HANDLING CHANGE
Introduction to this Module

Leading change is based on taking:

> 'A structured approach to transitioning individuals, teams, and organizations from a current state to a desired future state... to manage the people side of change"
> Wikipedia

It is the 'management science' (although it is more art than science) that looks at the way that people can be helped to move from a current way of seeing things (frame of reference) and a set of associated behaviours to a new way of behaving and seeing things.

The definition immediately explains why the area is one of both risk – of personal and corporate failure – and also vital importance. The ability to manage the people side of change effectively is perhaps the most important ingredient in successfully leading – especially when there is the need to move behaviour forward. It should be one of the key tools of effective leaders.

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A Christian Perspective on Change Leadership and Management

CHALLENGES

This boldly titled section aims not to provide a definitive view of change management from a Christian perspective. Rather it seeks to provide some elements to consider when looking at this subject.

Most people find the whole area fascinating and interest and publications in this area have grown along with the growth in interest that leadership has experienced. To some extent these are both driven by the same forces:

1. An interest in making changes work effectively.
2. The increasing understanding that to gain commitment from people, especially in a diverse and relatively flat power structure, needs thought, planning, skills and a personally sensitive approach.

However, if you are like me, the topic does require some careful consideration. Particular questions that are high on my agenda are:

1. Is taking a structured and considered approach to leading change simply putting a fine gloss on manipulating people? How moral is it to take such an approach?
2. When a desired goal is something that you feel is inspired by God then to what extent should the way that you go about achieving that be the product of a social-science approach like this? How legitimate is that?
3. The Bible talks about opposition to the church and the Christian message being driven by the natural enmity of the world to God. So shouldn't we expect attacks and opposition and not concern ourselves with any collateral damage that comes from moving forward with the Gospel?
4. Then there are some practical issues that come into my mind, notably:
   a. Can any approach that works be justified (even if seen to be effective in the secular world) or are some approaches simply wrong?
   b. What about the use of hard power versus soft power? (i.e. forcing through a change by using positional authority rather than gaining voluntary commitment to a change.) Is that 'right'?

There is not much that explicitly speaks to these issues in the Bible and the significant socio-political differences that exist between the UK in the 21st century and Palestine in ancient times (e.g. authority, education, democracy and pluralism etc.) make some lessons difficult to draw.

I can only provide my perspective on these points.

A PERSPECTIVE

There are some examples of powerful change management activities that can be seen in the Bible, for example:

- The frequent use of story both in the Bible narrative and the use of parables (with their differential meaning for listeners who can hear and those who can't);
- The intelligence behind the interactions of characters like Esther or Gideon in winning commitment to secure their aims; and
- The powerful use of symbol and form in the tale of the Jewish nation all speak to a real sensitivity to the impact of actions on people and the need to consider how best to approach people to secure the best result – essentially what change management is.

Similarly the New Testament narratives on the restructuring in the early church in Acts 6, or the resolution around the proclamation of the Gospel to the gentiles in Acts 15 demonstrates that some thought and process clearly was being given to the way to resolve conflict and secure direction. Again – change leadership.

However, perhaps the most powerful example of change management that I can see is in the way that Jesus proceeded in the Easter narrative that meant that he launched the church effectively and that all those who chose to injure and abuse him actually ended up as the tools for God's salvation. The myriad players in this narrative – including Sanhedrin, Romans, Herod, disciples, mob and crowd all ended up gruesomely conspiring to deliver an innocent man to his death within a week of his triumphal arrival in the Jewish capital.

Additionally the Easter narrative provides a clear parallel to personal change – with the death of the old on Friday, the walk in no-mans land through the Sabbath and culminating in the arrival of the new on the Sunday. This parallels the structure of personal and group change.

Given this background, my own position on change management is:

- We are called to be wise as serpents and innocent as sheep in our activity in the world – to be intelligent in our dealings with people. Change management is in its best form and practice precisely this. It makes the often otherwise hidden or unnoticed both visible and structured which makes it easier to handle and more readily addressed, especially in the melee that is often major change.
- I prefer open, explicit approaches to change because they discourage covert manipulation where people are

encouraged to act under a false understanding of the impact or significance of what they are being encouraged to do. Regardless of the explicit nature of messages, it goes without saying that I expect that leaders at all times will speak and act with truth and integrity. This is critical – oddly enough not just because it is right but also because it is the only sustainable way to secure commitment.

- I think that change management is about understanding people and then shaping your interactions and approaches to them in the light of this. Many of the frameworks and insights are largely neutral in their attitude to people – they can be used in a Godly way in exactly the same way that the frameworks and insights in leadership studies can be used.
- In my experience, much aggravation, upset and disaffection and change failure is driven by the failure to take a systematic approach to change management. It is not a necessary consequence of the change being sought – it is the collateral damage created by poor planning. There is no excuse for that and I have observed it both in Christian and non-Christian environments. As Christians we seek not to offend – and to give people excuse to take offence for the wrong reasons is very sad.
- Change management provides tools and frameworks to help in the effective planning of change but it speaks to the how of change and more than anything else highlights risks, areas to consider, and actions to take. These in my experience still require prayer and discernment before God to decide what to do with the insights that are provided. The confidence to approach change requires courage, wisdom and commitment to God. Change management helps inform this.
- Some of you may have heard of/read an old book called 1066 and all that. The defining mark of this history of England from 1066 onwards was its humorous classification of major events, figures and times into 'Good' or 'Bad'.... as indicated by its subtitle – 103 Good Things, 5 Bad Kings and 2 Genuine Dates. Too often we fall into exactly this trap in major changes – classifying the whole of a change, group, activity or person as 'good' or 'bad'. Life is not like that because people are not like that and changes are too complicated for that... change management helps to weaken this all too frequent frame of reference.
- For me and my approach to change, I believe that the Christian approach to change needs to embody:
  - ⇒ A love and empathy for people – all of them, including the opponents of change.
  - ⇒ A respect for truth.
  - ⇒ Accountability for words and actions – no heat of the battle excuses.
  - ⇒ Humility for errors, omissions and opinions.
  - ⇒ Honesty (especially versus manipulation).
  - ⇒ A real belief in transformation – and in God's power to realise this in the life of individuals and groups.

All this is consistent with the frameworks in this module.

The Dynamics of Change

FUNDAMENTAL STEPS

Major change is best characterised as comprising three fundamental parts. These steps have been identified by many different analysts looking at how people respond to discontinuities and major changes in their lives.

The steps apply at every level of change from the person to society and are represented by different titles but represent the same underlying concepts:

1. An unfreezing or ending from the starting outlook – representing the identification (voluntary or compelled) that something needs to change. This is well captured by the Piper Alpha analogy of the 'burning platform'.
2. A transition phase – sometimes called the neutral zone or change – which is a kind of no man's zone between two steady states where the signposts and stability are unclear. This is a fluid, uncomfortable and temporary stage that people have to move through to reach the third step.
3. A remedy – 'to be' stage which represents the end of the transition as the move to a new stable equilibrium is completed and the individual feels comfortable and accepting of the new position.

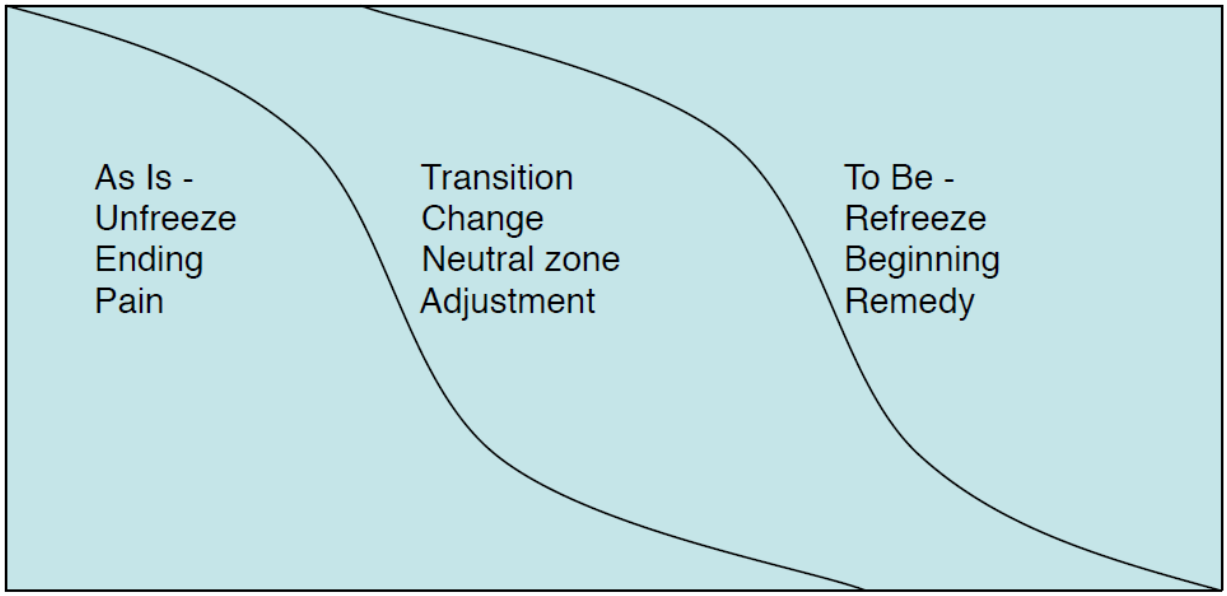
These steps are described sequentially but in any significant change at any point in time there will be people at each step, and individuals will be at different places on different aspects of the change.

The value of identifying these steps is that they help in the planning and navigation of any change, provide a sense of what to expect through each step and highlight the requirements that are needed to be able to progress to the next step.

Importantly these are the psychological steps, not physical steps, of change. It can be easy to achieve the external change but it takes much longer typically to realise the psychological change and it is typically this that is the driver of what people would think of as real change in any situation.

Key aspects of this journey are:

- People can repeat steps.
- Although groups may journey along together they will leave the 'as is' and arrive at the 'to be' at their own individual times.
- The speed of change is not critical as long as there is momentum and empathy with others at different points and proceeding at a different pace.
- Emotions are different at the different points of the journey.



RESPONSES TO CHANGE

Change is a journey that people go through and is always resisted – or at least aspects of it are – even positive change.

It is important to recognise that people do not resist change per se (despite what we might think) but they resist those aspects of even a positive change which involve losses. Losses are important to consider because people resent losing something more than they like gaining something. Losses can be anything that is important to them – you may not necessarily see it as a loss. Change is about the fact that their previous expectations are not being realised and what they now see does not replace these on a like-for-like basis.

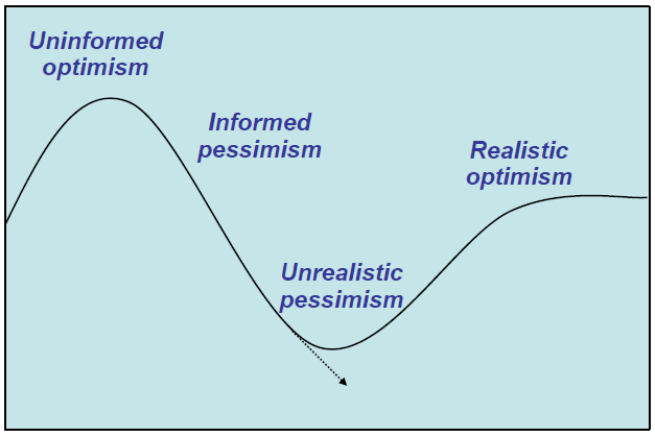
For this reason it is important:

1. People have a healthy attitude to conflict resolution and that conflict is resolved effectively through the change rather than ignored – hoping it will go away is not a strategy that is likely to succeed.
2. Losses are identified and compensated.
3. The level of resilience in the group (and individuals) is identified and shapes the handling of change (lower resilience – more care, more attention to increasing resilience).

People typically move through (not necessarily linearly) change in patterns. The response curves to positively and negatively perceived change are somewhat different and offer different points at which people may 'check-out' or get stuck and so fail to move to commit to the new state.

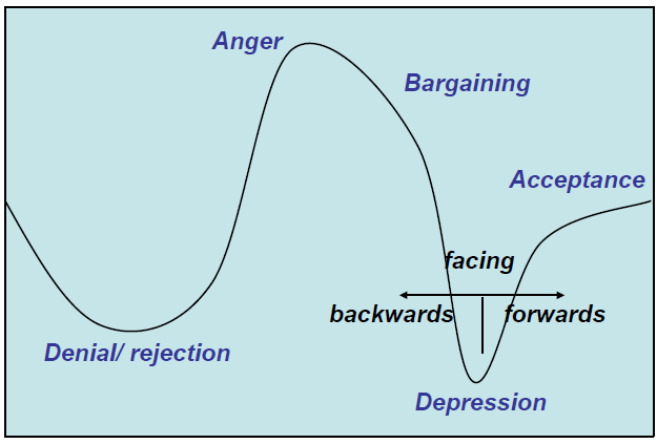
These transitions may be represented as below

POSITIVE CHANGE



Source: The career/entrepreneurial transition curve

NEGATIVE CHANGE



Source: Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, On Death & Dying, 1969.

The value of understanding these patterns is the insight that it provides into what to expect emotionally as people move through change and in being able to empathise and address their needs.

Key points are:

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

If a successful change is one where the group reaches the desired outcome as quickly and damage free as possible then there are some key attributes which are required to enable this to happen:

- **Vision** A clear picture of what the desired outcome is. This typically needs to be a rounded description addressing both the concrete and emotional aspects of the end state: how it will be and how it will feel.
- **Skills** There are skills required both to enable the change (e.g. project management, communication, conception, organisation, administration) and to realise the desired outcome (e.g. specific technical skills, problem solving, artistic skills). Both need to be present in enough quantity.
- **Incentives** A big change needs a big incentive, a little change perhaps rather less. But the size of change is in the eye of the person making it (not launching it). Incentives can be both to move away from the current way of doing things and attractions about the future.
- **Resources** Resources are multifaceted and defined by the change but include human, financial and emotional. There needs to be enough of them and of the right quality.
- **Action plan** An often overlooked item. This means an understanding of the steps to be taken (by whom and in what sequence) and a means of governing these as the group goes through them.

Without all these basic ingredients in place the change will fail.

ENGAGING WITH CHANGE AS A LEADER

The position of the leader is a vital one in any change – witness the challenges that our political, business or sports team leaders face whenever major issues or changes come up that they initiate or the environment creates. All eyes focus on that person, regardless of how fair that is.

The leader needs to bring resilience into change. Researchers Werner and Smith developed a simple way to define a resilient person. They say that a resilient person loves well, works well, plays well, and expects well. Resilience is the personal strength that will help them and their groups to manage the stress of change. The skills that underlie this are:

1. Social skills and connections that enable a person to reach out and build linkage with others. In addition to being important in helping to engage in change, by reaching out being responsive to people, social strength is vital in providing a protected base of trust that sustains the leader when the going gets tough (family, friends etc.).
2. A generally positive sense of purpose, worth and hope for the future – at a personal level and in connection with the world. Even if life is viewed as complex, it is also viewed as having opportunity.
3. A secure sense of identity and self-worth, that helps to provide flexibility and courage.
4. Problem solving, structuring and organising skills that help in both creative and critical analysis.

The leadership group is the most powerful lever for change and can often compensate for other weaknesses if it is resilient enough. If you are looking to increase your likelihood of success then focus on building this group up.

John Gabarro of Harvard suggests that in taking charge effective leaders perform three key roles:

1. They assess and diagnose the key issues to be addressed.
2. They build a team with shared expectations about what, why and how to address the future.
3. They bring about timely changes.

The Desired Outcome

THE IMPORTANCE OF FORETHOUGHT

In looking at change in any situation it is vital that the leader puts enough forethought into defining what it is that they think needs to be the outcome. Not so much thought that it leads to paralysis but enough to consider properly what outcome is really wanted.

One change management expert, Daryl Conner, suggests that the leader needs to be particularly concerned about 'future shock' – when people can no longer assimilate change without being dysfunctional because its demands exceed their capacity to cope. This makes the careful definition of what should be achieved and by when very important.

Defining the outcome needs to consider:

1. THE NATURE OF THE CHANGE – THE TARGET STATE

Change can encompass anything, so it is difficult to be prescriptive as what to consider but the kind of questions that need to be answered are:

- How do you (collectively) want the place to be?
- What will it look like?
- What activity will be going on and not going on?
- What will people feel like?
- How will it be organised?
- What will be its purpose?
- What are the key building blocks for the operation of the group?

These need to be worked through to their implications. It is easy to underestimate the amount of thought and discussion that is needed to get a clear picture of the end state and what it means. However, the clearer the end state, the easier it is to manage the change effectively because it unlocks the insight into stakeholders in the change and their potential interests and perspectives.

2. THE WAY OF BEING

One of my concerns with many changes in businesses, churches and organisations is that in many cases some of the deep 'cultural' facets of the organisation simply do not seem to have changed despite the vast amounts of change that have been experienced. Much of the change can seem superficial and highly resistant to the kind of change wanted! Our complaints on the management of the NHS go back over 30 years, and still continue even into reviews of the issues like that of the Mid-Staffs review in 2013.

My experience is that the underlying values and approach in many businesses are highly resistant to changes instituted by management – and often they readily reappear under stress and with new changes.

In churches often the outward change similarly can be realised or partially realised but the underlying change is not. It is therefore also helpful to think not just about the end state change but also the way that you want to move forward with the change.

This needs to answer questions such as:

- Do we need commitment for aspects of this change?
- What will be our approach to engaging people?
- How do we want to see conflict resolved? (Is it different from the past?)

The debate and definition of this is designed to flesh out the human skills, outlook and climate that is desired (typically through and beyond change) which is often poorly defined by leaders who often fixate on the tangible, structural or organisational changes that are needed and overlook what is often the key goal, the attitude and behaviour of people.

3. CHANGE CAPACITY AND AMBITION

The vision should be inspiring and ambitious, but at the same time it must be realistic. The conflict implied by this is very real but the vision painted needs to be shaped by people's capacity for change. It is fine to set a less ambitious goal because you do not think that people can cope with it. It is fine to set an intermediate goal – about equipping people with better capacity to embark on change. It is fine to recognise that limited resources and skills will put a boundary on what can be aspired to.

Change has a price – you can pay it up front in building up the commitment and capacity for change or you can pay it later – but typically the later you pay, the higher the price (and often this is failure to achieve the goals).

4. ENGAGEMENT OR COMPLIANCE

As has been implied in the questions, one critical aspect of the desired outcome is the nature of how participants in the change feel about it. Very early on in change of any kind, it is vital to come to a decision on whether the change needs engagement and commitment. If it does then the demand on energy, resources and time to make a success are much higher and the approach all the way through needs to recognise this.

It constrains the options for approach enormously, not just on this change but on other aspects of being involved with the group. It is a matter of judgement but one of great consequence. As Jeff Immelt, CEO of General Electric has said, 'When you run GE, there are seven to 12 times a year when you have to say "you're doing it my way". If you do it 18 times, the good people leave. If you do it three times, the company falls apart'.

IDENTIFYING THE 'DISSATISFIERS'

It is very important to identify early the aspects of the current way of doing things that create dissatisfaction with different groups of people. These are the bedrock for mobilising for change. In my experience the pain of leaving is greater than the joy of arriving. The dissatisfiers are therefore vital to identify and mobilise as a leader.

Dissatisfiers:

- Are different for different groups (1662 – good or bad?).
- Are more visible to those less close to the situation (think house doctor and decoration...).
- Help to unfreeze people but do not set them off in the same direction (people will indeed often run back to what they know... not where you might think).
- Can be physical, financial, social, visual, emotional or any other item that you can think of.
- The fuel that is needed to rework the way people see things.

Dissatisfiers need to be considered both at the overall level and by each stakeholder group.

Stakeholders and Roles

ROLES IN CHANGE

There are different roles that individuals and groups play in any change. Understanding what roles there are and how they need to be undertaken to be effective is critical for successful change.

Individuals and groups fulfil the roles and can play more than one role simultaneously – you can be a sponsor and an agent or a champion and participant.

Defining who needs to fulfil which role is very important – especially in deciding who the sponsors are or could be and then how committed they are to the change and how their resolve can be built up and in identifying the agents of change.

This is not necessarily a planning task to be done upfront. In a church setting, it might be that as the desired outcome emerges the roles may start to become clear. However, it is important to consciously identify these and make sure that no groups or people are overlooked and that as the change becomes clearer, the planning around each role is refined.

IDENTIFYING AND UNDERSTANDING STAKEHOLDERS

Once you have started to understand the change that you are engaged in, it is important to break it down into different components – identifying the major building blocks that you see comprise the whole 'change' (four to five is good maximum guide).

Once these components are identified (as much art as science...) then

1. Identify, for each component, the different groups and individuals that play each of the roles above – working back from the participants to the other roles.
2. From there work your way back to the sponsors (there may even be a hierarchy there and you can identify a key initiating sponsor that needs to be engaged).

The generic roles may be summarised as:

Role	Identification
Leader	People whose support is needed to authorise, legitimise and oversee the move to the desired state. They can be people in particular positions or people with strong group influence and leadership that is underpinned only by their personal attributes. These take two forms. The initiating sponsors who provide the starting momentum and overall authority and then a vital second group, the sustaining or direct sponsors who are often the people that determine how most participants in the change (see below) actually experience it and respond. Both need to be identified (they can sometimes be the same).
Agent	People who will be responsible for making the change happen – they will be the individuals who engage to implement changes, gain commitment, take on new roles, and initiate the move to the future. They rely for their influence both on their personal power – but more fundamentally on the power of the sponsor.
Reference point	People who, although they have no power to make the changes happen more broadly are potentially key influencers in advocating it as a good thing and persuading participants of its value. They can be participants or not in the change – but they are keen on it happening.
Participant	All those who are going to be in the midst of the change and be a part of it... those who you would change (and that might include yourself of course!).

It becomes vital at this point to gain insight into the way that different individuals think about the situation and their potential response to change. This is best gathered by talking with them, to understand the way that they see things.

The 'frame of reference'[1] that people bring to any change will always be unique to them, although groups may well share some common aspects and view changes in broadly similar ways. It is vital to gain an understanding of these viewpoints to begin to put yourself in others shoes and identify what they might feel they are losing in any change (or how it will grate with them). These are the losses that will need to be addressed.

Even if you think you already know, it pays to talk with people to ensure that you are right, to enable you to be quite specific about the issue (as it may then be resolvable) and also to empower your communication of the change and shape how you describe it.

LEADERS

The first group to examine is in many respects the most important – the sponsors of the change.

For each leader conduct the 'Sponsor assessment' (see toolkit) to assess how committed that sponsor is to the change and plan what actions might be needed to secure their commitment.

It is important to be realistic about how committed leaders are to the change and act accordingly. In making successful change, the leader often needs to put much more energy into managing the process – getting people on board and persuading them to engage and shape what is being done – than in sorting the specifics of what the change is about.

PARTICIPANTS

The second most important role to examine is that of the participants.

Again these need to be looked at in the groups that exist in the community – rather than simply as one block. For each group, their likely response to the change needs to be assessed and addressed – looking for ways to engage them effectively.

These can be mapped out (see toolkit) and approaches planned within the leadership group, with the agents and with the participants.

AGENTS AND REFERENCE POINTS

Oddly enough these might be quite easy to identify and consider. Key things to remember here are: that their positive response to the change (hopefully!) does not represent the view of other groups; that the reference points' positive advocacy of the change has no more power than that, and that for success the engagement of the sponsors is vital.

ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS IN CHANGE – THE VITAL ELEMENT

The desired outcome and the sequential nature of the way that we tend to look at change should not obscure important and basic facts about successful change – especially change that is open, requires commitment and real respect for the voluntary nature of participation.

There are two that stand out:

1. For people to commit emotionally to something they need to be engaged and involved in it – they have to move from passive recipients to active participants. Therefore more open, engaging approaches will be the only ones that in practical terms can succeed in the difficult task of more fundamental change. This is not just true of sponsors – it is also true of participants and so should be planned into the process. This will at times be painful (e.g. long meetings, ear-bending) – but without engaging people and surfacing their concerns, resistance and issues what will happen is that these things simply move below the surface and open any change to sabotage and failure. Open and direct conflict is always better than hidden conflict that acts like a cancer in a community.

2. The desired outcome should not be treated as a fully defined, non-negotiable given at any point in the change process. It is always a picture of what is to be that is there to be altered, enriched and shaped by the participants in the change and they should be encouraged to do this – whilst continually making the case for the essential elements that the change needs to achieve. This permission to shape and engage is vital and should not be discouraged – even if it needs managing.

[1]Frame of Reference: The context, viewpoint, or set of presuppositions or of evaluative criteria within which a person's perception and thinking seem always to occur, and which constrains selectively the course and outcome of these activities. Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought (2nd edn: 1988)

Assessing and Addressing Risks

It is very important that the leader engaging in change looks to identify the risks that go with the change and then seeks to manage these. In any formal project (in organisations, business and government or with technology projects and programmes) one of the key elements of effective management is the risk register where the risks are identified, their likelihood and severity of impact gauged and contingencies defined.

Whilst there is not a need to do this quite so formally in many cases, it is still very valuable to identify the risks and go through a similar process of thinking to maximise the probability that the change is successful, by planning to address these risks.

The conscious structuring and consideration of risks is a key way to do this.

THE LESSONS FROM HISTORY

However, you might wonder what are the critical risks and issues? What sort of things should I look for?

One of the key ways to begin to identify what the risks are in the process of change is to look back at what has happened in the past to changes both within the community that the change is taking place and also in your own experience. Both can reveal lessons that you can use for planning and managing the change effectively. Indeed these can provide vital insights to shape how you approach and plan a change.

Experiences that are perceived as successful or as failures are equally useful, even if the failures are often more instructive! History is often a good guide to the future – all other things being equal it will repeat itself unless something different is done.

This task can be done by identifying key changes in the recent history and understanding how they were approached, what actions were taken and what happened to them. By covering the same ground as you would in planning your own change you can understand:

1. The extent to which people's experience of change is one of failure and problems with change, as opposed to success. In this case the case for change and persistence in execution is going to be very important.
2. The issues that need to be carefully managed to avoid bad past experiences from recurring in this change.

For a prompt list of questions see the toolkit.

THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF THE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S RESOLVE

Perhaps one of the most important lessons for a leader in approaching change is to understand the importance of the commitment of the leaders of change. When other things weigh in against success, if there is a strong leadership team that is resolved to push ahead and make a change happen, it can often be achieved.

The critical points to consider here are:

1. It demands a team not an individual. Rarely can an individual on their own succeed. Therefore a lot of energy from any leader of change must go in building a coalition among the leaders that are committed to realising the desired outcome. In many respects this is the foundational activity of the leader – to recruit others and shape a common vision of the future that all the leaders are committed to.
2. Resolve demands real commitment to the end goal (see the second tool in the sponsor assessment for a way of evaluating this) and preparedness to pay the cost in terms of time, energy and whatever else it needs to realise it. Much can be achieved if this is the case – and it is very difficult to succeed without it.
3. The team needs to be broad enough to include most of the sponsors – if not all – of all the affected participant groups in the change. It has to provide real legitimacy to the direction and need for change in the eyes of the participants.

Inevitably not every sponsor is as committed to the change as they might be. This is reality and will need to be managed but some may even seek to work against the change. In these cases there can be a decision to be made. If an influential individual seeks to block a change (despite engagement and seeking to address their concerns) and the leadership group are clear that it is the right change to make – then it becomes important to isolate them or make their influence ineffectual. This is tough. But if the change is important enough then it is essential.

Milton Friedman when commenting on inflation explained that 'bad money drives out good'. The same is true about moving change forward. At times and with no disrespect to the individual – it may be essential that the people in the group change if a group is to move on. This needs to be done with dignity but sometimes it needs to be done. The leader should not be too upset by this. Very often this person might be in the wrong place or position (stuck on the change curve) and needs to move on to move forward.

Equally it can be very important to attract someone to the group to help bring about the change – and sensing when this is the case and making suitable steps to do this either directly or indirectly can be an important part of succeeding with a change.

MOST IMPORTANT RISKS

All the statistics that I have ever seen on change and my observation on the grand changes instigated in politics or other organisations suggest that most changes fail – by which I mean that they do not achieve the aims that the instigators set out to achieve. Some are catastrophic in their consequences or collateral damage, some achieve the opposite of their intentions and others (perhaps more commonly) simply undershoot on key areas that were targeted.

I believe that most lasting change arises from a change in the mind (Romans 12) – where the attitude and mindset alters and so subtly changes the outlook and approach on a myriad of often minor and major otherwise unconnected activities, elements and views. Witness the impact of the mindset shift generated by 9/11 in the approach to tackling terrorism globally, or consider the challenge of global warming and environmental pollution. All speak to the seismic impact – and difficulty of this area of change.

Yet even on a small scale, this is the change that we often seek – especially in churches!

This is compounded, I observe, by the fact that we often desire to effect positive change in attitudes and mindset – moving people forward. Yet ironically, poorly approached change to this area of mindset almost always seems to lock people in their current mindset or generate such negative emotions and impacts that it fails to have a positive or sustainable result.

This list of 'most important risks' concentrates especially on this kind of change. There is no neatly agreed list on 'what are the most common important risks'. However, here are my top five, drawn from the areas that are repeatedly identified by the literature, surveys and my own experience:

- **Lack of a coherent, shared leadership resolve.**
  There needs to be a critical mass of resolve that is shared amongst the leaders in a group to initiate and sustain the change. Frequently leaders think that they can get by without enough of this – they define the group too tightly, they do not share the resolve deeply enough and they do not recognise the strength of resolve needed to make the change a reality.

- **The failure to engage people in the problem.**
  People simply do not appreciate a solution to a problem they do not believe they have. Too frequently leaders seem to believe that they have a unique insight into the situation and that involving people in looking at the current situation is not worth doing. For successful mindset change you have to engage the mind – and enable people to become dissatisfied with their current position.

- **Poor definition of and prioritisation within the desired state.**
  It is too easy to compare a jaundiced view of reality with an idealistic view of the future and not be clear what is really important in the future picture – and what bits of the picture are really critical and what less important. The result is that as trade-offs are needed when things progress or decisions made, important facets of the current or future state are damaged unnecessarily in favour of less important aspects and the change undermined.

- **Failure to involve transparently the key stakeholders through the change.**
  Managing people through a change and keeping in mind all the different groups and how they feel and think is very time consuming and draining. It often involves repeating lots of messages and over communicating and involving making sure that people do not 'jump ship'. As a result people do not do it effectively… and the change goes awry.

- **That the leader gets bored with grounding the change too quickly.**
  It is so much more enjoyable to envision the future than make it happen – and so much quicker. Plus there are such a lot of changes to make and things to do…. especially for the bright, sharp people who are often leaders.

Sustaining Momentum

There are many different approaches that can be used to initiate and sustain change – this section will provide a few examples only. The reason for addressing both initiating and sustaining change is that often tactics that you might use to launch a change also shape the means to sustain a change later.

I am also assuming for the most part that throughout the cycle it is important to maintain engagement – so that people are committed to the changes – not merely compliant. This shapes what tactics can be used.

WAYS TO START THE JOURNEY

There is always a decision to be made when starting a change – to decide when to announce that a change is underway. In my experience people often do this too boldly and too early before they have involved people effectively in understanding the need for change and the dimensions of change.

In defence of boldness, people often quote the example of Hernán Cortés, who landed in Mexico in 1519, intent on conquering the Aztecs. He ordered that his boats be burned to ensure that his 400 troops fought strongly rather than give in and sail out when the going got tough. This is not my favourite illustration for a successful way of building leadership resolve or change commitment – however much it has fallen into common expression. Who remembers Pánfilo de Narváez who tried to conquer Florida eight years later with 700 men and was wiped out by the natives?

To me what it shows is that there is a need for commitment through change – and the timing of when you choose to make a bold move and how many of your boats you burn is a key decision to be made – because often after that point your only choice is to fight.

Nonetheless it is important to identify the symbols of the current state that need removing. These might be positions (e.g. choir master, representatives or numbers on governing bodies), buildings (e.g. pews, organs, venues for services) activities (e.g. the format or presence of certain services) or other facets. Almost certainly in any major change there will be a few of these that need to be destroyed to enable people to recognise that the past has gone – but choosing when to do this is an art – and later is often better than earlier unless engagement is not that important with that stakeholder group.

Signalling the journey though is important – both in terms of who and how and needs to be considered carefully.

KEY TOOLS TO SUSTAIN THE CHANGE

In sustaining the change many of the same messages hold true.

It is vital that as clear a picture of the desired end state is set down early on so that you can chart the change as it progresses and see where you are against it. This can be done explicitly and widely or more informally and narrowly but it is a key task that should be on the leadership agenda every six months and will help identify areas of course correction and action.

At the same time, one key way to reinforce and sustain the change is to remain clearly open to change and refine the desired end state. Too often leaders face so much hassle and angst in initiating change that they lose sight of the need to update the end goal and maintain an expanding and engaged base of people working towards it.

People only engage if they are involved, and if they are involved they will want to shape the outcome – this remains true throughout the process of change. One of the best ways to sustain the change is to actively continue to seek out more change and be very open to the new ideas and views that emerge on the journey.

ILLUSTRATIVE TOOLS – OFTEN TO BE USED IN COMBINATIONS

Initiating Changes	Sustaining Change
Pilots – one off events/programs, add-on activities.	Elimination – removing activities, bodies, metrics, positions that represent the past.
Exploration – (internal) e.g. gift inventories, that represent the past feedback questionnaires on current activity (external) e.g. community surveys.	Recognition – of the people who embody the change in positions, activities etc., of ideas that 'fit'.
Reviews – looking at the success of..., presenting metrics (ages, attendees, populations).	Reviews – looking at the success of..., presenting metrics (ages, attendees, populations), learning sessions.
Reorganisation – swapping people in roles, changing responsibilities, new roles.	Engagement – inclusion of people in new activities, incorporation of the 'old' in the new.
Messaging – changing agendas for regular activities, incorporation of the 'old' in the new bodies, mission/vision setting activities, linking past and future in goals.	Openness – continual challenge to renew, take onboard ideas, review original goals and metrics – and to do so openly in key forums.