emphasises the uncertain nature and role of practical knowledge in action. It also explores how we forge our understanding of our 'selves' in complex meaningful interactions with others.*

*Expressivism regards personal and collective development as a process of self-clarification through attempted expression, emergent reflection on the limitations of what we have created and become, and re-expression. For both schools of thought, education is about critical reflection not technical instruction. In part, it involves the task of 'de-reifying' the taken-for-granted world, not accepting its strictures, showing how what is mistakenly taken to be a necessary, universal and inevitable social condition or reality is the product of choice, convention and history.*

*What do such apparent abstractions mean for education in managing change? Firstly, a crucial component is recognizing uncertainty, complexity and process as a central feature of all action. Any reduction of managing change to the discovery and application of simple methods and standard techniques fails to capture this reality. It thereby distracts from and hinders education in 'knowing how' to change. Secondly, what is identified as individual and collective 'purposes' of change, the 'barriers' to change and the 'outcomes' are all temporal historical constructs in an ongoing, dynamic and dialectical sequence. Education in managing change involves communicating this fluidity, and grasping the tensions, contradictions and partial resolutions that drive it. Thirdly, all such change situations are an iterative process of action-under-uncertainty, reflection-on-action, and re-action based on an amalgam of the first two activities. Education in managing change is, thereby, involved in setting up the basis for creative experimentation and learning not instruction in applied knowledge. And, as we shall see, this is intimately linked with your identity, how you see but also how you handle yourself and others.*

#### **1.4. This book and the course.**

*"Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence."*

*Robert Frost*

This book and associated course is designed to support such an education in managing change.

## 2. The 5M change framework.

### 2.1. An introductory roadmap.

The brief roadmap outlined in this section introduces you to the key issues and actions in managing change. It provides a bridging framework between a leaflet series outlining each section of the Roadmap and the overheads for presentation the course. If after reading this introduction you would like a copy of the leaflets or course overheads, then contact should be made with the author at the email address included in the introduction to the book. Each of the leaflets introduces the key topic areas in managing change. Overheads in the course then take up one of the issues in each topic. The key feature of the managing change roadmap is the introduction of the 5M Action Framework. This framework is integrative and action oriented. It integrates and makes accessible in a relatively simple form the main concepts, issues and perspectives on managing change. It is designed to do so in a manner that supports and guides action and reflection on managing change.

This approach is different to that presented in many other introductions to managing change. Unlike academic multiple perspectives texts, it spends more time on identifying key issues, shared assumptions and key challenges and paradoxes than outlining alternative frames or approaches. In contrast to prescriptive outlines of one best way of managing change, it is comprehensive and integrative in focus. As a means for pulling together and productively focusing the literature, it focuses on identifying and making accessible the key underlying contributions of the literature in the field. It does so in a manner that seeks to simplify theory while respecting the complexity of practice and the challenge of stimulating effective reflective practice. The reason for the selection of simple, dramatic and personal narratives to illustrate the framework is that this is a more effective method of supporting personal reflection on practice than more artificially detailed and objective Harvard style case studies.

As an introduction, this book and associated course, is based on the theory, practice and methods of education on reflective practice. It is deliberately short, to make it accessible. It focuses on providing key concepts, guidelines, maxims and principles for action. It illustrates this through practical, relevant and personalized stories. It emphasizes the central importance of practice, and the significance of informing and organizing systematic reflection on what it is important to recognize is a highly personal and potentially confronting experience

The main principles behind each of the 5Ms of the 5M framework that captures the essence of managing change as the Mindful Mobilizing of Maps, Masks and Mirrors are:

- ◆ *Mindful – Be Careful!*
- ◆ *Mobilizing – Be Proactive!*
- ◆ *Mapping – Be Prepared!*
- ◆ *Masks – Be a Player!*
- ◆ *Mirrors – Be Reflective!*

Before going onto the outline of the roadmap, however, have a quick think through the idea of change as a journey by reading about a common view of change as a river, or a trip down a river. Keep some of these ideas in mind, when reading through the inevitably abstract contours and directions of a 'river' map!

### *THE RIVER OF CHANGE*

*Think for a moment about attempts at change as embarking on a journey. In particular, view them as attempts at successfully navigating the way across or down a river. The course of events that we seek to influence is in many ways comparable to a river. They do not confront us as something fixed and static but as a fluid and changing set of elements, events and relationships. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus is well known for his controversial observation, "No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it is not the same river and he is not the same man."*

*Think about this for a moment, for it is more than a slogan. It is mistaken and dangerous to assume that what we confront each day are unchanging conditions, and that this will continue into the future. It makes us oblivious to changes that are occurring. In terms of the old fable, it is the mindset of the frog who boils alive when he does not detect the gradual changes in temperature. It also makes us insensitive to altered circumstances. It is a common trap amongst successful leaders to assume that what led to their success in the past, will work again in 'new' conditions.*

*Here, also, the second part of Heraclitus' statement applies. We are also changing. Who we were in the past and who we will be in the future are different to who we are now. Our changing abilities, motivation, reputation and character all alter not only who we are but how we are seen by others, how we relate to them, and our ability to influence them. It is one of the most dangerous illusions that people are prone to, to believe that they themselves have not or will not change – and, most importantly, accept that what they need, what they are able to do, and therefore how they act must also change.*

*The main intellectual founder of contemporary change management, the German Jewish émigré Kurt Lewin is commonly known for what a contemporary change guru, Rosabeth Moss Kanter calls the 'ice cube' model of change. He stated that change required 'unfreezing' an unchanging status quo, 'moving' people to the next fixed state, and then 'refreezing' the new habits and behaviors. But he was more sensitive to the fluid river of change than that. How he put it was,*

*"From what has been just discussed, it is clear that by a state of "no social change" we do not refer to a stationary but to a quasi-stationary equilibrium; that is, to a state comparable to that of a river which flows with a given velocity in a given direction during a certain time interval. A social change is comparable to a change in the velocity or direction of that river."*

*Lewin, Kurt 'Quasi-Stationary Equilibria and the Problem of Permanent Change', in K.Burke et.al. (Eds.), Organizational Change. A Comprehensive Reader, Wiley, New York, p.74*

*This raises a key feature of the view of change as a river, or as our journey upon that river. This is the idea of how, and in what sense, we 'go with the flow'. As the leading global expert on rational decision making, James March (and his colleague Michael Cohen), put it,*

*"If you put a man in a boat and tell him to plot a course, he can take one of three views of his task. He can float with the currents and winds, letting them take him wherever they wish; he can select a destination and try to use full power to go directly to it regardless of the current or winds; or he can select a destination and use his rudder and sails to let the currents and wind eventually take him where he wants to go."*

*Michael Cohen and James March, 1986, Leadership and Ambiguity, Harvard Business Press, Boston, p.214*

*The image is clear. The overly-rational controlling image of change has faith in 'full power'. In contrast, the extreme Que Sera Sera 'go with the flow' Wind in the Willows approach attempts to exert no influence whatever:*

*Water Rat: "Believe me, my young friend, there is nothing – absolutely nothing – half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats. Simply messing, he went on dreamily: messing – about – in boats; messing –*

*"Look ahead, Rat!" cried the Mole suddenly.*

*It was too late. The boat struck the bank full tilt. The dreamer, the joyous oarsman, lay on his back at the bottom of the boat, his heels in the air.*

*"– about in boats – or with boats, the Rat went on composedly, picking himself up with a pleasant laugh. "In or out of them, it doesn't matter. Nothing seems really to matter, that's the charm of it. Whether you get away, or whether you don't; whether you arrive at your destination or whether you reach somewhere else, or whether you never get anywhere at all, you're always busy, and you never do anything in particular; and when you've done it there's always something else to do, and you can do it if you like, but you'd much better not..."*

*Grahame, K., 2012, The Wind in the Willows Simon and Brown, New York p.7*

*However, those who attempt to exercise the art of influence are proactive but are sensitive to their limited ability to intervene in the flow. As the US authority on culture and leadership, Robert Quinn puts it,*

*"Most people are clinging to the bank, afraid to let go and risk being carried along by the current of the river. At a certain point, each person must be willing to simply let go, and trust the river to carry him or her along safely. At this point he learns to 'go with the flow' and it feels wonderful.*

*Once he has gotten used to being in the flow of the river, he can begin to look ahead and guide his own course onward, deciding where the course looks best, steering his way*

*around boulders and snags, and choosing which of the many channels and branches of the river he prefers to follow, all the while still 'going with the flow.'"*

*Quinn, R.E., 1988, "Beyond Rational Management: Mastering the Paradoxes and Competing Demands of High Performance," Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, p. 164*

*When we are 'looking ahead', however, what does the river of change look like. For some, it is one-directional, smooth and placid. For others, more multi-directional, rough and tumultuous. As Yiannis Gabriel, the UK academic most attuned to the stories that we tell about our organizations, puts it,*

*"Organizations are likened to many things – machines, armies, garbage cans, theatrical plays, the human body, and so on. We find the analogy of a river helpful. Like a river, an organization may appear static and calm if viewed on a map or from a helicopter. But this says little about those who are actually on or in the moving river, whether swimming, drowning or safely ensconced in boat...the images of organization which we generate have more in common with the moving, changing, living river than the tidy lines of a map."*

*Stephen Fineman, Yiannis Gabriel and David Sims, 2005, Organizing and Organizations, Sage, London, p.2*

*Like Sue Dopson, who sees life in organizations more like Edgar Allen Poe's Fisherman in the Maelstrom than a Wind in the Willows summer cruise down a placid river, Gabriel et al. give us a more anxious and confronting view of the experience in the river of change.*

*Andrew Pettigrew, head of the Centre for Change at the University of Warwick, and leading UK expert in strategic change, adds another dimension in his analysis of change as a complex 'process'. The 'flow' is not as simple and linear as many river images lead us to believe. As he puts it,*

*"If the process is our stream of analysis, the terrain around the stream which shapes the flow of events and is in turn shaped by them is a necessary part of the process of investigation. However, the interactionist field of analysis occurs not just in a nested context but alongside other processes. Metaphorically we are studying some feature of organizational life not as if it represents one stream in one terrain, but more like a river basin where there may be several streams all flowing into one another, dependent on one another for their life force and shaping and being shaped by varieties of terrain each constraining and enabling in different intensities and ways. This quality of the interactionist field moves us into the form of holistic explanation which is the apotheosis of the processual analysis."*

*Andrew Pettigrew, 1997, "What is a Processual Analysis?," Scandinavian Journal of Management, Vol.13, No.4, pp. 337-348, p. 340*

*Finally, how do we understand ourselves and our activities in the complicated and varying river of change? Do we see ourselves as heroes, victims or something more complex. The temptation is, as Nietzsche puts it so well...*

*"The small force that it takes to launch a boat into the stream should not be confused with the force of the stream that carries it along: but this confusion appears in nearly all biographies."*

*Friedrich Nietzsche*

## **2.2. Managing change.**

This section introduces you to the idea of managing change as the art of influencing ourselves and others to achieve a purpose.

Firstly, the issue of control. Does the phrase 'managing change' itself suggest a degree of control over change that is unrealistic? Does it point us to the important issue of influencing change, yet mislead us with outdated images of rationality and control? Secondly, managing change focuses our attention onto people. It directs us towards the challenges of implementation and the key people dimension of all forms of change. But does it do so in a way that relegates it to a 'Human Resource' issue? Is managing change reduced to people issues in implementation or is it a key strategic capability and challenge? Thirdly, what is the purpose of managing change? Is managing change about managing activities, capturing hearts and minds or furthering individual and organizational development? Do these purposes overlap or are they in tension? Is managing change about manipulation or realization?

### *2.2.1. Control.*

Our civilization is built on a belief in science, rationality and progress. Organizations are upheld as institutions established to efficiently pursue their purposes. Whatever one thinks about such beliefs, they are widespread. They are the doctrines we are schooled in and the assumptions that lie behind many of our policies and practices. They are, in a sense, the cultural air that we breathe.

It should be no surprise, therefore, that managing organizational change is often regarded as a control technique. Organizations draw on management science and knowledge of how change occurs to effectively plan and execute deliberate change initiatives. Managing change is seen to involve diagnosis and planning, identifying stakeholders and developing strategies for cooption and overcoming resistance, developing and communicating corporate visions and associated strategies, creating counseling and support structures, establishing leadership and team building training and regulation, programming and supporting project teams and initiatives and so on. Training in managing change is associated with instruction on the knowledge governing such change dynamics, and the multiplicity of such techniques available for their manipulation.

## THOUGHT EXERCISE: MUDANCAS!

*How would you view change differently if you replaced the phrase 'managing organizational change' by 'leading changing institutions'? Think this through, and then check how this contrast is outlined in Badham, R., 2006, 'Mudancas not Removalists: Rethinking the Management of Organisational Change', Human Factors and Ergonomics in Manufacturing, 16, 3, 229-245.*

While programmed change management activities are an important element of all change initiatives, presented in this way they do not capture the complex, personal and controversial dimensions of managing change in practice. There is consequently a danger that managing change may appear to be little more than another level of strategy and planning – the kind of rational planning that is done to implement rational plans! The confronting, challenging, paradoxical nature of change practice is then overlooked.

## WRESTLING IN THE MUDPIT

*Managers in an Australian steel plant were being pressured to initiate a major cultural change. They were uncomfortable about facing up to conflicts with each other, about the problems of changing their roles, about the uncertain consequences of devolving their responsibilities. They were scared about whether they were going to be able to match up to the demands upon them to now be 'leaders' of men rather than administrators of things. They turned to a management academic and consultant who was working closely with them, and asked for a course on managing change. The academic/consultant, buoyed by this interest in his work, visited their superior to give him the good news that his reports are interested in learning more about change. His response was unexpected. 'Fine, I have no trouble with that. But you do realize that this is just an exercise in avoidance, don't you?' 'No, why?' 'Well, they are now all feeling uncomfortable about what is happening to them. They don't like the conflict, the confrontation, the pain. They want something to take this away from them. And they hope that a course on change management will do this. What they really need to do is to get into the mud pit and start wrestling.'*

Managing change in practice is an interpersonal process characterized by all the uncertainties, ambiguities, confrontations, hopes and fears that are the stock in trade of human existence. To capture this, a broad understanding of managing change is required – as the art of influencing ourselves and other people to achieve a purpose. The exercise of this art is just as applicable to ensuring that a change program works out in practice as it is to planning how corporate strategy is to be implemented in the first place.

As an art, managing change is creative and interpretive, not simply a matter of applying technique. As an exercise in influence, it considers intervention as a desirable and necessary activity, but does not confuse this with controlling change. As an exercise in achieving purposes, it addresses a fundamental feature of all our lives, outside organizations as well as within. This is the fundamental gap that exists between what we aspire to and what we achieve, what we hope and dream for and what we attain, what we intend or say that we will do and what we actually do. Education in managing change cannot ever overcome this di-



vide. It is part of the human condition. What it can do, however, is to make us more attuned to the challenges that it poses. It can inspire us to take up such challenges, and cope better with the strains and tensions that it creates. It can improve our understanding of this divide, and in so doing help develop our ability to reduce it.

### *2.2.2. People.*

In considering how to influence ourselves and other people in change, modern organizations have a systematic bias towards addressing the rational, systemic and structural dimensions of this problem. As a result, they routinely under-emphasize the importance of the emotions, mindsets and motivations of those involved.

The rigorous formulation of strategy often takes priority over addressing the practicalities of implementation. In organizational innovation, the transformation of systems and structures receives greater emphasis than changing people's actions and behaviors.

Managing change is commonly identified with addressing this imbalance, focusing on implementation rather than strategy, people issues rather than technical ones. Insofar as it goes, this characterization captures some crucial elements of change management. What it omits, however, is the importance of addressing implementation when strategy is being developed, and creating structures and cultures that address both systemic and people dimensions of innovation rather than simply paying attention to the neglected people features of change. Managing change, if it is to successfully address the achievement of organizational purposes, cannot be restricted to a human resource (HR) or organizational development (OD) add on. It is a core strategic and innovation capability.

### *2.2.3. Purpose.*

The broad definition of managing change adopted here emphasizes that it is an ongoing activity not a 'one hit' phenomenon. It is a mindful and adaptive process not a 'controlling' one. The definition focuses us on the fact that both human beings and organizations have or set their own purposes but then they have to act to bring these purposes about. It is one thing to have dreams, goals and aspirations. It is another thing to realize them in the world. Even once we recognize that we have to act to bring these purposes about, and develop plans to do so, these plans still have to be put into action. In turn, in order to generate action one has to effectively mobilize oneself (and often other people) to get things done, and this is, ultimately, not a science or technique but a practice – 'the practice of influence'. It is a mindset or capability that pervades our whole existence, it is not just a role that is donned in order to deal with particular organizational activities. Why is it valid to see such a general activity as achieving purposes as 'managing change'? Because, setting purposes is in a sense planning 'change'. It means going beyond accepting what the world is like or routinely following habit. It involves imagining a different situation you would prefer yourself, others or the world to be in. It therefore involves envisioning and deciding to bring about a 'change'. As the emphasis on achieving purposes is intended to illustrate, managing change is not, in the first

instance, about this envisioned 'change' (involving visions, strategies goals, etc.), where it came from, its adequacy, how you set it and so on. It is about execution, action to bring about the envisioned change. And this always translates into a practice of influence.

However, if one wants to influence oneself and others, then the nature of the envisioned change, how it was created etc. is a consideration. Setting purpose and direction can take the form and be set up in such a way that it supports or hinders the ability to bring it about. To adopt a managing change perspective is, to place primary focus on realization and execution, and secondary focus on the nature of the change itself. It must be emphasized, however, that this does not restrict managing change to simple execution or implementation. What it does mean is thinking through the nature, desirability and practicality of envisioned changes and the manner in which such changes are envisioned and set.

*It is how you do the dishes*

*Managing change is not an extraordinary management activity but a set of skills, capabilities and activities that are present in normal routine management, as well as in our personal lives outside the organization. In one study comparing the work of change managers in large manufacturing plants in the Netherlands and Australia, a Mintzberg style exercise was undertaken to explore 'what change managers do'. It was initially thought that it would not be too difficult to distinguish between 'change' activities and 'non-change' activities, but this proved to be mistaken. The plant manager in the Australian plant viewed how he dealt with trade union disputes, how performance reviews were conducted, how new employees were recruited, and how weekly management meetings were undertaken as all symbolic of either the 'old' or the 'new' way of thinking and behaving. The way 'routine' management was conducted both influenced and expressed the planned cultural change. As the Zen Buddhist slogan goes, "Ethics is not what you do after you do the dishes, it is how you do the dishes!"*

Managing change is, in effect, a discipline – a means or process for ensuring that when strategies and purposes are set they are actually achieved. However, this discipline can take a number of different forms.

The first two forms, as management and leadership, are not intrinsically linked to how goals and purposes are established. One form is managing change represented as a managerial technique, a set of planning, budgeting and control methods to ensure that projects deliver on commercial outcomes. Another form is managing change as a leadership activity of aligning people's hearts and minds behind a communal purpose. This involves motivating people to adopt a new direction, and supporting them in the difficult personal and organizational transition process.

The third form, exploring change as development, views the setting and achievement of purposes as intrinsically related. Managing change, as development, is a critical and reflective process, challenging routine habit, institutional authority and established practice in the light of emerging ideas, values and aspirations. It is based on finding and expressing individ-

ual and organizational voice as a central feature of the process of mobilizing people for change. It ties change into a developmental activity of overcoming outdated, resistant and repressive structures.

Managing change, defined as the art of influencing ourselves and other people to achieve a purpose, captures all three dimensions or forms of change management. Management and leadership, by themselves, are merely techniques of manipulation and control. However, when combined with the focus on development, means and ends are closely intertwined. The basis upon which people come to define and agree upon purposes becomes a central issue for understanding and evaluating how they pursue them. How purposes are defined are regarded as of central significance in mobilizing people to achieve them. This critical edge to change management is lost in the less critical, restricted and orthodox approaches to managing change.

### **2.3. Experiencing change.**

This section introduces you to the personal confronting nature of the change experience. It presents this experience in terms of a dominant image: a Death Valley Rollercoaster. Firstly, the frustrating and anxious 'Death Valley' experience of the difficulties involved in 'getting in', 'getting on' and 'getting out'. Secondly, the series of emotional rollercoaster highs and lows rather than any simple one-dimensional progression. Thirdly, the scary and exhilarating, anxious and inspiring, nature of the tumultuous ride.

Why this strong focus on the experience of change? It is to help combat any tendency to reduce managing change to a simple technique or rational solution. As Einstein aptly put it, "You cannot solve a problem with the same thinking that caused the problem." And one doesn't solve the problem of 'implementing' a strategy by creating a strategy for implementation or address the 'people' dimension of systems change by introducing a systemic people approach! There is more involved than that. In particular, the inherently uncertain, challenging, emotional and confronting nature of interpersonal change processes.

#### *2.3.1. The 'Death Valley' of change.*

A recognition of the significance of the 'Death Valley' experience is absolutely crucial for any serious attempt to grapple with managing change. Our unreflective view of change is one of instructing or pushing others to move from the 'bad' irrational world of the past to the 'good' rational world that we believe to be incontrovertibly necessary or desirable. When others fail to understand, appreciate or 'get the point', we get frustrated, upset and angry at their 'resistance'. The outcome is often unproductive and dysfunctional behavior that fails to persuade or influence others to change. What a recognition of the 'Death Valley' of change does is forewarn us of the difficulties and frustrations to come.

The first hurdle is 'getting in' in the first place i.e. getting people to listen to us, overcome established prejudices, unthinking habits and dearly held routines and rituals. People have to be persuaded and influenced to change, and this requires standing back, seeing the world

from their standpoint, and working on the reality as they see it. This activity can be very frustrating. When faced with denial and anger at what we see to be totally reasonable, most of us tend to 'resist the resistance'. We end up denying the denial, or getting angry at the anger, directly mimicking the so-called irrational resistance that we have identified.

The second hurdle is 'getting on', and addressing the depression, apparently insurmountable obstacles and declining levels of confidence that all result from losing a world with which we are familiar and practiced, and facing the backlash from ourselves and others in the form of repeated attempts to reinstate the old way of doing things. As Rosabeth Moss Kanter, the US HBR professor of change puts it, this is the stage of the 'difficult middles'. As she repeatedly states, the 'change always looks worse from the middle'. The temptations to give up at this stage are immensely strong.

The third hurdle is 'getting out', coming out the other side, and stabilizing a new set of arrangements without 'slipping back' into old ways once the initial enthusiasm, energy and attention is over. Again, this is another challenging phase, as worn out and tired by the effort required to get to this stage, there may be insufficient energy and resources available to avoid the tendencies to slip back. Or, in contrast, a premature optimism that everything has been achieved and bedded in, can result in a failure to persist in ensuring that slippage does not occur.

The basic point of the 'Death Valley' experience is not, however, that the change process can be split into three simple stages. The change experience is far from being that simple. The central issue is the anxiety, frustration and emotion generated by being confronted with these various hurdles, hurdles that may assail a change program all at the same time rather than in easy sequential stages! In the face of such turmoil, there is a temptation to run away from the confronting experience. This often takes the form of a search for, or an exaggerated faith in, a managing change technique, methodology or set of experts to solve the problems. This is, however, little more than an exercise in avoidance, contributing to the perpetuation of the problem rather than resolving it.

### *2.3.2 The rollercoaster.*

It would be nice to be able to see change as a linear process, and organize a change program that is planned, orderly and progressive in nature. This is, however, rarely, if ever, the case. When hurdles are overcome, confidence rises, and excitement, energy and even euphoria can result, as it appears – at least for a while – as if the problems have been overcome. But when a new set of hurdles emerges, and there is another set of problems and difficulties to face, anxiety, stress and depression can set in yet again. If, or when, these are, in turn, addressed and resolved, excitement and energy may rise again – until the next hurdle and downturn!

Life on the rollercoaster, proceeding through numerous ups and downs, is inevitably 'edgy'. In the midst of change, we become strangers to our old world and experiences without yet be-

coming settled inhabitants of a new world. The sense of anxiety, displacement and confusion of the 'marginal man' has been a traditional theme in history. Such people are, however, also known for their creativity and energy. In a sense, if change is seen as a form of transition ritual, those involved have the creativity, opportunity and freedom of being released from traditional ties, yet also the fear, uncertainty, ambivalence and confusion of the homeless. Life on the edge may also be one of enterprise and enthusiasm but it is rarely comfortable.

Again, intellectual recognition of the existence of a rollercoaster is still different from confronting the experience. Learning to adapt to this difficult experience is as much, if not more, a matter of emotional intelligence as an intellectual achievement.

### *2.3.3. The ride.*

The ride is rarely one of feeling 'in control'. There is rarely enough time, resources and energy available to address the major problems that emerge during change. Operational tasks and duties continue to demand attention, and managing change appears as yet another problematic burden, that it is difficult to find time for or undertake properly. Conditions are often uncertain, twists and turns unpredictable, and the pace of change too fast to allow comfort or complacency. Images of 'planned change' just do not grasp the experience of living and working on the 'edge of chaos'. The picture is not all bad. Change can be uplifting, creative, exhilarating and an opportunity for self-development and career advancement. It can, however, also be very scary, stressful, destructive and dangerous to mental health and one's economic and social fortunes.

There is, in short, no simple resting place. As Archimedes was celebrated for having commented, 'If I had a stable point, I could move the world.' In the midst of change, we may yearn for such stability, but rarely find it. Coming to terms with the turmoil, not denying or avoiding it, or relapsing into pathological routine behavior, counter-productive attempts to exert monolithic control or pathological optimism in technique, is an important part of coming to terms with the practice of change.

## **2.4. 5M action framework.**

This section provides a brief introduction to the overall 5M action framework designed to capture the experience of change and support the practice of managing change. This book introduces you to the 5Ms of managing change – the Mindful Mobilizing of Maps, Masks and Mirrors. These are further illustrated in the booklets, overheads, presentations, videos and exercises in the Managing Change course.

This framework has been developed with some hesitation. I do not particularly like frameworks, particularly as a crudely used educational tool. When people are given a frame, they often forget the work! They are often unaware of the work that went in to constructing it, and in this sense remain ignorant. Users of a framework are also often unprepared for the work necessary to apply, interpret, reflect, reinterpret and in general makes sense of the

framework they have been given, and modify and develop it for their own purposes. Such work is a personal challenge and opportunity, not simply an intellectual one.

In recognition of this situation, the 5M action framework is, one that seeks to build on and give recognition to the complexities and challenges of change practice, not to undermine any such recognition. It is intended to help inform, motivate and encourage practical understanding, reflection and action not prevent it by substituting a set of easy guidelines or slogans.

#### *2.4.1. The emergence of the framework.*

The 5M action framework emerged over time through numerous experiences with change projects in a variety of organizations, wide (if not 'wild') readings of voluminous literature not only on change but which bore on change, and, most importantly, a series of iterations in intensive courses with intelligent, experienced and critical students and practitioners.

The first 'M' to emerge was 'Mapping'. Traditional ideas of 'planning' change appeared far too boring, academic and even anal. They have an aura of briefs written by specialists with something to prove and defend. They also often fail totally to capture the guesswork, the improvisation, the uncertainty, the ambiguity and the paradoxes inherent in really finding and following a change direction. Remembering work done in the history of science on how maps are socially constructed, and the political roles they played in the past, I began to look at plans as 'maps'. Soon, I was overwhelmed with literature on the fact that the 'map is not the territory', the complex interpretation of maps, allegories about the philosophical search for perfect maps, the skills of map reading and so on. So, I became happier with the term. One of the key values of using the term 'maps' is that it emphasizes that the 'journey' is the thing, and that mapping is a very partial activity in this quest. It also focuses on the practical importance of discussing, working out and reflecting on change features, dynamics and consequences. Mapping change is no mere academic exercise. It thus provides us with a frame for looking at what are, in effect, relatively endless discussions about the real characteristics, patterns and dynamics of change.

The second 'M' to emerge was that of being 'Mindful' in the process of change. I spent much of my time in practicing and teaching change, in making people aware of the substantial personal and social barriers to change. I also became increasingly aware as time went on, that despite all the talk on managing change, techniques, methods and so on, most of us remain totally unprepared and effectively dysfunctional when confronted with the disruptions, discomfort and anxiety of change. This was particularly noticeable, in instances too numerous to mention, amongst people who were so-called 'experts' in change. In addition, I was often reminded of one change project, in an Australian rod mill steel plant, when a concern of mine turned out to be correct. We had carried out a highly successful technology redesign project involving all stakeholders and participants. It had been tense and a struggle, but it had worked. They asked us back, and I sent a colleague to carry out the project. She was totally confident. She had the tools, we had the credibility, and she was going 'up there'

to impart her knowledge. I became worried. Things are never this easy. The result? You guessed it, disaster and chaos. I have never forgotten the importance of remaining on guard and expecting the unexpected in what are often challenging and confronting organizational contexts. In combination, all of these factors led me to recommend caution. At that time, I read the work of Karl Weick and Rosemary Sutcliffe on 'mindfulness' in what they term 'high reliability organizations', and the term stuck!

The third 'M' was Mirrors. This was, again, somewhat accidental. I was sent a leaflet from the University of Warwick, my old university, on a day-long introduction to different research schools or 'labs' developing and testing out alternative means for reflecting on practice. The workshop was interesting but what immediately hit me was a picture painted by Leonardo da Vinci, sitting alongside the title of the workshop: "The Mirror Game: Changing Practice through Reflection." I loved the idea, particularly because, like maps, the character and use of 'mirrors' is a well-known cultural symbol. Many artists have sought to convey the endless series of mirrors within mirrors that constitute our attempts at reflection. The myth of Narcissus warns against too strong an obsession with mirrors. Oscar Wilde even writes a short story about Narcissus' pool which, when asked how beautiful Narcissus was, replied that it hadn't noticed, it only saw its reflection in Narcissus' eyes! Also, of course, we all use mirrors in our own way. Some are deliberately tinted or narrowed. We preen ourselves in front of mirrors more to get a good image of ourselves than an accurate reflection. Is it then the camera rather than the mirror that never lies...or do we start selecting our photos as well? You can see the train of thought. The most important point is that ongoing evaluation and reflection is a crucial part of complex and uncertain change initiatives, and that there are a variety of psychological and organizational factors that obstruct and prevent accurate and truthful reflection. The idea of reflection as setting up 'mirrors' captures some of the personal as well as cultural aspects of how we hold 'mirrors' up to ourselves. In particular, how in the process of finding out how we look, we also selectively use, interpret and even deny what we see.

The fourth 'M' was 'Masks'. This followed quickly on from 'Mirrors'. The famous US sociologist, Anselm Strauss, wrote a classic book on identity called "Masks and Mirrors". He made the point, crucial to our understanding of change as well as social life in general, that we see ourselves in the eyes of other people, play to them, and receive our self-affirmation (or destruction!) from them. Once I had 'Mirrors', it was therefore not too far an intellectual jump to tag what I was trying to capture about managers change performance as the use of 'Masks'. This may at first seem a bit of a 'stretch'. I kept the term, however, because this very strangeness helps to focus our attention onto an important issue. In my thinking, the activity of 'managing change', split easily into 'change' (how to understand it, its patterns etc.) and 'managing' (how to influence or control it). Under 'managing', I sought to capture the range of controversial positions and stances by viewing them as variants on two main paradoxes – balancing 'planning' and 'emergence', as well as 'coercion' and 'constraint' – in influencing

styles. It was only later, having read contemporary work on performance in society, organizations and culture as well as the 'arts', that I realized how much of this involved skill, expertise and credibility in playing 'parts'.

We all understand our organizations to be made up of roles and responsibilities. These are ultimately, however, little more than a set of expectations imposed upon us, and sets of audiences who have to be convinced of the success of our performance. And in doing so, we have to be credible. In complex and uncertain situations, we also have to play multiple parts, and don different persona – in a sense, effectively taking on and taking off 'masks', and being credible in ones' use of them. My previous emphasis was on the fact that the exercise of influence was important, there were a number of key principles, tension and choices in this exercise, and how this was resolved was a matter of practice. The term practice, here, refers to the often semi-tacit capability of effectively dealing with ambiguity and confrontation in complex and contested situations. In supporting people to reflect on their practice, however, I have increasingly found the idea of performances, parts, scripts, audiences, masks etc. as a valuable one. Not only do we use theatrical or dramatic role-plays to encourage and support reflection, but we use theatrical ideas to help us to understand, generalize about and improve what is, essentially, our 'performance'. Where the rubber hits the road in change management – to use a horrible cliché – is when what we have mapped out and decided upon is actually put into practice in very specific personal situations. It is, then, about how we perform the tasks of influence in these settings.

The final 'M' was 'Mobilizing' – not because of the lack of centrality of the theme, but the difficulty I had of selecting an appropriate 'M' for what I wanted to say! The theme that it captures had always been something that had grabbed me in the change literature, and which needed to be conveyed as a central part of the framework. I first cut my intellectual teeth on change as a discipline reading the book by Rosabeth Moss Kanter, "The Change Masters". This book is, and remains, a classic for giving us a rich picture of the dynamism, complexity and challenges of change – yet also providing us with a relatively simple framework for thinking these issues through. Above it all, however, Kanter has an energy and enthusiasm for the proactive, make-it-happen, innovative individual – an enthusiasm I shared. Since that time there have been multiple authors, texts and programs outlining and seeking to encourage such 'enterprise'. This is so much so, that a number of critics are reflecting, quite appropriately, on whether this has been taken too far. Enterprise can be unhealthily stressful, undesirably destructive and undermining of other ambitions and values – at the same time as it can inspire creativity, self-development, comradeship and the removal of outdated and authoritarian constraints. My initial thoughts are, and these have remained with me, that this energy and enterprise is essential for inspiring change and helping people overcome the usual lack of resources, frustrating roadblocks and aggressive reactions and attacks. The theme only became a more formal one in my presentations, however, when I began to see what happened to people who were overwhelmed by the message of being 'Mindful'. Too great an emphasis on the difficulty and complexity of change is thoroughly



demotivating. As the famous English political philosopher Isaiah Berlin once said of Buddhism, it encourages a 'sour grapes' mentality – "If it is this difficult, if I can't easily win, then I am not going to try at all. I will take my ball and go home!" The "mindful" message was just too depressing, too de-energizing. What is needed is a strong and important counter-balance, and this is what is provided by the energy, enthusiasm, creativity and achievements of effective 'mobilization' of people and things.

#### *2.4.2. Key elements of the framework.*

The brief statement of the origins of the 5M action framework has been deliberately self-indulgent. It has done so for two reasons. Firstly, the telling of a 'narrative' helps to make ideas understandable. Secondly, it goes back into the origins of the framework, thereby, hopefully, breaking down the too abstract, uncritical and authoritarian use of the framework. For learning purposes, however, it might be useful to just quickly summarize the main elements.

The first two sections of the framework, Mindful and Mobilizing, address key comprehensive themes that have to be addressed in all areas of managing change. Managing change always requires being mindful of the problems and barriers that exist while being willing and able to mobilize energy and resources to address them. It also means being mindful of the practice gap that always exists between design and implementation, strategy and change, plans and outcomes, between 'what rules prescribe and situations demand'. Similarly, it also requires, the mobilization of thought, emotion, action and reflection in helping to span this gap. The first two foundation elements of the 5M framework are, consequently, being Mindful of such gaps and barriers, while being motivated and capable of Mobilizing oneself, others and additional resources to address them.

The next three sections of the framework, Maps, Masks and Mirrors, address key issue areas in managing change. Whether explicit or implicit, well-formulated or ad-hoc, managing change always involves mapping out any intended journey. These are viewed as maps, rather than plans, to illustrate their constructed and selective nature, and their instrumental, supportive and partial use in embarking on a (change) journey. Assessments of conditions, guidelines for action and so on, that emerge from any mapping process, all require translation into action or practice. This process involves the use of influence, and this is the theme of the section on masks. Influence has to be performed, and managers have to play their parts, or at least follow prescribed scripts, in order to have an effect. Finally, the processes of mapping and exercising influence are inherently ambiguous and uncertain. They inevitably involve a degree of experimentation and critical reflection. Managing change requires the creation of the, formal and informal intellectual, emotional, technical and political conditions necessary to establish effective learning spaces. The elaboration of these conditions is the central purpose of the final section on Mirrors.

#### *2.4.3. An action oriented exercise in integration.*

One of the complexities involved in any outline of managing change is that everyone who has an opinion about the nature of either management or change has a different slant on

what managing change involves and how it should be carried out. The topic provides an intellectual playground for ongoing debates about the main patterns and key drivers of change, whether change is best viewed as an ongoing emergent process or a periodic structured activity, a process driven by technology or culture, politics or the environment etc. This is added to by fundamental disputes over the nature of management as technique or practice, administration or leadership and so on.

Because of this range and diversity, it is quite sensible to argue that managing change is a non-topic. If the whole world is static, and then suddenly lurches into change, in predictable ways, then managing change is clearly a central and well-defined discipline. If, however, a broader view is undertaken of change as a dimension of what we do, an ongoing activity, and something that is often highly unpredictable, it is difficult to separate managing change out from normal management. This point is well-taken but, as argued at greater length elsewhere, I think the topic of managing change remains a valuable one, because it provides an interesting, dynamic and recognizably relevant frame for looking at organizational issues. The key question, therefore, is not whether or not it is 'a topic', but how valuable can be the treatment!

The approach adopted here, and represented in the framework, is that it is important to provide an integrative approach, covering the range of thought and discussion, but without 'flattening out' important areas of discussion and debate. It is, however, important to also be action oriented. The integration is not merely undertaken as a bundling together of frames or approaches, but an attempt to capture central themes and issues in a manner that will help us to understand, reflect upon and improve our own actions in managing change. Previously, the relapse of academia into 'multiple perspectives, provides an introduction to some of the richness of debate, but only does so at a cost. It is as if by noting the value of the alternative painting styles of Renoir, Monet, Picasso and Miro, one creates a better painting by putting them all onto one canvas. As some wits have caustically remarked, many of the academic 'isms' are now 'wasms' and we are beset by 'many approaches but few arrivals'!

The integration is, however, achieved in a way that is directly opposed to creating unreflective consultancy 'toolkits'. In the face of what is often presented as impractical scholasticism, managers often search for (and are provided with) checklists and techniques that they quickly forget, formal methodologies that they do not follow, and prescriptions that are offered with limited attention paid to the evidence on which they are based or the contextual factors that influence their relevance and use. The aim of the 5M framework is not, therefore, to provide unreflective instruction but to support critical reflection. It aims to provide what is widely accepted as a needed component in organization studies – the creation of bridging concepts and frameworks that integrate insights from multiple perspectives in providing suggestive guidelines and assisting in reflective learning.

As this text argues, managing change is a difficult and challenging practice. The complexity of this practice needs to be examined. Concepts, methods and sites need to be established to support reflection. In doing so, education into managing change needs to replace simplis-

tic views of practice with ones that recognize its complexity. To support this task, it needs to reduce the unnecessary complexity of academic theory (in both language and content) by providing simpler and more useable integrative frameworks. In a sense, and using loosely a favored phrase of Dutch sociotechnical designers, education on managing change needs to move from a discourse of complex theory/simple practice to one of a more simple theory/complex practice. The 5M framework developed in this book and associated course is an attempt to move us in this direction.

### 3. Mindful change.

This section introduces you to the idea of being mindful about change. It is a matter of being 'in touch' rather than 'out of touch' with the complexity of what is going on and the potential dangers within it. It embodies an injunction to be careful.

There are three key dimensions of what it is to be mindful. Firstly, to 'mind the gap'. Are you aware of gaps in your own life between what you preach and what you practice, what you hope for and what you pursue, what you plan and what you realize? Are you aware of and open to making mistakes and things going wrong? Minding the gap is all about responding creatively in the face of gaps between aspirations and achievements. Secondly, to recognize and take into account the barriers to change. Have you experienced in yourself and others a refusal to accept new and discomfoting information? Do you encounter organizational actions and patterns that just do not make sense? Welcome to normality, and the inevitable barriers to change that we have to be mindful of. Thirdly, to be mindful of the complexities involved in change. Have you ever observed yourself and others having been blindly overconfident in situations that turned out to be more complex and dangerous than you expected? Have you ever picked up on indications that things are 'not quite right', or 'going off track', but not told others about it or not done anything about it yourself? Being open to complexity and potential hazards, and proactive in addressing this, is a key challenge of change.

#### 3.1. Mind the gap.

In assessments by leading change experts around the world, change programs are seen as failing about two thirds of the time. The figures are woolly, and the assessments subjective, but the pervasiveness of the theme should cause serious reflection. Your odds of succeeding in your present project are, on such figures, less than a quarter of the chance of surviving Russian Roulette! It is sobering to keep this performance gap in mind when considering how much attention one should pay to managing change!

Such gaps are, however, not unique to change. If we repeat Michael Palin's rather nice summary about minding the gap from the photographic collection in the book *Mind the Gap*.

"Mind the gap, perhaps the most famous phrase associated with the London Underground, must surely have the creators of the service spinning in their graves. It's an acknowledgement that the thing doesn't quite work. That however fast and frequent the service, however comprehensive the network, the trains don't always fit the platforms [and these are]...not just gaps between the train and the platform, but between the designer and user, staff and passenger. And between dreams and reality."

What this points us towards is the fact that the world rarely turns out to be the rational, reasonable and responsible place one can be lured into believing it will be. In the famous Darwinian catch phrase, nature is often 'red in tooth and claw'! It is quite normal to find considera-

ble problems in just getting things done. Systematically we are confronted with multiple gaps between strategy and implementation, what rules prescribe and situations demand, and between what we know ought to be done (or ought to have been done) and what we actually do. Learning to accept, be wary of and live within these 'gaps' is a key part of coming to terms with change.

The acclaimed US organizational redesign specialist, James Taylor (not the singer!), tells the story of the notorious US Olympic pole-vaulter Dave Volz. He made an historic reputation for doing something that no one else had ever even considered doing. While passing over the high 'bar', at the zenith of his ascent, he dislodged the bar, and it was about to fall off. Thinking quickly, at a time when no-one else had ever thought there was space or opportunity, he leant slightly and nudged the bar back in place, before falling down the other side! Was this cheating or valid opportunism? Whatever one ultimately decides, the key point is that he was proactive at a time when no-one else realized there was even space for decision. Before things went totally 'belly up', he noticed potential dangers, and acted to avert them. It is just this attitude and initiative that is needed in the face of the multiple gaps – and potentially disastrous gaps – in any change initiative. Minding the gap involves expecting the unexpected and the problematic, being open to what is happening, and acting to remedy the situation before it gets out of 'hand'!

### **3.2. Barriers to change.**

Dictionary definitions of mindful refer to such things as being aware, bearing in mind, being attentive to, being regardful, heedful and observant. Managing change requires being mindful of the barriers to change. This is a relatively clear and obvious response to evidence of frequent failures to innovate and change. As Barbara Tuchman put it in "The March of Folly", there are many situations in which individuals and groups are faced with apparently obvious problems and clear avenues to address these problems, yet they stubbornly pursue another path. Why is this the case? It is important to be aware of the psychological and organizational reasons for such apparent blindness. The details are not, however, as important as the cultivation of a mindset that recognizes the existence of such barriers to change. As Lao-Tsu put it, in a discussion of military strategy, 'Don't underestimate the enemy'. Being mindful in change is about not underestimating the strength of the opposition. As Machiavelli warned,

*"There is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success nor more dangerous to manage, than the creation of a new system."*

It is this insight into the many difficulties and barriers to deliberate change that lay at the foundations of the classic analyst of change management, Kurt Lewin. Lewin has become well known for his prescription to look at every change as occurring in a force field – a set of interrelated forces that either hinder or promote the desired change. What Lewin added to this, however, was a view that in order to effectively bring about change, one has to work on

this force field and, in particular, work on reducing or removing the hindering forces. Where individuals, groups or organizations attain a state of 'quasi-equilibrium' – moving with some consistency in a particular direction – change can only be brought about by overcoming the web of forces that have given this direction a degree of stability.

Change in a force field can be brought about by strengthening promoting forces and weakening the resisting forces, but Lewin argued that it is the latter that should be of central concern. 'Pushing' change, injecting energy into a system with all the subsequent dangers of disruption and backlash, is a natural temptation, but a dangerous one. It is important to focus initial attention onto 'pulling' change, removing the conditions that would prevent the desired change from coming about. These may be substantial and habitual, little understood or actively repressed as unmentionable. Suggestive evidence for this view came from Lewin's classic experiment into changing the cooking habits of UK housewives in WW2 – trying to get them to help the war effort by cooking 'offal'. The interventions that 'pushed' change, 'selling' the change through charismatic presentations, appealing to duty and morality, and providing detailed recipe books was far less effective than those seeking to elicit from the housewives what would stop them from changing, and working with them in addressing these problems. In Lewin's work, and those of subsequent OD (organizational development) practitioners, mindfulness referred to the surfacing of such barriers, and the use of participative and consultative approaches to work on overcoming embedded 'resistance to change'.

Once the search for psychological and sociological hindrances to change is seriously undertaken, the barriers seem extreme. Individuals, and groups, see the world through, often deeply held, beliefs and perspectives. They possess taken-for-granted expectations about how people will and should behave, that anyone transgresses at their peril. And built into our individual makeup, as well as our organizational processes, are systematic filters, means for blinkering, denying, covering up, and even aggressively destroying any challenge to what we hold dear.

Being aware of such barriers makes us more attuned to the problems and threats facing any change initiative. While it aims to capture the strength of the opposition, this does not have to result in pessimism. It is, rather, to accept the full nature of the challenge, and support actively working on addressing the factors involved.

### **3.3. Mindful of complexity.**

As the US author Carrie McLaren outlined in "Mindless in America", much of our lives are dominated by automatic behavior, blinkered thinking, and undisciplined and wandering thoughts. These three main forms of 'mindlessness' require skill and discipline to overcome. As is the case with traditional Eastern thought and practice in this area, being mindful requires energy, attention, discipline and technique. As the Harvard psychologist Ellen Langer observes, it involves a "heightened sense of situational awareness and a conscious control over ones thoughts and behavior relative to the situation". This is only achieved by training and experience – in thinking, feeling and willing.

In emphasizing this performance dimension, Weick raises the crucial issue of shared mindfulness. In contrast to restrictive views of collective mind or 'group-think' that blinker and restrict perception and action, Weick emphasizes the important collective dimension of an alternative state of mindfulness, being more open, aware, attentive and vigilant towards uncertainty, change, inappropriate expectations and so on. This occurs, however, not simply as an individual phenomenon, it is not a matter of mindful super-heroes, but of a nested set of social interactions that stimulate, discipline, resource and support ongoing mindfulness. Some types of organizations (in his terms 'high reliability organizations') provide us with models of the forms that this might take and how it might be supported. Weick and Sutcliffe point to 5 main dimensions:

- ◆ Preoccupation with failure.
- ◆ Reluctance to simplify.
- ◆ Sensitivity to operations.
- ◆ Commitment to resilience.
- ◆ Deference to expertise.

In combination, these are seen as crucial systemic components of 'high reliability' or 'safety' cultures, and can easily be applied as characteristics of mindful change cultures.

## 4. Mobilizing change.

*"It takes a good leader to recover from an error, a great one to use it."*

*Cardinal Richelieu, The Three Musketeers*

This section introduces you to the idea of managing change as an exercise of will as well as intellect, as the positive and proactive mobilization of people and things to ensure that things get done.

There are three key dimensions of this feature of managing change. Firstly, the nature and significance of adopting an entrepreneurial mindset towards addressing the challenges and opportunities of change. Secondly, the key importance of establishing a powerful and effective coalition for mobilizing change, a coalition that centrally involves influential individuals, change action teams and broader stakeholder alliances. Thirdly, the major significance of mobilizing oneself for change. The energy, initiative and persistence necessary to realize change can only come from someone sufficiently willing, motivated and committed. This means deliberately and creatively seeking alignment between one's personal goals, individual career and the institutional benefits of any change program.

This section introduces you to the idea of mobilizing people and things as a key dimension of change. It involves being creative, energetic, persistent and opportunistic in creating, supporting and defending the momentum for change. It is the 'glass half full' mentality in a difficult context in which there are multiple temptations to indulge in the 'blame game'. It embodies an injunction to be proactive.

### 4.1. Entrepreneurs.

There is rarely enough time and resources to manage change 'properly'. Most individuals and organizations are already busy, and often highly stressed, in performing their routine work. Change is another burden, and putting the time, energy, thought and creativity into overcoming potential problems can appear to be just too difficult. This situation is made worse by a number of additional factors. Firstly, the fact that the information handled and required is inevitably impressionistic, uncertain and fuzzy. Individuals and organizations who feel more comfortable with certainty, clear evidence and precise rules, will tend to regard the speculative nature of change diagnosis and action as too hard to handle. Secondly, reflections on 'change' as an issue often come hard on the heels of 'problems' in existing or previous change experiences, the proactive change agent is, therefore, often on the back foot at the start of any serious consideration of how to manage change better. As the cliché goes, managing change appears to have all the uncertainty and pressure of changing the tyres on an automobile while it is in motion. As one change team member remarked, "I used to have one job, now I have two!"



In this context, as one senior Australian plant manager remarked, “some people have the get up and go, and put in that extra bit of effort, that is essential to get things to happen.” As John Kotter aptly observed in an early book on Power and Influence, most people in organizations suffer from a ‘power gap’ i.e. a gap between what is required of them in their job and the time and resources that they are provided with to get it done. This is particularly the case with the ‘additional’ job of change.

The fostering of the entrepreneurial mindset necessary to forcefully and creatively address such problems is an essential component of the mobilization of people and things necessary to get change to happen. At one level, this is an individual capability and attribute, and has been the consistent theme of decades of explorations of entrepreneurial mindsets, successful influencers of other people and the habits of highly effective people. At another level, however, it is a characteristic of cultural and structural environments. Individuals and groups live and work in contexts that can create feelings, attitudes and set of behaviors of powerlessness. This is the consistent theme of managerial gurus such as Tom Peters, Rosabeth Moss Kanter and Stephen Covey in their exhortations for managers and organizations to overcome the frustrating and inhibiting constraints of traditional bureaucratic structures and mindsets. It is, however, also a theme present in radical critiques of how systematic lack of opportunity, access to resources and experience of repression can lead to self-reinforcing cycles of powerlessness amongst disadvantaged individuals, groups and communities.

There is a temptation in a modern culture that celebrates innovation and change, to rather simplistically heroise entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurial way of life. As a growing body of critics are now observing, however, there are a variety of personal and social costs to a too simplistic and dogmatic pursuit of entrepreneurialism. Burnout, family collapse, corruption and recklessness are all potential negative consequences of untrammelled entrepreneurial pursuit of change. The fostering of an entrepreneurial mindset and set of capabilities is a central component of change, an important cultural resource upon which champions of change must draw. To do so in a considered and reflective way is, however, a key challenge of change.

#### **4.2. Coalitions.**

As outlined in the discussion of force fields, change is not one discrete entity, and the forces or pressure for change does not come from one source – or one individual. It is, sometimes, a temptation for those attempting to change a system, to identify themselves as the source and energy for change, and the system as a resistant barrier to be overcome. As formally encapsulated by the HBS Professor Mark Abrahamson, in his concept of ‘kludging’, nothing could be further from the truth. There has to be some kind of tensions, contradictions and energy within a system for there to be momentum for transformation. It is important, indeed crucial, to create some kind of coalition for change, made up of forces and elements within as well as external to the force field, system or organizational entity being ‘changed’.

It is now widely recognized that some kind of political coalition is important in mobilizing change. The need for a stakeholder analysis to guide the formation of such a coalition is also often emphasized. Some methodologies place central importance on selection of appropriate change agents and a working change team others to the central significance of contributions from an 'invisible team' upon which such a 'visible team' depends, and others to broader stakeholder coalitions of resource providers at senior levels. Such widespread acceptance should not, however, lead to too easy a placing of such coalitions as simply 'one' of the ingredients of change, or as an entity that can be identified or created in any simple fashion. In the face of the difficulties and challenges of change, it is the strength of such coalitions that is essential to overcome the obstacles. And it is the difficulty of identifying interests, shifting alliances, degrees and forms of commitment and so on, that makes it so difficult to not only map out the power terrain but also build successful alliances within it.

#### **4.3. Self.**

The focus on coalitions can have the unfortunate effect of distracting from the importance of mobilizing oneself to achieve a change. In plural societies, we are, in a sense, ourselves 'multiple' being, with crosscutting allegiances, roles, identities, activities and obligations. We need to establish a 'coalition' in ourselves to effectively secure our own commitment! It is often remarked that change is a personal endeavour, and so it is. Our credibility as a 'performer' depends very much on our ability to reveal our own commitment to the task. Understanding others, addressing the emotions of others, and influencing others are all central components of effective change practice – and this is, ultimately, inseparable from our ability to understand ourselves, manage our emotions and influence our own behavior.

In terms of ensuring one's own ability to deliberately bring about change, the more difficult the task, the more important it is to choose one's targets carefully. It is only if changes fit with one's own personal values and inclinations, and are in clear alignment with one's own interests and career aspirations, that one is likely to enthusiastically sustain the energy and momentum necessary to persevere in change and overcome substantial obstacles. Being 'authentic', in this sense, is not an idealistic luxury but a practical consideration in taking up or shaping change objectives, projects or programs to pursue or be involved in.

## 5. Mapping change.

*"There is never enough time to do things properly. But always enough time to clear up the mess."*

*Popular unattributed business anecdote*

This section introduces you to the nature and dynamics of change. An understanding of its character is an essential part of any informed attempt to influence change. There are three key elements present in any attempt – whether explicit or implicit – to map out the character of change and attempt to influence its direction. These are the definition of the particular change under consideration ('gap analysis'), the analysis of the specific forces or conditions that influence its form and dynamics ('force field analysis'), and the exact sequence, pattern or shape that it's course takes ('route analysis'). Informing all three activities, are underlying assumptions about the general forces of change and the form that they take

So, what are the key forces and drivers of change, what are its key elements, what patterns occur? An interest in managing change addresses this question from a pragmatic position. What do I have to know about change in order to influence it more effectively? It is quite appropriate for an academic text on organizational change to go into the multiple issues, complexities and theoretical frameworks of change. And such an exercise is a fascinating and worthwhile one. However, a text on managing change has to take a more instrumental view. From an action perspective, it is not simply about understanding change. It is approaching such understanding from a viewpoint of needing to decide what to do.

In order to inform this activity, this course uses the metaphor of a 'mapping' process. This serves to emphasize the practical task of informing a trip or journey, as well as capturing some of the widely recognized characteristics of 'maps' – their inaccuracy, their interpretation and their inevitable partial and instrumental use.

### 5.1. Mapping the journey.

Be prepared! The first action task in managing change. This means mapping out what you have to do before you do it. What do you want to achieve? What problems are you going to face? What resources do you have to overcome them? What strategies and tactics are you going to put into place to reach your goal, and when?

Why do I use the term mapping rather than planning? Because, in our common language, planning has strong connotations of rationality, precision, logic and data driven analysis. Mapping is a looser term. Most people understand that maps are often inaccurate, that maps have to be interpreted, that some people are better map-readers than others, that being good at reading a map does not make you a good traveler. So, using the metaphor of change as a journey, the idea of preparing for change as carrying out a mapping activity, provides a better 'feel' for it's important, yet inevitably partial and provisional nature.

## **STOP! TAKE NOTE!**

*The image of change as a 'journey' is now a cliché. It has been used by some to emphasize that change has an exploratory dimension, that how it is undertaken is important, that in many ways the 'journey is the thing'. It also captures a long established Western mythology about The Journey – the heroic drama of the Odyssey, the Quest for the Holy Grail, God's Purpose and the Journey of Life. It provides inspiration for people struggling through change, allowing the use of inspirational quotes about 'the million mile journey beginning with the first step', etc. There is a danger in the use of such a powerful metaphor, however. Firstly, it's common usage, means that it can prevent thinking rather than inspire reflection on what it means. It becomes, in the words of Kenneth Burke, a 'fossilized' or 'redundant' metaphor. Secondly, despite its use to overcome too rational, restricted, planned and staged view of change, it also has its own restrictive implications. It can suggest that there is a real destination, that there is a common accepted goal, that all spheres of life can be examined in terms of its support or hindrance to the quest, and so on. Images of voyages, train journeys etc., suggest 'one track', 'one captain', 'one objective'. Yet the reality of change is far more complex. There are intertwining journeys, conflicting goals, multiple agendas, off-track trips that may turn into a new voyage. If such dangers are kept in mind, however, then the image can still be a useful one – particularly in allowing thought and reflection on planning as a 'mapping' exercise.*

### **5.2. Key mapping activities.**

Mapping involves three sets of activities. These activities are logically distinct and carried out in sequence. However, in reality, they are inevitably iterative, overlap and are far messier in character than such a logic suggests. This process issue will be further explored after outlining the three activities: 'gap analysis', 'force field analysis' and 'route analysis'.

#### *5.2.1. Gap analysis.*

Gap analysis involves identifying where you are ('as is') and where you want to go ('to be'). This is often charted out as a two-column table. This is now a simple and common enough tool, exercised in the initial stages of many strategy exercises. Many of these strategic exercises include another column – actions to be done. This is premature and is not included in the gap analysis described here. Why premature? Because it can lead to an ill-considered set of 'just do it' actions that have not taken into consideration the challenges of change, particularly all the emotive, cultural and political issues that need to be addressed. Gap analysis as it is understood here is, therefore, the apparently simple but actually quite complex outline of what 'the change' really constitutes. This is the difference between 'where we are' and 'where we want to be'.

## **STOP! TAKE NOTE!**

*The change is NOT where you want to go to e.g. 'to bring in the new structures, information system', 'acquire new company' etc. The change is the distance to be traveled, the conditions that have to be put in place, in the transition from where we are to where we want to be. How-*

*ever, dramatic the desired end state, if you are close to it already, it is not much of a change. If, however, the distance to be traveled is substantial, even if the desired ends state appears to be a modest objective, then a substantial change is involved. If, for example, the organization is not used to dealing with the emotional trauma and political conflicts surrounding reorganization, then even an apparently minor change in administrative procedures or equipment may bog down and create disruptions.*

There are five main challenges in conducting a gap analysis.

Firstly, most people focus on the technical content of the change e.g. the type of IT system, the form of restructuring, the formal acquisition to be made etc. But this is not all the change involves. In fact, from a managing change point of view, it is not even the most significant and challenging. Organizations are complex systems, in which all the parts are interdependent. The initial 'surface' components of what a change 'is' are often intertwined with 'deeper' features of the organization. A common organizational metaphor is that of the iceberg, the surface 'tip' is the formal rational features of an organization. It is the technology, procedures and structures, the formal policies and strategies. Below the surface, however, lie hidden, deeper, and influential mass of political and cultural elements. It includes people's identities, values, expectations, career interests, cabals and prejudices. Any change process ignores such factors at their peril. John Kotter provides us with a nice analogy for change. It is like moving one or more pieces of furniture in a room in which all the pieces are connected by pieces of elastic. Moving one, is to move all, with unforeseen and potentially disastrous results. Any gap analysis worthy of the name has to address all these interdependent elements in working out what the change is that is planned. As Senge puts it, a crucial component of successful management – particularly in complex situations – is systems thinking. As complexity or chaos theorists are fond of citing, a butterfly beating its wings in one part of the world, can cause a hurricane in another!

Secondly, there is a systematic bias against addressing such issues properly. Setting up an environment in which an adequate gap analysis can be carried out is a major challenge. Why is this the case? At one level, the formal and rational nature of our organizations creates a mindset and associated set of practices that are geared for rational discussion of formal issues and agendas. Any discussions of the emotional, informal and political dimensions of organizational life are relegated to 'outside' real work – in the pub, in the coffee bar or break, at home. There appears to be no time, little incentive, little familiarity and even less ability to surface and discuss such issues. There are numerous sanctions that are applied to make the message clear: 'don't go there!' Linked to this, but with its own problems, is the amount of uncertainty and guesswork involved in addressing these 'softer' issues. We are in the realm of dealing with people's personalities and motives, much of which may be little understood, repressed or actively concealed. How much time can we afford to spend on such matters? How do we collect the information and how reliable is it? Such difficulties only serve to reinforce the systematic neglect of such issues. It may appear to be just too hard.

Thirdly, thinking through the 'to be' situation is far from easy. There is a tendency, prevalent and widespread in individuals and organizations, to not think through clearly what our goals and objectives are. How often do we as individuals (as well as the organizations we inhabit) make crucial decisions about our lives without really thinking through what it means? We often mistake our real objectives, and herein lies a key challenge for managing change. As Greg Norman, the Australian golfer put it, "if you don't know what you are aiming at, you will hit it every time!" Most importantly, if we don't know what the important change goals and what are merely peripheral, then we have no idea about what to negotiate, how far we have to push through the agenda, what is optional and so on. Moreover, in our rationalized organizations, most of us give a technical or economic answer to statements about goals and objectives. However, the passion and the enthusiasm (as well as the anger and opposition) often resides in less rational values, beliefs and expectations. In order to characterize what the change is, it is essential to capture these dimensions of a change. Without it, we will have an analysis but nothing else. Not only is it a case of 'garbage in, garbage out', but a tool wielded by an idiot is as likely to do damage as it is to be effective.

Fourthly, the characterization of the 'as is' situation is also far more complex than first appears. How far back do we go? As Alex Hitchins (played by Will Smith) put it in the movie Hitch, "we need to understand our past, if we are to know where we are going." If we adopt the broad view of the organizational elements to be addressed in the gap analysis, how do we impose limits on the collection of data? How much data is relevant? Moreover, given that most of our knowledge about what we do is only tacit, and many have a vested interest in placing a particular slant on what they and others do, how can we ensure accurate data? And how do we avoid becoming too bogged down in data collection that is not relevant to our final decisions and actions? There are numerous cases, for example, of time consuming 'skills analyses' undertaken before job design, which are not used and not particularly relevant for the final redesign.

Fifthly, and finally, considerable thought has to be put into how the gap analysis is to be carried out. At what time? By whom? In what way? For how long? With what objective? All of these questions are crucial? As soon as the decision is made to collect data, it is game on. Every information request is also an intervention. People will be wondering what the information is for, whose agenda is being pursued, rumors will begin about what is going on. Who collects data, how it is collected, who is consulted, how the exercise is presented, these are all highly symbolic activities that already send messages. Thinking this through as part of mapping change is important. Who is to do this? Another crucial decision, and the answer depends on context. Some kind of champion, change agent, credible and authoritative people are required, but how much 'secret' pre-planning occurs, how it is done etc. depends on the degree to which the change is urgent, complex or controversial. The people selected to do the gap analysis will clearly frame the view taken of the 'as is' and 'to be' situations. The agenda, objectives or vision also clearly strongly shapes the outcome. Crucial issues are

also raised by the appropriate form of data collection. It is not only necessary to consider the symbolic effect of how this is done, but the best ways to collect 'rich pictures' of what is required. Given the uncertain and controversial nature of delving beneath the 'surface', into the iceberg of emotions, culture and politics, how should data be collected concerning how people really see the change and the status quo? We shall consider this issue a bit more in the following description of a force field analysis.

### *5.2.2. Force field analysis.*

The first stage of mapping is to work out where you are and where you want to get to. The second stage is to investigate what the conditions are like along the way. This is the task of the force field analysis. It is a means of mapping out the terrain over which you have to cross, the factors that determine how much of the journey will be uphill climbs and how much downhill runs. A force field analysis is, again, a deceptively simple two-column table. On the left hand side is the list of promoting/pushing/positive forces for the change. On the right hand side are all the resisting/restraining/negative forces against the change. For ease of communication and discussion, it is possible to present the stronger forces on each side with thicker and/or longer lines.

The force field analysis tool was first developed by Kurt Lewin, a Jewish émigré working in England in World War II, and arguably the founding father of change management. Lewin viewed every personality, group and social institution as residing in a state of 'quasi-equilibrium' in which forces for the status quo balance out the forces that challenge it. While not necessarily static, in any simple sense, individuals and collectivities often move in a specific direction, and this direction is the outcome of the state of the 'force field' within and between them and their environments.

Despite the checklist appearance of the two-column diagram, force field analysis was not intended to provide a simple list of separate independent factors. The aim was to help capture the intertwined, interdependent and systemic nature of the dynamic field of forces within which the change was located. The image of a Newtonian force field may help capture this spirit. If we follow up this metaphor, the field of change through which we travel can be seen as one of interconnected energy flows, with positive and negative charges or effects. Newton's laws of motion can be kept in mind as a reminder that if we don't understand this energy field, the energy that we personally put in may be wasted or even counter-productive. Everything is in motion, unless changed. Every action has an equal and opposition reaction. And the momentum is sustained. The point of this metaphor is not to draw out specific lessons but to illustrate a central point: it is the energy and dynamics in the field that have to be understood and worked with if action is to be effective. It does not just come from 'us'.

In recent years, there has been a return to the idea of using a looser characterization of organizational fields as a basis for understanding action and change. This looser notion provides an important contrast to more rigid and formal descriptions of what happens in organ-

izations based on organizational functions, institutional locations, formal structures, business processes and so on. More attention is paid to the changing 'rules of the game' in fields of practice or industry sectors.

In exploring such force fields, Lewin made two additional points to those involved in the basic force field analysis. Firstly, he argued that significant, even greater, attention should be paid to the resisting forces, and working with those involved in change in deciding how to overcome such barriers. Simple 'push' oriented prescriptions for change are, in this analysis, far less effective than 'pull' strategies that involve working on the removal of the grounds for resistance. Secondly, he attempted to present a more complex view of the contrary array of forces. He did this by including the fact that as change progresses the forces change in nature and strength. Moreover, it is possible to explore force fields not only in relation to simply the factors for and against change, but also assigning a relative strength to the forces pushing change in different directions. This remains extremely rough and inadequate as a way of exploring options, but the general principle is not difficult to grasp and the schematic conclusions are very useful for personal and group reflection.

In terms of the challenges facing the force field analysis, there is naturally enough a large overlap with gap analysis. The whole question of how to collect data, the background, interests and expertise of the group carrying out the analysis, and how to deal with the complexity of the data is crucial. As is the matter of overcoming the barriers that individuals and organizations put in the way to prevent any open discussion of emotion, politics and culture. Most importantly, however, the more that the gap analysis addresses the whole range of change factors, and force field analysis addresses forces for and against different options, the more that they overlap and merge into each other. Yet, the logical separation between the character of the change, and the degree of support or opposition, ease or difficulty, merits their separation, at least for practical purposes if no other.

The conduct of an effective force field analysis does, however, face a number of challenges. A number of these are the same, concerning data collection, what is discussable, the formation of the group and agenda etc. In addition, however, there are two other challenges. Firstly, there is an initial tendency to list all the technical, economic, structural, environmental and strategic issues on the left hand side as promoting change. All the cultural, political and emotional issues are then presented as lying on the right hand side as resisting forces that need to be overcome. This tendency severely distorts the analysis of the field. If, for example, one reversed these lists – it is always possible to find political, cultural and emotional forces that are pushing for change, and strategic, environmental, technical and structural ones that are acting as barriers. A comprehensive force field needs to be honest and aware of both the non-rational forces pushing for change and the often 'reasonable' forces that hold it back. Secondly, there is a tendency, once the force field analysis is done, to just neglect it in the ensuing discussion of what should be done and when. It is important, however, to integrate the findings of the force field analysis into any detailed discussion of the



route to be taken. As we shall see, generic 'route' maps of change are very general in character. They have to be interpreted, omitted details have to be considered, and choices have to be made. If, for example, an organization has an effective political coalition for change, then initial political action is not so crucial. Where an organization already has a strong sense of urgency, then dealing with anxiety and developing strategies is more important than overcoming initial inertia. And so on...

### *5.2.3. Route analysis.*

Route analysis, understood as the final planned path to the destination, is probably the most commonly recognizable and widely discussed element of change management. The literature on change management is resplendent with 'N-step' models of change, all of which see change as progressing through multiple stages.

It is safe to say, however, that underling all these step models of change is a basic three stage view of the change process. It was first characterized by Kurt Lewin in terms of 'un-freezing', 'moving' and 'refreezing' but has taken a variety of different forms since that time.

This three-stage model is deeply embedded in our modern conception of the very idea of change. The idea that there is a starting point, an end point, and a transition between the two is practically inseparable from our idea of what change is. Many have argued, effectively, against simplistic three stage models. In her critique of Lewin's 'ice-cube' model, Rosabeth Moss Kanter emphasizes the tension, fluidity and movement within all of these 'stages'. Arguably, in all organizations, but particularly in rapidly changing contemporary organizations, there is no 'standing still' – either before a change or after. There is ongoing change and transformation, and individuals and organizations need to be prepared for this. An additional and crucial point is that if each stage is so static and integrated, where does change come from? How can it be brought about, other than through some 'external' mover – an image that is as dangerous as it is inadequate.

In addition, the simple-minded idea that change moves predictably through three sequential stages is also an illusion. One level of an organization may be unfreezing, while another is refreezing, and another moving. As time passes, iterations may occur, as well as relapses. Change champions may be replaced, external environmental conditions change, internal resources and objectives may shift, enthusiasts may become resistors and vice versa. The so-called 'stages' of change may be a complex, chaotic and uncertain process of becoming with multiple levels, multiple events, multiple narratives, and multiple experiences. There may also be sub-change processes in the main one, involving their own processes of unfreezing, moving and refreezing.

Any attempt to explore a particular change process soon ends up with similar observations. Where stages begin and end is often unclear, the content of the change shifts, the level of 'required' activities at each stage (or absence of such activities) is difficult to measure or assess, different individuals, groups and levels of the organization proceed according to their own

pace, and multiple and conflicting stories are told about what is 'really' happening or 'happened'. So, in short, the process is far more complex, contextual and chaotic than '3 stage' theories are often taken to imply.

This said, however, the threefold image remains behind what many people do. It is no accident, for example, that one of the foundation texts of the more 'processual' view of change, criticizes the simple and static nature of Lewin's 3-stage model, but then proceeds only a few pages later to say that the more complex 'processual' model they offer divides change into a 'conception of a need to change', 'process of organizational transition' and 'operation of new work practices and processes'! This is not to condemn this approach, for my argument is that we cannot get away from this 3-element model, however much we talk about the complexity of actual processes of becoming. Change means that we can talk of one state ending, another beginning, and address the transition between the two. The states do not have to be static, they may be conceptual rather than 'real' in their 'identity', they may be subject to internal tensions and ongoing transformations, they may be difficult to distinguish, but the basic orienting frame is there.

In addition to this logical point, however, there are important reasons for further exploring, as we do in the website, the makeup and character of the three 'moments' in change. In anthropology and ritual theory, there is an established view of 'transition rituals' as inevitably involving phases of 'separation', 'transition' and 'incorporation', and considerable research has been undertaken into the ritualistic character of each of these phases. As outlined in one investigation of the 'death valley' U-shape of change studies, the idea of going through some kind of separation, transition and incorporation phases, with all the problems of 'getting in', 'getting on' and 'getting out' that they raise, is one of the most established and well-supported generalizations in social theory. It is widely observable in studies of grief cycles, overcoming addiction, learning processes, team development, socialization and morale, as well as social rituals and organizational change.

What all these variants address are the key issues involved in:

- ◆ breaking down the habits, perceptions and behaviors of traditional routine actions and structures;
- ◆ dealing with the problems of anxiety, performance and complex unforeseen events in the transition period; and
- ◆ avoiding any 'slipping back' and embedding of new ways of thinking and behaving in routine patterned activities, systems and structures.

If we take Kotter's 8 stages of change, for example. The first three stages, creating a sense of urgency, building a coalition, creating a vision and strategy – are all components of the first 'getting in' or 'unfreezing' stage. When Kotter argues that 50% of change programs fail

in the first stage – not creating enough urgency – he is pointing us to the challenges of this phase. It was the significance of this phase that the US change expert Edgar Schein first pointed us to in his study of how the Communist regime in North Korea used 'coercive persuasion' to brainwash US military captives. He notes, in particular, the importance in 'un-freezing' or 'getting in' of providing disconfirming beliefs, creating guilt or survival anxiety and providing psychological safety.

In addressing such issues, it is important to recognize the uncertainty, movement, tensions and contradictions in the existing 'order', but these are understood as levers for breaking down resistant factors. Many of the issues involved in the transition period are, in a sense, common to our normal 'changing' environment, and many features of our personal and organizational existence will not be in 'transition' at all. However, key issues surrounding anxiety, performance, complex system interdependencies are crucial issues to address, in general, and particularly during any deliberate or planned change.

When Kotter proceeds to argue for the importance of ongoing communication, creating short term wins etc., he is moving onto the importance of carrying people through the second 'moving' phase, 'getting on' in transitioning through the depths of the 'death valley' of change. For Schein, this involves cognitive redefinition, and requires strong role modeling by an authoritative mentor or the inculcation of a proactive experimental, learning and scanning regime.

Finally, 'getting out' is often a problem in the transformation of any complex personal or social system, as changes in one part may be incompatible with other parts, and ultimately 'revert back' to original states. This is as clearly apparent in, say, a person giving up smoking and having to create a new lifestyle, as it is for an organization seeking to perpetuate new ways of thinking and behaving after initial enthusiasts and champions have left, or senior management attention turns elsewhere. In this final, third phase, frequent recommendations are made to embed change in the culture or 'way things are done around here', and sediment it in new systems, processes, structures, performance measurement etc.

What is crucially important in this process, is that the 3-stage model is only taken as a rough guiding maxim. The detailed content of planned change has to be determined in the light of the 'gap' and 'force field' analyses. Moreover, the mapping exercise is inevitably iterative. Thinking through the route required to address the change identified in the gap analysis, and taking into account the forces identified in the force field analysis, may result in a plan which is too difficult, too lengthy or too resource intensive than is feasible or desired. And so, the change itself needs to be redefined, and the mapping cycle gone through again. In addition, as the change proceeds, and deviations and complexities emerge, participants need to be mindful of such changes, and be ready to map out the process anew.

Such an exercise is unavoidable. Even if it is only performed anecdotally, sporadically and ineffectively, actors always undertake analyses of some kind. These may, however, be ex-

tremely ill-informed, for example based on an assumption of change as a rational two-stage process, and time spent on railing against the irrationality and prejudice of others, and a relapse into reactive dogmatic instruction or vindictive or coercive 'punishment' of the offenders. Some kind of map is, however, in their heads. The purpose of a more informed and reflective mapping process is to help prevent avoidance and neglect of unwelcome information, guide a systematic thinking through of the issues, provide a framework for communication and discussion, and allow monitoring and readjustment during the change process. Also, and importantly, it helps to keep the key issues in change in mind, providing participants with a more realistic and productive set of expectations about change. This is necessary because of the systematic bias in modern organizations towards the neglect of key change issues, over-emphasizing rationality, formality, strategy and ease of implementation at the expense of understanding the role of emotion, politics, informality, irrationality and the ambiguous and confronting nature of change-in-practice.

### **5.3. Forces of change.**

Underlying any mapping process is inevitably some characterization of the forces of change. This is an implicit, if not explicit, component of the 'gap' that is mapped out, the forces that inform the 'force field', and the levers to be utilized in the 'route map'.

Despite the complexity of any analysis of forces of change, certain themes continue to recur. At the most general level, it is important to see change as a normal rather than exceptional feature of organizational life. Clearly, organizations may be subject to smaller or larger degrees of change, and may be more or less resistant to radical shifts in direction. People inside or outside those organizations may interpret this as an absence or presence of 'real' change. However, there is no essential difference between understanding and explaining the everyday workings of these organizations and the forces that promote and hinder change. As the organizational theorist James March put it, "a theory of change is a theory of action in organizations." In this regard, there is little disagreement about the general character of organizations, whether the model is taken to be the McKinsey 7S approach, Johnson's 'cultural web', or some other, the now clichéd image of the organization as iceberg is rarely far from the surface! Whatever final approach is adopted, it is important for any mapping process that some kind of useable thematic framework is presented, if we are not to slip into superficial surface analyses or relapse into impractical statements of unanalysable complexity.

The first orientation is, as we have said, what can roughly and metaphorically be described as the 'iceberg' of change – the presence of a formal rational 'tip', concerned with economic environments, structural designs and technical systems, and an informal non-rational 'under the water' iceberg, involving politics and culture, identities and interests. Above the 'water line', two common factors are (i) strategy, structure and environment, and (ii) technology, task and efficiency.

For the former, the key issue surrounding change is the objective mismatch between the requirements of the market and institutional environment and the structure of the organiza-

tion. The mismatch results in a lack of performance, and deliberate change is a prospective or reactive strategy to address this potential or existing performance problem. The focus is on the 'harder' economic and legal institutions, and the formal structural arrangements in the organization. The cause of the mismatch is variable. It can be the classical 'S' curve of organizational expansion, as organizations move from small, to medium to large, with respective crises in organizational strategy and structure as they struggle with the new requirements. It can also be due to an industry 'S' curve, as companies struggle with a maturing product or portfolio. Or, it may be due to many other multiple shifts in the local or global environment that makes the previous structure and inefficient anachronism. It is recognized, of course, that other factors may hold back the ability of organizations to adapt to such requirements. Factors such as the degree of leeway or 'organizational slack' that they have, the capability and interests of the 'dominant coalition' determining strategy and so on.

Those who focus on technology, task and efficiency are similarly concerned with formal, economic and systemic factors. A key emphasis is on the dynamics of technology and the evolution of new 'best practice' techniques that render previous systems and methods of operation inefficient and redundant. The emphasis is on the 'production' task being carried out by the organization, the ways in which this can be more efficiently undertaken, and the clash that occurs between such pressures for change and the restraining influence of embedded frames, equipment, skills, capabilities and processes.

For the latter, 'below' the waterline analyses there are different foci on, firstly, culture, purpose and identity and, secondly, leadership, politics and power. For the former, the main focus is on the 'informal' nature of organizational life, the embedded values, beliefs and forms of sense making. The emphasis is upon the clash that occurs between established views of the purpose of the organization and people's commitment to their roles within it, and new emerging values and identities – coming from the entry of new personnel, copying what is happening in other firms in the industry or other industries, and more general changes in culture and society. For those concerned with leadership, agency and power, the key dimension of change lies in the sphere of agency and politics. The clash between established and rising political interests, the power given to such interests through changes in the environment, the turnover of key power-brokers, the change capabilities and motivation of people in the organization, the power, commitment and skill of formal and informal change agents and so on.

While academic debate encourages mutual criticism and condemnation of other perspectives, frame or approaches, it is more constructive to focus on the manner in which these emphases reflect significant forces of change, and adopt them as at least a rough guide in the various change mapping exercises.

The second rough orientation is recognition of the systemic interdependence of forces of change. For the purposes of analysis, it may prove useful to separate out 'hard' and 'soft',

'structure' and 'culture', 'organization' and 'environment', 'technology' and 'politics' etc. as identifiable forces. Change, however, is always contextual, and such forces are always interdependent. It makes no more sense to talk of one force or fact as 'the' cause of change than it does to try and identify the taste of one strand of spaghetti in a bolognese separate from the rest. Change is always change in or of a force field, a nested set of interdependent and fluid processes, all moving, often in tension, and in context difficult to separate. This is an extremely important corrective to remember, in the face of frequent tendencies to talk of 'the' change being considered in organizations as being some formal restricted goal or state, often technical or structural, rather than (inevitably!) a transformation of an inevitably complex interdependent system.

The emphasis of the US MIT learning guru, Peter Senge, on the importance of systems thinking is an important one, and most appropriate for any attempt to capture the nature and dynamics of 'change'. It is also, important, however, that terms such as 'system' are not taken to imply too mechanistic, equilibrated or functional entity, with clear purposes, boundaries, organs and so on. As observers of complexity and its challenges frequently emphasize, it is only those minds, frames or theories capable of accepting the problems and challenges of chaos and uncertainty that are, paradoxically, able to capture and operate effectively within complex situations or environments. As Brad Pitt's character put it, in the movie *The Devil's Own*, "If you think you know what's going on, you don't know what's going on!"

The third rough orientation is the existence of relatively established ways of looking at each of these forces. This adds a further level of complexity in looking at forces of change, and is only re-commended for inclusion in formal mapping, once individuals and groups have shown themselves to be relatively capable at dealing with simpler analyses of forces. The ways of looking at this complexity were well captured in a now classic framework developed by the English organizational sociologists Gibson Burrell and Gareth Morgan. What they succeeded in doing, in a way that has been drawn upon, clarified and refined but not surpassed was to capture the main ongoing tensions that faced any analysis of organizational forces (including forces for change).

They presented this in terms of tensions, disagreements and positions taken on two dimensions. The first dimension is the degree to which organizational action is governed by patterned structural forces or takes the form of active, creative, unpredictable agency. The second dimension is the extent to which organizational action is regarded as grounded in some kind of purposive, functional consensus or as a matter of conflict and contradiction between dominant institutional structures and interests and subordinate individuals, groups and sub-cultures.

The tensions between these different views can be usefully regarded as addressing the range of forms that the forces of change may take. Structure and environment have an objective and structural existence, and can be at least partially treated as such, yet they are

also 'enacted', constructed and made sense of in complex situations, and these active processes need to be understood and addressed. Similarly, how these are perceived and addressed may be more or less embedded in an implicit consensus or the matter of significant political conflict and tension. Technology can be regarded as more objective, embodied in equipment, systems and structures, or as a less objective and structural set of knowledge, fames, skills, capabilities and information flows. Technologies and systems may also take the form of tools more or less shared to achieve common tasks, or weapons employed by different interests and groups to achieve their own ends in more or less insidious ways. Culture can also be understood as having a degree of systemic, objective, and functional 'thingness' as well as being a messier, ambiguous and diverse malintegrated phenomenon – with clear implications for how change can and should be addressed. Similarly, it can be more or less well-represented as involving a power culture of conflict between warring tribes or as a common set of shared meanings and values. Finally, issues of leadership and power may be embedded more in formal structures and systems or more or less actively reproduced in ongoing interactions. Similarly, it may take the form of a more consensual mobilization of people on the basis of shared beliefs and values or an activity involving the domination and control of some individuals and groups by others.

Taking mapping processes to this level of detail, at least in rough-cut planning, is more likely to distract than clarify. In the process of any discussion of the real forces of change, however, disagreements on just these issues are likely to arise. It is, therefore, useful and valuable for people to understand that it is quite likely and valid for discussion to be generated on such matters. It is important avoid adopting a standpoint of one being right and the others wrong (a strong temptation given the popular cultural stereotypes that lie behind these images), or lapsing into a despairing agnosticism about the overly-complex nature of mapping change. In contrast, recognizing such issues and tension can be helpful in guiding skilled individuals and change teams in developing shared perspectives and agreements, and providing a practical basis for a more informed, well-discussed and thought through analyses of the forces of change underlying change plans and actions.

## 6. Masks of change.

*"Don't be fooled by me.  
Don't be fooled by the face I wear  
For I wear a thousand masks  
That I'm afraid to take off –  
And none of them is me."*

*Peter Lehman, 1974, "Lost in a Masquerade"*

This section introduces you to the idea of influencing change as a performance. There are three key dimensions of this activity. Firstly, the central importance of practice in influencing change, and the value of seeing this as a performance. Secondly, the key significance of control as the central theme in managing change, and the vital importance of the form in which this is exercised. Control is not simply about controlling, and nor is it simple! Thirdly, the existence of central and enduring tensions, dilemmas or paradoxes in how influence is exercised.

It is clearly one thing to plan how to change, it is another thing to put it into operation. Plans have to be put into practice, intentions have to be realized, decisions have to be followed through. "Innovation", as the famous Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter put it, "is a feat, not of intellect but of will." Maps outline the territory but they are not the territory. They have to be read, and then used in the real journey. In successfully bringing about change, performance is everything. It may not be all right on the night!

So what does this performance involve? As the Harvard change academic and consultant John Kotter argues, leading change involves four main activities. It requires establishing an agenda, developing a human network to realize this agenda, executing the agenda, and then finally achieving the outcomes. As a manager, this involves such traditional 'command and control' tasks as planning and budgeting, organizing and staffing, controlling and problem solving, and this produces a degree of predictability and order in achieving stakeholder demands. This classical project management approach is important. Establishing and running efficient processes is an important change management discipline. As a leader of change, however, more is involved. Leadership means working with or establishing a community with a purpose. It involves establishing direction, aligning people, motivating and inspiring, and ultimately producing sustainable change. Leadership means winning hearts and minds, mobilizing energy and motivation, and this requires more than disciplined processes.

### 6.1. Performance and practice.

Knowing that this is the case is, however, different to knowing how to do it. In practice it is difficult, if not impossible, to follow simple rules. Conditions are uncertain, directions are ambiguous and principles we are given to follow are often contradictory. How then to act?



We are deliberately using the metaphor of performance here because it captures both the centrality of practice and the kinds of things that are involved in being an effective practitioner. We all have scripts but it is how we act out the script that is central. We need rehearsals, they are crucial preparation. But 'going live' is very different to a rehearsal.

As we act, the action does not involve 'all of us'. In organizations we are given formal roles and responsibilities. There are multiple informal expectations of us as well. In order to effectively fulfill, bundle together and improve how we undertake these roles, we need to have a degree of effective distance from them. The idea of seeing these as parts we have to play, masks that we have to put on and take off, can help in this regard. It is important, however, not to become too distanced. And this is part of the performance metaphor as well. An authentic character is one who is 'inside' as well as 'outside' his or her role. As in any case of 'acting', this is an important balancing act – for our plausibility as a character and health as a functioning human being.

Are we saying that organization is merely a theatre? Yes and no. On the one hand, all action can be seen as part of human drama. We all operate on stages, with scripts, props, characters and audiences. We may be more or less plausible, more or less effective in our parts, and be more or less well received by the audience, the critics and our fellow actors. In this sense, organizations are not just like a theatre, they are theatre. On the other hand, theatre is often seen as something merely for entertainment. It is truncated, stereotyped and artificial. It is intended to give a kind of cathartic release in a 'play' space separate from the seriousness and harshness of the real world. In organizational life, in contrast, as the sociologist Peter Berger put it, "we all don our hats and wigs, and we have our wooden swords, but the weapons can draw real blood."

We are also expected not to be 'playing'. Modern organizations, and therefore all of us, are locked into what could be characterized as a performance performance. Our front-stage public performance is a rational one, of fulfilling organizational goals, efficiently selecting and applying the best means to achieve these goals, and being capable and willing to perform this task. And we have to perform well in this arena, and on this 'stage'. As we discussed in the introduction, however, there is another side to organizational life. This is the sphere in which ambiguity and uncertainty is apparent, emotion and politics is rife, and paradox and contradiction are handled as a matter of routine existence. An effective change performance has to acknowledge this arena, and work well on this stage, as well as the rational one. Why is this the case? Because to win over hearts and minds, to effectively influence people, one has to step beyond the narrow rational performance and address their lived experience – and this experience encompasses both arenas. This is not, and I repeat not, to undermine the significance of the performance performance but to set it in its context. There is also an argument that one has, in addition, to give more than a committed 'leadership' performance, as a degree of skepticism, ambiguity and uncertainty about one's role may be an essential part of credibility. This is arguably even more the case in more

complex modern conditions in which multiple roles, changing conditions, and inter-generational turbulence are not only matters of course but accepted as such.

This is an important message to take to heart in our private personal lives as well as in our organizational or work lives. In a sense, as Shakespeare put it, all the world is a stage, and it helps us to reflect on our lives and what we are doing to recognize the degree to which this is the case. We all have to play multiple roles, and have many responsibilities, and the art of juggling all of these can be helped by reflecting on them as a performance. It is also applicable to the 'parts' that we play in the stages of our lives. Shakespeare's (As You Like It, 2/7) famous saying, continues to make some important observations that are less frequently quoted,

*"All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players:  
They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,  
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.  
And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,  
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad  
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,  
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,  
Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel,  
Seeking the bubble reputation  
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,  
In fair round belly with good capon lined,  
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,  
Full of wise saws and modern instances;  
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts  
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,  
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,  
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide  
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,  
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes  
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,  
That ends this strange eventful history,  
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,  
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."*

## **6.2. Dimension of control.**

Performing change is about the practice component of managing change. As an initial starting point, management can be simply defined in terms of deciding what to do and getting it

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done. Getting it done involves mobilizing both yourself and others to realize the decisions that have been made. Management is self-management as well as other-management, and it is crucially about people as well as things.

In this sense, management is essentially about control. Control, like power, is a complex and contentious terms, and has many nuances and interpretations – none of them neutral! However, the origins of the term are clear. It comes from the Italian 'maneggiare', meaning to handle or 'take in hand' horses, and whether it is seen as a general practice or an organizational elite, the theme of control is always involved.

What is more subtle, however, is exactly what one means by control. In our present discussion, what is meant by 'controlling change' in change management? If we begin from the general meaning of the term management, this can mean a more limited achievement of 'managing to' (just managing, managing to get by etc.) or a stronger more purposive form of 'managing of' oneself, others and organizations. Think, for a moment, of the different mental image created by using the phrase 'managing to change' rather than 'managing of change'!

It may be useful, and make things a bit clearer, if one takes the general view of management 'control' as being one of exercising influence over people and events, with a narrower, stronger and more directing form being that of dominating or 'controlling' such entities. The view we will adopt here, however, is that managing change is about influencing people and events, where attempts to more strongly dominate them is a particular level or form of exercising control – and not necessarily the most effective!

Debates over how best to influence people and events has a long history, and preoccupied mankind a long time before 'change management' came onto the scene. In studies of history, the 'great man' or 'Cleopatra's nose' issue is a long-standing and unending matter of debate. To what extent are we the victims of broader movements and events and to what degree are people, and individuals, able to influence them? If Cleopatra's nose had been a little longer, would Marc Anthony have fallen in love with her, and would the history of the Roman Empire have been different?

### *6.2.1 The promethean dimension.*

The first main area of discussion and controversy is over the degree of control that we should try and exert over events. I characterize this as the Promethean dimension because of the classical Greek imagery of Prometheus – the Titan who stole fire from Zeus and gave it to humanity. Prometheus was punished by Zeus for this theft. He was chained to a rock and had his liver eaten out each day by a vulture, only to have him be reborn at night, and then go through the agony again the following day.

This myth, in the Aeschylus drama *Prometheus Bound*, is symbolic of the degree to which humanity should be given knowledge and technology. Like the mythological stories of Frankenstein and Dr Jekyll and My Hyde, the myth raises the question of whether humanity's pursuit of greater technical capability is a salvation or a curse, a source of nobility and

progress or a dangerous tool in the hands of barbarians. The key issue, and the controversy and drama, concerns the degree to which mankind should try (and can succeed) in knowing about and controlling the world, events, themselves and other people. As we saw in the discussion of 'mindfulness', the classic Buddhist response is that such an attempt is doomed to fail and is the cause of much unnecessary suffering. Whatever position one adopts, however, the central issue remains. How much should mankind attempt to plan, control and regulate people and events? How much knowledge and applied technique is it best to accumulate and apply? Are there boundaries beyond which it is immoral, unsustainable or self-defeating to tread in our quest for knowledge and control?

One of the reasons for myths and mythologies is that they address a real ambiguity or ambivalence in a culture. The modern quest for and yet suspicion of knowledge and control is one that we have to live and grapple with. It is inevitable that it is expressed rather than resolved in discussions of change management. The form that this takes is in discussions over 'planning' versus 'emergence'. How much is managing change a matter of anticipation, planning and regulation and how much a question of reaction, emergence and improvisation?

The emphasis on anticipation and planning, in part, reflects the traditional organizational development (OD) concern with 'planned change'. It means explicitly addressing people issues in change, particularly motivation and resistance to change. It is best exemplified in 'N' step models of stages of sequenced activities revolving around the classic model of 3 steps of change'– the 'unfreezing', 'moving' and 'refreezing' phases outlined in the classic work of Kurt Lewin. It finds expression in the idea of using expert HR/OD personnel and their diagnostic tools, intervention and planning techniques to address the 'people' dimension of change.

A focus on emergence and improvisation in change has come very much to the fore in the last fifteen years. Since the classic work in the 80s and 90s on the 'processual' nature of change by the UK Change Professor Andrew Pettigrew, substantially greater recognition has been given to the messy, complex, iterative, contingent and contextual nature of strategic change. This has been extended in the greater degree of attention given to such matters as:

- ◆ handling uncertainty and patterned chaos in complex systems, such as strategic change environments;
- ◆ the multi-layered interpretive nature of how actors actually make sense of organizational life, and the rituals that they go through in breaking down and reconstructing the 'taken for granted' assumptions and the cultural 'way we do things around here' ;
- ◆ the sophisticated ways in which managers improvise in order to get things done in organizations and in change; and
- ◆ the complex yet central nature of managerial practice in strategy and organizations in general, and the ways in which managers can enhance their professionalism through reflection on and in that practice

Much of the debate over planning versus emergence takes the form of claims and counter-claims about the nature of change processes. Naturally enough, there are conflicting views over the extent to which change takes the form of predictable law governed regular patterned activities or is a contingent, contextual and chaotic affair. For example, can we work with the assumption, as John Kotter does, that there are eight clear, identifiable and required 'steps' to change? For Kotter, these are:

1. Establishing a sense of urgency.
2. Creating a guiding coalition.
3. Developing a vision and strategy.
4. Communicating the change vision.
5. Empowering a broad base of people to take action.
6. Generating short term wins.
7. Consolidating gains and producing even more change.
8. Anchoring (institutionalizing) the new approaches into the culture.

On the other hand, as critics of 'N step' models emphasize, does this provide an artificial and irrelevant straightjacket on what is an essentially unpredictable, contextual and iterative process? When do we have enough urgency? How much of a coalition is required? Do we not have to monitor and revisit these as ongoing dimensions of change?

Intertwined with different views of the dynamics of change are, however, contrasting preferences for alternative methods of influence and control. Different personality types, and managerial philosophies, prefer influence strategies that are more planned or more emergent. Individuals with a more bureaucratic, rule governed, orderly personality – the ISTJ in the Myers-Briggs framework or the 'Box' in the Psychogeometrics typology – tend to prefer the more law governed view of change and accompanying planned approaches to change programs. Those with a more flexible, creative, and innovative mindset – the Myers-Briggs ENFP or Psychogeometrics 'Squiggle' – select the more interpretive, chaotic, emergent view of change and the more flexible and creative improvisatory approach to mobilizing energy for change. These different views reflect and mesh with ongoing debates over the accuracy of 'planning' models as a description of managerial work in general, as well as strategy-in-practice.

### *6.2.2. The machiavellian dimension.*

The second main area of discussion and controversy is over the best form of control over people. The classical rational and bureaucratic approach to managing people emphasizes what the US organizational dynamic writer Amatei Etzioni called 'low intensity' management – a variant of what the nineteenth century UK sociologist Herbert Spencer characterized as the militaristic ethic: "do your task and take your rations!" This involves developing rules and procedures, giving instructions and monitoring results, and relying on economic remuneration as the basis for exercising influence. However, once we enter the arena of

change, in which people are expected to give up established values, beliefs and practices and take on new ones, the importance of going beyond this form of control to win hearts and minds becomes even more clear.

This involves entering the more confronting and emotive areas of what Etzioni characterizes as 'high intensity' management. In this arena, the choice and debate centre's around the traditional question raised and answered by Machiavelli in the following manner,

*"Whether it is better to be loved than feared, or the reverse. The answer is that one would like to be both the one and the other; but because it is difficult to combine then, it is far better to be feared than loved if you cannot be both."*

*N.Machiavelli, 'The Prince', Oxford University Press, London p.57*

In Etzioni's terms, the two extreme alternative strategies are characterized as 'coercive' and 'normative'. The coercive strategy – for Etzioni the use of 'the gun, the whip and the lock' – involves the significant use of threat and fear. This may take a variety of forms, with coercion commonly being used to refer to such matters as using threats to people's livelihoods, fear of physical harm and so on. The normative strategy is more concerned with winning consent than forcing compliance. It works on inspiring people to act by appealing to their deeply felt values, identities and loyalties. It involves all the methods, techniques and practices of charismatic leadership, and the more or less systematic use of symbolic rewards, symbols of prestige, group esteem and so on. In simplistic terms, 'high intensity' methods range from the use of fear to hope.

In the post WWII period, change management was centrally concerned with the use of participative management approaches to overcome internal resistance to change. It focused strongly on generating involvement and commitment, overcoming anxiety, and stimulating and addressing needs for self-realization. The predominant emphasis was on small-group settings, and generating commitment through facilitative leadership styles, the use of group dynamics, supportive and caring human relations techniques, enriched job design etc. These tactics and methods are as relevant today as they were then. They have, however, been extended in three important ways.

Firstly, the balance has tended to shift from support and relief of anxiety to stimulating flexibility and innovation, from facilitative leadership to organizational designs that support enterprise and initiative. Secondly, there is greater concern with integrating and cascading levels of facilitative and charismatic leadership from top to bottom, and linking inspirational performance into acting with or bringing out authenticity in organizations that move from 'good to great'. Thirdly, there has been a move from small-scale leader-group dynamics into strategic analysis of how to rapidly mobilize and effectively run wide-ranging change programs.

One of the main consequences of this shift in focus has been greater attention to the limitations of pure 'participation' models. In the face of strategic demands for rapid change, and

the need for complex coordination of varying organizational interests, the limitations of pure participative management styles have often been pointed out. Participation can be useful in generating enthusiasm and involvement, however, it can also result in compromise, traditional and blinkered ideas, costly and time consuming change programs, and a failure to generate sufficient urgency and desire for closure. As the Australian change academic and consultant Dexter Dunphy has argued, in conditions requiring rapid change, where there are strong entrenched interests, coercive leadership styles may be centrally important. In addition, as David Buchanan and Richard Badham have argued in their extensive overview of organizational politics approaches and strategies, there is also often a coercive dimension to the so-called consensus based participative strategies. Use of group shaming, fear of loss of status, and a background uncertainty about what will happen if people do not perform are all used as more or less insidious coercive tactics in such programs.

As outlined by classic writers on participative management, there are a wide range of strategies and influencing techniques along this Machiavellian dimension. In the framework provided by US participative management writer, Rensis Likert's, these range from 'exploitative-authoritative', through 'benevolent-authoritative' and 'consultative', to 'participative-group' systems.

### **6.3. Paradox and change.**

Each strategy for influence or control has costs and benefits, and may be more or less appropriate in different settings. An awareness of the tensions and paradoxes is essential in customizing situationally appropriate change strategies. While this sounds relatively obvious, it challenges many of the assumptions and practices of traditional rational management. It means that there is no simple 'one best way' to be found. It also, and importantly, means living in the uncomfortable zone of recognizing that one's choices and preferences are not a simple solution, and that in a sense they contain the seeds of their own destruction, they have an inherent potential to undermine what you are trying to achieve.

In discussions of planned and emergent change, it is relatively clear that, whatever one's personal preferences, both realities and both strategies for influence and control are required. The major interesting issues concern how this should be done. This raises a number of issues. Firstly, defining and creating the individual and organizational capabilities to pursue both general types of strategy. This means not only the training of managers and employees but the critical examination of the degree to which organizations have (a) the process disciplines in place to make planned implementation effective, and (b) the support for autonomy, creativity, risk-taking, experimentation and learning necessary to deal effectively with the ambiguities, confrontation and struggles of real world change. Secondly, grappling with the downside as well as the upside of both strategies. In the case of planning, the downside is rigidity, wasteful formalization and the undermining of spontaneity and motivation. In the case of emergence, the downside is chaos, distraction, incoherence and lack of systematic learning and direction. Thirdly, deciding in general on the forms and degrees of each strategic orientation required in different situations.

It is important, however, to be mindful of the fact that underlying such analyses and discussions will always be something other than thoughtful rational analysis of strategy-in-context. It will also reflect philosophical, cultural and personality preferences that push people and policies in one 'mythological' direction or the other. For example, on US study of the implementation of total quality management (TQM) in hospital with different organizational cultures, explored how each approached this organizational change. It was interesting, but not too surprising, to find that the different cultures implemented forms of TQM that reflected their previous culture. The internal-bureaucratic culture focused on the rigorous, statistical, standardizing components, the external-people culture selected the more empowering, enabling, facilitative learning dimensions!

Knowing that there are a range of systems, methods and tactics is important as a source of ideas about influence strategies and alternatives. In much of the work and advice on forms of influence over people – the Machiavellian dimension - these alternatives are frequently expressed in terms of different ways of overcoming resistance. At heart, the essence of each classification is the same – influence strategies are related to what the change agent or 'influencer' sees to be the contingencies of the situation and, in particular, the abilities and motivation of those they are trying to influence. One of the most established classifications of overcoming resistance methods is provided by John Kotter and Leonard Schlesinger in 'Choosing Strategies for Change', Harvard Business Review, Reprinted 2008, July August pp.1-11.

As in the case for the Promethean dimension, the choice of influence strategy is not purely dictated by a rational analysis of the situation. There are fundamental and ongoing disagreements about what actually motivates human beings. In addition, there is always uncertainty about the details that apply in any specific situation. The type of strategy adopted will, again, reflect personality preferences and individual capabilities, as well as managerial philosophies and practices more or less embedded in any organizational context. The choice will always be one that involves some blend of the range of possible methods from coercion to consent. Moreover, a key component of any applied strategy, will be addressing the negative consequences of each style of influence. This includes the lack of commitment and buy in to 'low intensity' remuneration strategies, the strong negative backlash, hidden resistance and even immobilizing fear that can result from coercive strategies, and the time overruns, complacent conservatism, manipulative hidden agendas, and even anxiety and resentment that can be caused by participative consent based strategies. In addressing these issues, there will be no simple 'one best way', as witnessed by the enduring discussions and controversies surrounding the Machiavellian 'dirty hands' problem.

It is increasingly widely recognized that accepting and working with ambivalence and paradox is an important part of all creativity, and especially applicable to creative strategic endeavors and action in ambiguous contexts such as that of organizational change. In "Breaking the Code of Change", the Harvard University professors in change management, Samuel



Beer and Nitin Nohria, offer a series of paradoxes that have to be addressed in change, including whether change should be: top down or bottom up; focused on structures and systems or culture and attitudes; be based on plans and programs or experiment and evolution; be motivated by money or commitment; and involve consultant solutions or use consultants as support. They characterize this as an 'unending minuet' of alternative ideal type strategies of 'E' and 'O'. It was no accident, however, that they were able to find eminent academics, consultants and practitioners to strongly support contradictory strategies based on emphasizing different ends of the dilemmas or paradoxes that Beer and Nutria identify.

It is important to know that there are such tensions and contradictions embedded within all influence strategies. This does not, however, mean that one then knows how to effectively exert influence. Wrestling with paradox and contradiction in uncertain situations is a performance, and learning how to don and take off, separate and integrate, the scripts, roles and masks that we are required to play, take on and wear is a developed practical capability. It requires experience, creativity and ongoing experimentation and reflection. Change agents, programs and organizations need to build such an understanding of the central importance of reflective practice into everything that they do. All of which leads us on to the next section of the roadmap: the use of Mirrors.

## 7. Mirrors of change.

*"You don't drown by falling into water. You drown by staying there."*

*Robert Allen*

This section introduces you to the idea of managing change as an ongoing series of experiments in an inherently uncertain environment. In this process, a key component of managing change is relevant and effective evaluation, obtaining timely and accurate feedback, and, in general, supporting quality reflection on the change process and the actions taken to influence it.

There are three key dimensions of reflection. Firstly, the nature of reflective practice as a form of knowledge. Secondly, the multi-dimensional nature of change intelligence, and the importance of reflection encompassing thought, feeling and action. Thirdly, the creation of appropriate and relevant learning spaces.

Every change process is essentially uncertain. It involves second-guessing people's understandings and emotions, trialing influence tactics, making assumptions about the context within which one is working and so on. In a very real sense, therefore, every action is an experiment. It is a decision about the best way to act based on hypotheses we have about conditions and effects. In a sense, we should expect, or at least be ready, for things to go awry and events not to proceed according to the 'best laid plans of mice and men'. It is important, therefore, to have rapid and effective feedback on how things are going, the correctness of one's assumptions, the success of one's actions. The celebrated German philosopher Wilhelm Hegel once coined the phrase "The Owl of Minerva only flies out after dusk." What he meant by this was that we cannot foresee the future, and in a sense only know what we are doing after we have done it. Many scientists strongly dislike Hegel. One even referred to his 'Owl of Minerva' as an 'overrated piece of poultry'!

His point is, however, an important one, and centrally relevant for attempts at initiating or managing change. Organizations are highly complex entities operating in shifting and multiple environments. To fully understand prior to action is impossible. The classic optimistic scientific slogan coined by Auguste Comte in the late eighteenth century is "Savoir pour Prevoir. Prevoir pour Pouvoir." ("Knowledge for Prediction. Prediction for Action"). This optimistic faith is no longer widely held. From the nuclear physicist Heisenberg with his 'uncertainty principle' to the more recent insights of chaos and complexity theory, the non-linear, unstable and unpredictable nature of our world is more clearly understood. In practice, there is never enough knowledge and information to make the outcomes of action certain. We inevitably suffer from what the Oxford social philosopher Charles Taylor characterizes as the 'phronetic gap' that always exists between 'what rules prescribe and situations demand.' It is this kind of awareness that informs the pragmatist approach of change experts such as Kurt Lewin, as exemplified in his now classic statement. "If you want to understand a system, try to change it!" Incomplete knowledge and uncertainty is an inevitable part of action. It does

not, and should not, prevent action. What it leads to, however, is a mindfulness about complexity, and an openness to testing and revision. A key part of this is obtaining (and most importantly, paying attention to!) information on whether one's actions are 'working'. An available, clear and accurate mirror – or series of mirrors – are important.

We use the metaphor of a mirror for this activity of feedback and reflection quite deliberately. In the popular mind, many are aware of the threat as well as promise of mirrors, our denial of what we see as well as our desire to find out. While the camera might never lie, we often have more control over the positioning, angle and lighting of mirrors. But the information they provide is important. Similarly, there is growing acknowledgement that we need to establish 'learning organizations' to effectively face challenging environments. So, the idea of ongoing 'learning' slips easily off the tongue, and is all too easily agreed with. Yet learning – like unwanted images in a mirror – can be difficult, upsetting and disturbing. It can challenge all forms of established authority – including one's own beliefs. As the eminent British philosopher, Bertrand Russell, puts it,

*"Men fear thought as they fear nothing else on earth – more than ruin – more even than death... Thought is subversive and revolutionary, destructive and terrible, thought is merciless to privilege, established institutions, and comfortable habit. Thought looks into the pit of hell and is not afraid. Thought is great and swift and free, the light of the world, and the chief glory of man."*

*Bertrand Russell*

So, we often want to learn yet do not want to learn at the same time! We wish to get feedback on how we are doing, yet we also want comfort and reassurance that what we are doing is valuable and correct. This dilemma has often been pointed out in the mythology and metaphors that surround mirrors. What we often want is an image that reflects what we like to think about ourselves and what we do, not an image that undermines this. The sociologist Peter Berger once raised the interesting question of why it was that totalitarian regimes had the worst spies. His answer was that they were so afraid of authority, that they often tended to communicate back information that the authorities wanted to hear, rather than what they thought was actually going on. Deming, the founding father of the 'total quality' movement, had a number of principles underlying his systematic approach at improving the quality of processes. The first principle was 'Eliminate Fear!'

The metaphor and mythology of mirrors also raises other interesting points. The Irish dramatist and wit, Oscar Wilde, wrote a short story about Narcissus. The narrator talks to the pond that Narcissus always looked into to see his reflection, and asked it about the beauty of Narcissus. The response of the pond was that it didn't know, all it had been looking at was its own reflection in Narcissus' eyes! When we use people as mirrors, as we all do, and must do, then their own interests, values and perceptions come into play. There is no such thing as a 'neutral' mirror, and the activity of mirroring itself, can, and in many ways should, be looked at...in another mirror!

## 7.1. What do I know?

Our knowledge of how change is and should be managed is a reflective practice. In the terms of the famous Oxford philosopher, Gilbert Ryle, it is ultimately about 'knowing how' to manage change, not 'knowing that' managing change takes place in particular types of phases, involves the use of particular techniques etc. And 'knowing how' requires active reflection on the practice of ourselves and others. Establishing mirrors means, at one level, creating the intellectual supports and environment to support such reflection.

As we have argued, most of us operate with a restricted, rational, two-step, Nike, 'just do it' view of change. We want to order and instruct people about how to move from what we know is the 'bad old way' to the 'new good way'. When they do not listen, when they behave 'irrationally' or with 'resistance', we reassert, get angry, threaten or bully. As the Irish playwright Bernard Shaw once put it, "I never argue. I merely repeat my assertions." The language and techniques of persuasion and change management are actually very helpful in starting off reflection on the inadequacies of this mindset. Managing change techniques tend to adopt a more complex three-stage view of change. If we wish to move people and things from one state to another, we need to dislodge and unsettle existing patterns and systems of behavior, then we need to support the often difficult, uncertain and anxious transition period, and finally bed in the change at the other end to prevent 'slippage'.

This insight was first, and most famously, elaborated by the French sociologists Henri de Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte in their comments on the very real terror and disruptions surrounding the French Revolution. The problem, they argued, was that the rational philosophers of Enlightenment, and the politicians that followed them, did not realize that every society needs social supports. However 'rational' the new order is seen to be, it is, at heart, merely another social arrangement, requiring new forms of authority, unquestioned beliefs, hierarchy and so on. Any dislodging of the existing order – however progressive – will only create resistance, and then chaos and disruption, if it is not accompanied by the planned creation of a new social order. If we try to 'just do it', we face potential disaster.

This image underlies many of the techniques of change management. These are, in essence, often means established to influence and persuade people – to leave their existing ways, to continue through the discomfort and anxiety of trying to bring about the new ways, and to stick with the new 'way we do things around here'. We are, for example, offered 'N' Step theories of stages of change; standardized principles, method and techniques for overcoming resistance; programmed activities for planned change initiatives; and recommendation and advice on the principles and practices of leadership. In each case, we are provided with generic advice, methods and techniques – the somewhat clichéd 'take-aways' often demanded by managers believing in McDonaldisized management education.

What such techniques do not provide, however, is knowledge, experience and understanding in how they should be applied and made to work – in contexts that are often challenging,

ambiguous and confronting. This is the next important type of knowledge involved in managing change.

*"There are no laws,  
which you can trust to work.*

*There are just rules,  
which you must make to work.*

*In the one hand,  
you are holding the mirror.*

*On the other hand,  
you are the mask.*

*Put on the mask and look in the mirror.*

*What you see  
(the mirror does not lie)  
is that which is common to both,  
the truth you can believe.*

*Wilson Duff, "The World is as Sharp as a Knife"*

What we know, and specifically what we want to know, takes many different forms. Some forms of knowledge are quite formal and distant. They are analytical, abstract and general. They appear well formed and structured but are often 'thin' and even 'cold'. Others are more informal, proximate and personal. They are detailed and local. They appear more rough and messy but are often 'thick' and even 'hot'. Many people have a preference for one form or another. Academics thrive and make reputations on pointing out the weaknesses of one, while praising the strengths of the other. They may even be seen as major polar opposites or tensions in the way in which we view the world. One does not have to commit to one side or another, however, to recognize their dual existence – and their clear presence in discourses about managing change.

Much of the theory and language of change management formally recognizes the role of emotion and culture, politics and resistance, habits and blinkers, routines and denial. Yet the way in which such issues are described and analyzed, the manner in which they are addressed, is rather distant and abstract. Attention is directed towards 'techniques', 'tools', 'audits', 'plans' and 'programs'. What is lost in this discourse is the 'up front and personal' nature of change. Change can be confronting and challenging, stressful and elating, messy and discomfortingly or exhilaratingly uncertain. Knowledge about how to act, learn and find meaning in this more personal, intimate and close up area of change is probably the central challenge of change.

This is not to underemphasize the role of abstract thought, planning and technique. In the frameworks of change analysts and the stories told by transformational leaders, rational

management methods, tools and processes are praised for providing an important disciplining function in mobilizing people for change. It is important not to stop there, however. As we shall discuss, there are many forces pushing us into viewing such formal and distant views of knowledge as the main issues focus of discussions on managing change. So...The playing field is not level. Things are not in balance. The fulcrum is off center. In order to at least partially restore the balance, we need to refocus on the lived experience of change. Rather than repressing the personal experience of change, or relegating it to bar room or coffee shop gossip, we need to bring it to the surface. It needs to be better understood, reflected upon, coped with and addressed. As we shall discuss later, this is an experience that cannot be reduced to the cold categories of distant knowledge or the harsh analytical judgments of management metrics. In the words of Bobby Jones in the movie of the same name "It is a game that can only be played, not won." And... can we work on being better players?

We have to begin with real-world expectations, however. Many managers want techniques. Once they have techniques, they want to know how to apply them. They then search for other techniques on how to apply these techniques. It is, as illustrated in the apocryphal anthropologist's Turtle story, 'turtles all the way down!' Let's try a thought experiment for a moment. Turn the 6 Sigma analysis technique of the '6 Why's' applied to a problem, into the '6 Hows' of change management. So, let's take a set of hypothetical 'how' questions and responses to Kotter's injunction to 'create a sense of urgency' at the start of a change program.

First how, was 'how do I begin a change program?' Answer, 'create a sense of urgency?' Second, 'how do I create a sense of urgency?' Answer, 'through stimulating hope or instilling fear'. Third, 'how do I choose hope or fear?' Answer, 'it depends on the situation. If the organization is deeply entrenched in its old ways, with strong vested interests, and you need to quickly change, then fear will inevitably be required.' Fourth, how deep does 'deeply entrenched' have to be, and how 'strong' the vested interests? Answer, 'significant enough to mean that they cannot conceive or willingly follow the path that you wish them to go along.' Fifth, 'when do I decide that they 'cannot' willingly go along this path?' Answer, when you have tried as far as possible, within the time, resources and abilities that you have available, to win them over in other ways'. Sixth, 'is it necessary to try as much as possible to use your 'hope' strategy, or can I second guess that I should not mess around, and should begin with a fear strategy? Answer...'yes, maybe...' You see how quickly it gets complex, and we haven't yet even got onto the questions of the data collection methods to answer these questions, the techniques to be employed to stimulate fear or hope, what exactly these strategies mean and so on.

The lesson here is that, however, detailed a 'law', 'rule', 'instruction' or 'technique', it always has to be interpreted and applied in context, in a situation in which there will be ambiguity, uncertainty and conflicting views. This is a key insight required for any 'rational' manager. To the degree that a manager seeks to have 'certain knowledge' before acting, (s)he will either be immobilized in the face of complexity or unreflectively blind to the judgments that (s)he is inevitably 'making'.

So, what type of knowledge is required to make such judgments? This is the type of practical knowledge, Ryle's 'knowing how', that celebrated US writers on professional knowledge and innovation such as Chris Argyris and Donald Schon have been observing and writing about for decades. It is often tacit, based on an intuitive grasp of the tools, issues and context in an area of practice, and grounded in experience of dealing with the situational uncertainties and stresses and strains involved. There are often maxims or heuristics that are followed, but not slavishly so. There may be more or less systematic bodies of knowledge about the area of practice, and more or less formalized 'apprenticeship' into the community of practice that surrounds it.

This knowledge is not merely technical, however, it is also ethical and political. It involves the skills, capabilities and knowledge captured in the classical Greek idea of 'phronetic' knowledge – what the Danish analyst of organizational knowledge, Bengt Flyvberg describes as 'wisdom in the doing'. Many, if not most, of the uncertainties in situations surround the 'people' factor, how one understands their motives and perceptions, and how one influences them. Practice is, therefore, inevitably intertwined with ethical and political actions that may be more or less sanctioned, acceptable, credible and effective. How to handle oneself and others in such situations is a multidimensional personal, and interpersonal, matter, as well as a pragmatic, technical or economic one.

Finally, if this knowledge is often tacit and experience based, how can it be understood, taught and developed. As we shall see in the practice stories on the website, instructors are often unable to understand the wisdom-in-the-doing, and incapable of passing it on. But does this mean it is not accessible, or capable of improvement? The widely used 2x2 matrix of learning used by many consultants – the move from unconscious incompetence, through conscious incompetence and then conscious competence, to unconscious competence, suggest that expertise is primarily unconscious. There has, however, been some discussion about the need to add a fifth reflective mastery category, incorporating systematic reflection. This argument has affinities with that made by Ikujiro Nonaka and Hirotaka Takeuchi in their discussion of knowledge management in organizations. Practical learning, they argue, is not simply a codified system or an uncodifiable realm of tacit knowledge, but a process of reflecting on and systematizing what has previously been tacit and uncoded, then acting with the support of this and, in doing so, using and developing more tacit and uncoded knowledge, that can then in turn be captured and codified and so on. So, how do we set up this process?.

In the intellectual realm, this is where theory and generalization come most strongly into play. By reflecting on our assumptions about causes, conditions and consequences, drawing on and testing existing theories and explanation, and reworking both the theories and our own judgments and practice, we are using and further developing our own 'reflective practice'. Change management 'theory' is, in one sense, therefore, the last thing that should be discussed! It is essential, but, arguably, only central once we have moved beyond simple Nike just-do-it common sense, understand something of the techniques of influence and

persuasion, and have a significant degree of practical knowledge and experience. There are, as we addressed in the section on mindfulness, substantial forces in play keeping most of us in the 'Nike' zone. Our instinctive 'fight and flight' response to challenges, causes us to deny, lash out or just give up in the face of dashed expectations, apparently 'irrational' behavior, confrontation and contest etc. and not to enter into a productive realm of trying to effectively manage change. As Gandhi put it, in the movie of the name,

*"The question is 'Do you fight to change things, or do you fight to punish?' For myself, I find that we are all such sinners, we should leave punishment to God!"*

It is not 'theory' alone that moves us out of the punishment mindset!

## **7.2. Think. Feel. Act.**

Management education is often perceived as a rational discourse, imparting objective knowledge and techniques of efficient and effective administration to eager, willing and 'empty' student 'vessels'. My argument here is that not only is this whole conception of managerial knowledge wrong, it also fails to grasp the key areas of 'intelligence' that are of central value for practicing managers.

Peter Drucker, arguably the founder of the modern management discipline, was once asked what he thought was the central feature of successful management. After a few moments of reflection, he replied in his thick Germanic accent "Thinking things through!" In a reversal of the GIGO computer slogan, "Garbage In. Garbage Out", if you communicate useful and relevant knowledge to someone, but they are not thinking clearly or intelligently, then nothing useful is achieved in terms of practical outcomes. An idiot using 'gap', 'force field' and 'route map' methods will produce an idiotic change plan. The techniques, or technical knowledge, will not produce the plan for him or her. So, thinking things through, is important. Yet, as many critical rational writers have argued, people do this more rarely than they think or are willing to admit to. This is explicitly the argument made by Scott Adams for the success of his Dilbert cartoons. When asked for this technique, he said that he just assumed that people made stupid decisions 70% of the time, and then spent the other 30% trying to cover up. Man (sic.) is supposedly a rational animal, yet is strongly influenced by peer pressure, ego and general selective inattention to what (s)he does not want to know or hear. Going beyond managerial 'fads and fashions', and the mouthing of platitudes, and thinking things through is the first important critical form of intelligence. How reliable is our data? Are we really clear and committed to a direction? Do we really know what we are doing? Have we put in place the conditions necessary to support our plans? All these direct questions have to be properly thought through as a key component of managing change.

In "The Heart of Change", John Kotter extends his previous quite intellectual and rational approach to advising on change, to explicitly address the emotions and feelings surrounding change. As he puts it, most of us do not go through a decision-making process of the form 'analysis, think, change' but, rather, 'see, feel, change'. This argument has been most



strongly put forward by the emotional intelligence guru Daniel Goleman. Intellectual and technical skills are of little relevance for effecting change, if one does not also have the personal and interpersonal abilities and skills necessary to influence and control yourself and others. This involves, crucially, abilities in the area of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills. As change, and resistance to change, will inevitably involve a turbulent emotional roller-coaster for most of those involved, handling the emotions of oneself and others is a second major area of required intelligence.

The third area of intelligence was most forcefully presented to me when sitting on a tennis court with a manager from a large manufacturing company for which I was carrying out some change management activities. "Change management?", he said, "We don't need more change management. We have tons of that. What we need is do management. We never actually do anything!" This is also the key message of innovation enthusiast and champion, the management speaker circuit consultant and guru, Tom Peters. Most managers, he argues, are stifled by a fear of risk. They are locked into a 'ready, aim, aim, aim' mentality. Careful, hesitant and, hence, incompetent in situations of ambiguity, innovation and change. What is required, he argues, is more of an action orientation, an experimental ethos, confidence and capability to adopt a 'ready, fire, aim' approach! This key positive, action oriented, enterprising spirit is promoted in multiple award winning interpersonal influencing books, and is a key component of the immensely influential Stephen Covey program to instill 7 (and now 8) habits to support being highly effective in such situations. The third area of intelligence is, therefore, an action intelligence, the orientation towards and capacity to actually 'do' things.

Each of these areas of intelligence – thought, emotion and action – are key areas for assessment and development, in both ourselves and others. They are all crucially important for effectively managing change, and can and should be a matter for ongoing reflection and improvement. Reflection does not stop, however, at a purely instrumental level. Reflection on our capabilities for thinking, feeling and acting inevitably moves into reflection on how we do these things, how much we do them, and what effect this has on us. How much time and effort is it desirable to spend thinking things through, assessing and manipulating the feelings of ourselves and others, and creatively and enterprisingly working to make change happen. In a world in which burnout is rampant, insecurity is rife, and interpersonal manipulation poses threats to intimacy and authenticity, how far and in what form should we be developing such capabilities in organizations? These are important personal and social questions.

### **7.3. Learning spaces.**

Despite a widely prevalent commitment to learning in organizations – and even to create learning organizations – in practice there are substantial barriers to effective learning. If, as we have argued, change is a highly complex affair, then experimentation and evaluation is crucial. In terms of the classic action learning cycle, ongoing processes of planning, doing, checking and acting are required. It is important to think through and make explicit what is

planned and the assumptions on which this is based, to initiate actions on the basis of these plans and assumptions, evaluate and check what happens and why (or why not) things went according to plan or not, well or not, and then rework plans and assumptions, and act again. This proactive learning orientation is not as 'natural' as it seems. In frustration against management conservatism, Ken Iverson, the CEO of Nucor, once stated that "I expect every one of my senior managers to make mistakes 70% of the time. But then they had better quickly solve the problems!" In his outline of the key levels of management, Elliott Jacques, the classical world renowned organizational design consultant and inventor of the 'requisite organization' concept, often emphasized that managers should be promoted on their ability to handle every higher levels of complexity and uncertainty in the face of longer 'time spans of discretion'. Yet, as he pointed out, this is often not the case – with political skill, forcefulness and competence at lower level technical tasks often given preference over ability to handle ambiguity and complexity. Sound familiar?

Setting up learning spaces is not, however, merely a matter of intellectual capability. It is also about creating the time, physical space, political tolerance, confidence and motivation necessary to set aside opportunities for learning, and to effectively take them up. Post-implementation project reviews are common in many large organizations, but are frequently seen as a 'blame' game, and something that happens too late, after the fact. The US MIT organizational learning celebrity, Peter Senge, argues for multiple forms and dimensions of learning spaces to be set up. As he illustrates, sports teams often practice on their playing fields, yet management teams often go on 'away day' trips, far from the action, to reflect and 'learn'. Is it not possible to create effective learning spaces close to the action, 'playing fields' before and after meetings, at crucial crisis learning junctures in the progress of programs and so on? This is, of course, not merely about resources and intellect; it is also about management philosophy, political power and the dangers of open and honest reflection for multiple vested interests and careers. How this is handled is a final key component of setting up 'Mirrors of Change'.

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## Appendix. Principles of change management.

### *Preamble*

Change creates uncertainty, fear and anxiety – for both authors and targets. The most common response is a knee-jerk reaction – defensiveness and aggression, hiding one's interests and fears behind rational arguments, and attempts to impose rational external controls on the irrational behavior of others. In this difficult and uncomfortable situation, it would be nice to have a rulebook to follow and a toolbox of techniques to deploy. This is particularly the case for those who like or who have been rewarded for engineered, command-and-control, tasks in the past. However, in the face of the messy, uncertain and confronting nature of change, any premature attempt to 'solve' the problem by imposing simple rules, rational monitoring and coercive controls is impractical. For those who resist this suggestion – and there are many, it is quite natural – this mindset will be part of the problem – and one of the reasons why over 70% of change initiatives fail.

The experienced and effective change manager is one who is aware of the emotions of him or herself and others, understands the complexities and dilemmas facing anyone attempting to influence change, is experienced in surfacing and addressing the real issues, and is committed to ongoing learning and improvement for him (her) self and colleagues. Like every other area of professional practice, enhancing one's change capabilities is about improving one's practical ability to get things done in uncertain and unique situations – where rules cannot be simply applied to 'solve' the problem. While this sounds relatively simple in theory, in practice it involves uncomfortable questioning of one's own values and interests, direct confrontation, and learning to live in and adapt to a world of uncertainty and confusion.

What I want to do with this list of principles, therefore, is not to provide a simple recipe for how to manage change – of the form provided by John Kotter. At best this would give you an unjustified faith that you have been given the keys to the kingdom of change management. At worst, it would lead to complacency about the challenge of the task, and costly mistakes in uncritically applying simple rules. The aim is, in contrast, is to stimulate discussion and reflection on how you manage change at present and, hopefully, encourage you to pursue further learning in the future. What I would like you to do, therefore, is to read through the principles and jot down where it seems relevant:

- ◆ any 'war stories' that you have that illustrate any of the principles;
- ◆ any more principles that suggest themselves to you;
- ◆ any problems or lack of clarity that you find with any of the principles.

### **Principle 1**

*Life is lived forwards but understood backwards – learn to live in the 'twilight' zone.*

## **Principle 2**

*Genius is 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration – retain a pessimism of the intelligence, and an optimism of the will.*

## **Principle 3**

*There is never enough time to do it properly, always enough time to cope with the mess – be proactive in creating enough 'slack' at the front end.*

## **Principle 4**

*Your win-win is also lose-lose – be prepared for your own resistance.*

## **Principle 5**

*Use misunderstanding – learn to live with and exploit ongoing ambiguity and confusion.*

## **Principle 6**

*Change agency is a contact sport – recognize and develop a wide range of political resources and tactics.*

## **Principle 7**

*Work the grain against the grain – encourage and exploit the tensions in the existing culture.*

## **Principle 8**

*360 degree ambivalence is normal – avoid paranoia by learning to live with cooperation.*

## **Principle 9**

*Bedding in is going to sleep – balance enthusiasm for a particular change with a message of continuous change.*

## **Principle 10**

*Those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it – create a productive learning environment.*

## **Principle 1**

*Life is lived forwards but understood backwards.*

Hindsight, as the saying goes, is 20-20 vision. It is not so difficult to analyze where things went wrong in a change process that has already occurred – lack of vision, insufficient urgency for change, failing to involve key figures and so on. What is more challenging is how to analyze a change situation *before* the action occurs, and 'get things right'. As one German philosopher (Hegel) put it, "The Owl of Minerva only flies out after dusk" – by which he

meant that the goddess of knowledge (Minerva) only gives us understanding of life after it has happened. Some critics have referred to this Owl as 'an overrated piece of poultry'. What we all want to know is how to operate in the 'grey zone', before dusk turns to night – how to solve problems or improve things when things are underway but before it is too late. In this area, recommended rules for change management, ideas about stages of change and appropriate activities at each stage, are *always* too general to adequately inform action. You are inevitably a more or less aware and attentive improviser, drawing on rules and guidelines but interpreting and adapting these in context. 'The devil' is very much 'in the details', and a sensitivity to the details is essential 'for the want of a nail' can undermine the most momentous of programs.

## **Principle 2**

*Genius is 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration.*

The celebrated Stanford Professor Jeffrey Pfeffer once remarked that what organizations required is a radical improvement in the skills of 'getting things done' rather than 'figuring out what to do'. This is particularly applicable to change management, in two fundamental ways. Firstly, it is one thing to develop plans and strategies. It is quite another to get them implemented. This is the origin and basis for the interest and concern in change management itself. Secondly, the view that change management can be a designed and planned process is also flawed – such plans and strategies are themselves always subject to disruption and change, the emergence of the unexpected and the problematic. As John Quinn, a major contributor to strategic thinking, put it, it is often a case of 'purposeful muddling through'. In the words of Thomas Edison, "The three great essentials to achieving anything worthwhile are; first, hard work, second, stick-to-it-iveness, and third, common sense."

It is Kanter's Law – Rosabeth Moss Kanter being the premier Harvard Business School Professor and international consultant on change management – that 'things always look worst from the middle'. As one telecommunications CEO put it, it is all too easy to get bogged down in the 'treacle that just plays the game and gets in the way'. The 3Ps of change management are 'Persistence. Persistence. Persistence'. This is not a message that is particularly popular, as a simple and effective technique would be much more palatable. As is the case with advertisements for the latest piece of equipment to get us fit or dietary technique to reduce our weight, we often prefer to believe in the dramatized promises of the vendor than to understand and reflect on the personal effort that will be involved.

What does one do in the face of such challenges? Enthusiasm *is* important. A commitment to put ones heart and mind into the task of achieving change, and overcome whatever obstacles present themselves *is* crucial. Yet this should be accompanied not by pathological optimism but a critical mindfulness, an awareness of the many dangers of change, the unexpected consequences, the intrusions from left field. As Machiavelli put it, "There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success

than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things” or as Lee Iacocca remarked in reflecting on his widely acknowledged success in turning around Chrysler, “If I’d had the slightest idea of what lay ahead for me when I joined up with Chrysler, I wouldn’t have gone over there for all the money in the world.” To be aware of dangers, yet remain optimistic and persevere to bring the change about, is a key part of being a ‘mindful’ and effective change manager. “Pessimism of the intelligence, optimism of the will,” is how Antonio Gramsci, an Italian philosopher, once put it.

### **Principle 3**

*There is never enough time to do it properly, always enough time to cope with the mess.*

Individuals and organizations have the same inherent faith ‘that it will be alright on the night’. When purchasing new technology, trying out new methods, improving our work or home environment, we always underestimate the time, resources and effort required. In a sense, we may become excessively conservative and risk averse if we were to be fully aware of all the costs and problems involved in bringing about changes. Any recommendations for effective change management are, therefore, inherently difficult to implement – there is a strong, embedded, irrational hope that this is all ‘too much fuss’, and that things will ‘work themselves out’. If most change programs were successful in achieving their objectives, then this would not be a problem. However, the opposite is often the case, with reported levels of change program failures being above 70%.

As management fads come and go, people become disillusioned and cynical (hence the BO-HICA phrase – Bend Over Here It Comes Again). At the start of most change initiatives, there is much hoop la, beating of chests and banging of drums. A glowing future is proclaimed, promises made, and expectations heightened. In many cases, however, this is more a case of pathological optimism than realistic enthusiasm.

Some have likened the faith in the new management fad to the addicted gambler who, insanely anxious over his past losses, puts his hopes yet again on one more throw of the dice, hoping that this time his luck will change and his number come up. Or, as has been remarked in another context, insanity is repeating the same actions and expecting different outcomes!

It is then left upon, often, middle managers to try to keep operations going through the disruptions of change, to cope with the problems that they create, and take out the beneficial elements and avoid as much as possible some of the dangerous effects that they can have. Most of our organizations have more or less informal slack to help address such issues and ‘clean up the mess’.

One of the challenges of change management is to try and convey the unpalatable message that more time and attention needs to be paid up front to addressing potential issues and problems, and committing time, energy and resources to addressing such issues.



## Principle 4

*Your win-win is also lose-lose.*

As Covey outlines in his '7 Habits', being proactive and seeking 'win-win' solutions is part of the mindset of every successful entrepreneurial manager, and hence every successful change agent. At the same time, however, where change requires cooperation from different individuals and groups, it will inevitably require you to adapt your ideas and interests in order to get things done. For many of us, this is a difficult process. In terms of the traditional Kubler-Ross 'grieving' cycle, we often respond to resistance (the 'loss' of our initial ideas and hopes) by, first, denying its existence (by reasserting our position, emphasizing what we see to be the value of the change, providing rational arguments for its necessity etc.), secondly, if this does not work, by becoming angry (becoming aggressive or sullen, resorting to coercive command-and-control strategies, use of fear and threat), thirdly, again if this is insufficient, by negotiating (now attempting to find out the interests and perceptions of others, accommodate to their desires but keep as much of our own etc.), and, if things then seem to work out, move into the fourth, stage of acceptance of the modified change. This is a common pattern amongst those *initiating* change – but also amongst those who are the *targets* of change. Handling this dual sense of loss, while seeking win-win solutions, is a necessary part of effective change management.

## Principle 5

*Use misunderstanding.*

As the key proponent of applying chaos theory to strategic management, Ralph Stacey, remarks, what organizations now need is 'extraordinary management' – managers who are able to operate in situations of high uncertainty and major disagreements. If you are involved in significant change, what you desire *will* run counter to the interests of some individuals and groups, *will* be differently understood and perceived, and in the face of this opposition and confusion you will have to 'keep the show on the road'. In attending to the needs and views of others, what stimulates action, what they are supportive or opposed to, may be something other than you originally intended. A degree of misunderstanding and confusion will always be rife. But, rather than reasserting your own views and opinions, imposing simple rules and regulations to remove all uncertainty, it is necessary to learn to live with this ambiguity and use it. Rather than running away from inherent uncertainties and conflicts, what is required is flexibility, adaptability and openness in the face of the unknown and the contentious. As Oscar Wilde flippantly remarked, "I live in terror of not being misunderstood".

Uncertain about what is required and what may happen in change, many managers initially hold back from involving people and communicating the need for change. They are worried about losing credibility, revealing uncertainty or weakness. Yet as the goalposts inevitably

move, and lack of trust threatens constructive cooperation, change agents need to be more open about the lack of certainty and involve people more directly in crafting out responses in situations that are acknowledged to be ambiguous and conflictual. Moreover, as one senior Japanese manager commented, the difference between Western managers and Japanese managers is that most Western managers see good management as getting the ideas of the managers into the heads of the workers as efficiently as possible. This 'injection in the head' model of change not only fails to draw on people's intelligence and creativity but results in inevitable frustration. On the part of the agent of change this is frustration about the lack of understanding of his ideas and needs. On the part of the recipient it is frustration about being imposed upon and not valued. To paraphrase Oscar Wilde, the secret of every successful marriage is getting used to being often and hopelessly misunderstood. Partners in change are not so different. To learn to live with ambiguity, and to use it rather than run away from it, is part of the emotional and intellectual make up of effective change initiators.

### **Principle 6**

*Change agency is a contact sport.*

The Holy Trinity of change management may very well be 'Fear. Hope. Charity.' In order to inspire urgency in others, inspirational hope, involvement, and participation are one set of strategies. In the traditional joke about Organizational Development, 'How many OD people does it take to change a light bulb?' Answer 'It doesn't matter. The light bulb has to want to change!' Incentives, rewards and inducements – or their opposite – are another. But fear, coercion and manipulation are an often unspoken and unacknowledged means of getting things done. As one UK industrialist remarked in response to a question about his change management approach, "We use the F.I.F.O. model. Fit in or Fuck off."

The effective Machiavellian manager is not, however, just the one bent on intrigue, personal ambition, and manipulation, with a preference for coercive power plays. (S)he is the one who is able to judge the circumstances, and select that tactics necessary to get things done. In different situations, the use of empowerment, instrumental rewards and coercion as tactics might be disastrous, but in other situations, their absence would be a recipe for failure. The change agent is inevitably involved in making the political and ethical decisions necessary to get change to occur. There is no way of standing above the fray. As one senior manager from BHP put it when told about the desire of his reports to attend a workshop on change management, "Fine, but you realize this is an exercise in avoidance. They just want to attend the course so that they can find a way of not being uncomfortable, to not find change so confronting. What they need to do is to get into the mud pit and start wrestling."

### **Principle 7**

*Work the grain against the grain.*

Far too often, with the implicit assumption of 'no pain, no gain', change is presented as a cataclysmic transformation, in which everyone has to give up everything that they held dear

in the past, in order to create a necessary and desirable future. It is not surprising, in response, fear is rampant, and the energy for change frequently lacking. In a recent book "*Change without Pain*", the US international consultant and academic Eric Abrahamsson makes the important point that the change agent has to use one part of an organizational culture against another – searching out the myths, legends, values and interests that will support a desired change, and use these to root out and undermine those that prevent the change. The change agent is a facilitator, attempting, as far as possible, to work with a culture rather than against it. As Deal and Kennedy, two of the early founders of the commitment to 'strong culture' programs recently commented, "There must be a million consultants promising to help 'change the cultures' of companies. Many of these consultants are even making a reasonable living from the practice. What a lot of bollocks. Cultures change only when they need to and are damned well ready to change. They change when their collective intelligence recognizes that the world has changed and that the culture better adapt in order for the business to survive."

### **Principle 8**

*360 degree ambivalence is normal.*

Change is not brought about alone. However, energetic, enthusiastic, or powerful the initiator or leader of a change program, (s)he is dependent upon those to whom (s)he is responsible, colleagues and subordinates for his or her success. Resources, advice and cooperation are essential requirements, and these can only be obtained by successful 360 degree leadership – making sure:

- ◆ that one's 'bosses' interests are known and addressed and that they are sufficiently persuaded by the importance and potential success of the change initiative to continue to resource and protect it;
- ◆ that one's colleagues are able and willing to contribute their knowledge, time, expertise and resources rather than seek to undermine 'your' change program; and
- ◆ that those below you employ their inevitable discretion to actively support rather than actively or passively undermine that is intended.

However, as Freud showed us long ago, we are often fundamentally ambivalent towards those who are most important to us. We love and hate, adore and fear, those upon whom we depend for our livelihood and our self-image. It is a fiction to believe that anyone can be simply supported by and supportive of superiors, colleagues, subordinates or customers. We are often fundamentally ambivalent towards them – and them to us. We are in a state of what one Harvard book called "Coopetition" – we both cooperate and conflict with the same individuals and groups, and have to develop the mindset and strategies necessary to deal with this. We both praise and condemn superiors who at times help and at other times misunderstand and undermine what we do. We are supportive, congenial and cooperative with colleagues who work with us towards common ends, yet we are also in competition with

them for time, resources, and career advancement. We both work for and with our subordinates, yet also have conflicting interests in meeting the needs of ourselves and the organization on the one hand, and address their values, concerns and competing allegiances on the other.

In the face of this ambivalence, the successful change agent does not become a zealot for a cause, or the distanced and disillusioned cynic, but, rather, adopts a more mature ability to recognize such tensions and conflicts and yet craft out and commit to a worthwhile agenda that carries people forward and achieves worthwhile outcomes.

As Kotter puts it, "Beyond the yellow brick road of naivete and the muggers lane of cynicism, there is a narrow path, poorly lit, hard to find, and even harder to stay on once found. People who have the skill and the perseverance to take that path serve us in countless ways. We need more of these people. Many more."

### **Principle 9**

*Bedding in is going to sleep.*

Change is often presented as a journey. The image is frequently used to emphasize that there is no easy and fixed course, yet there is a destination. It also draws on our Western heroic tradition of the 'quest', and the American 'Wild West' frontier imagery. The idea of a destination, a final resting place, where we attain our utopian state is, however, a double edged one. It can inspire but it can also lead to complacency and rigidity. In a world of ongoing change, the idea that one is in a short term transition to a state where change has been 'achieved' can lead to inflexibility. Paraphrasing the insights of Donald Schon, one of the founders of professional knowledge training, "As long as I can remember, I had a belief in a stable state, in my own life as well as in that of organizations. But it never comes. It is an illusion, and a dangerous illusion at that." A part of successful change is inculcating a general innovative change mentality amongst those involved.

The idea of going somewhere, and achieving something worthwhile, is an essential part of inspiring change. It is an ideal, a place where we can 'rest up' after all the effort. In that sense it is an essential component and motivator of our striving. At the same time, it needs to be accompanied by a sense of the temporal and shifting nature of such achievements. Whether attention is focused onto the Fortune 500 companies, or particular industries such as semiconductors, one frequent observation is made: how the names of the top corporations change over time! New innovations, new changes appear as what the Harvard Professor Clayton Christensen called 'disruptive technologies', a threat to established bases of success. Without a general recognition of the need for ongoing change, and establishing cultures and organizational arrangements to support this, there is an ever present danger of fossilizing into a rigid and even repressive culture or structure. A commitment to and enthusiasm for *specific forms* of change needs to be accompanied by a similar ability to cope with and dedication to bring about *ongoing change*.

## **Principle 10**

*Those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it.*

"Experience", notes Oscar Wilde, "is the name that we give to our mistakes". Managing change is a complex phenomenon in which mistakes are not only frequent, but to be expected. In a classic treatment of complex technical systems, the Yale Professor Charles Perrow coined the term 'normal accidents' to describe the fact that in complex situations, unexpected outcomes, errors, accidents and mistakes should be regarded as 'normal', and to be treated as such. Given the complexity of change programs, 'normal mistakes' will occur, and the successful change agent is one who not only admits to mistakes, but acts to rectify the problems that emerge. In the most desirable case, this may also involve actually using such mistakes to his or her advantage – at least as a learning opportunity during the change process.

In order to encourage learning from mistakes, it is important that change agents are oriented by general guidelines that are, to an extent, applied and tested during change programs. The anthropologist Charles Lamb tells the story of a 'roast pig' to illustrate this general problem of learning. When invited by the natives to a dinner of roast pig, he was shocked that they put a pig into one of their houses, then burnt down the house, before taking the pig out and serving it up. When asked why they did this, they replied that they used to eat the pig raw, but one day a house burnt down with a pig in it, they then ate the pig, and realized how good it tasted. So, now, on special occasions they make roast pig by burning down the house. If change agents want to avoid burning down houses each time they wish to roast their own particular pig, then some general understanding of heating and cooking principles is necessary. Ongoing reflection – informed but not restricted by rules, guidelines, and heuristics – is a necessary part of gaining change management experience.