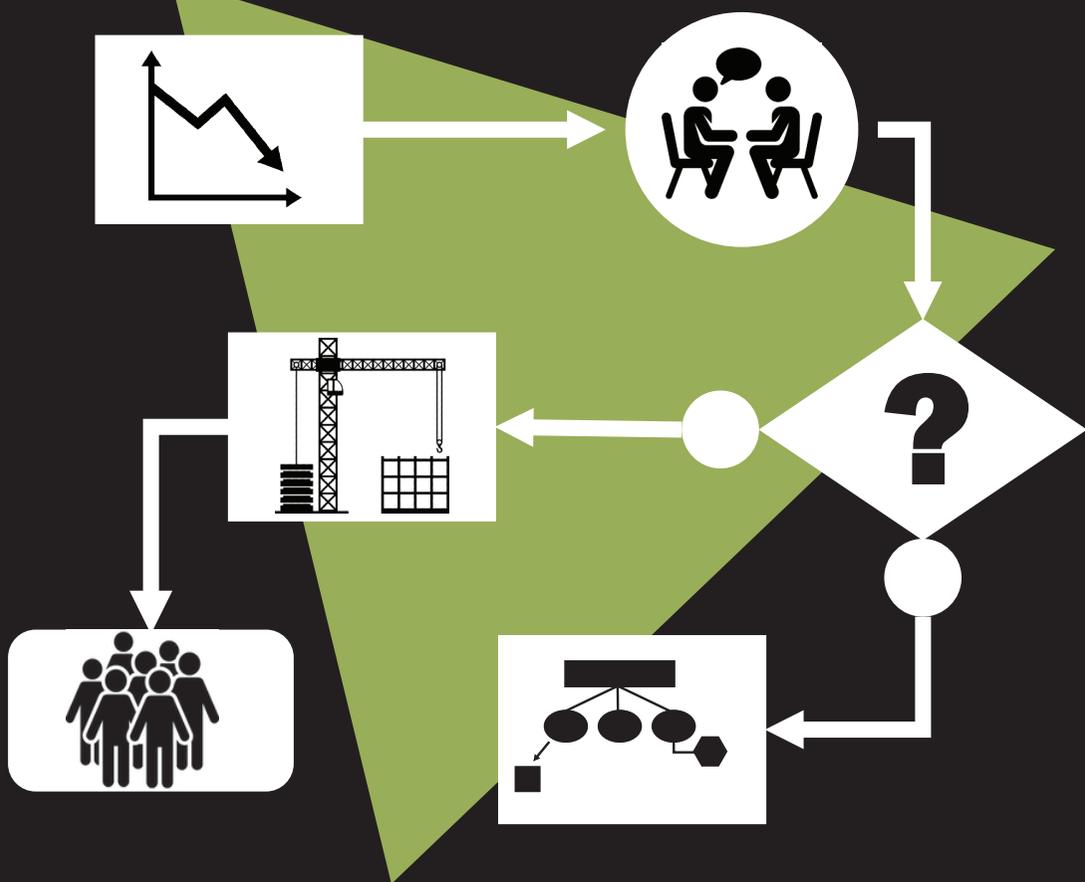


LEADING CHANGE IN MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS

PRIMER FOR SENIOR LEADERS



FIRST EDITION

DEPARTMENT OF COMMAND, LEADERSHIP, AND MANAGEMENT

UNITED STATES ARMY WAR COLLEGE

LEADING CHANGE
IN MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS

PRIMER FOR SENIOR LEADERS
1ST EDITION

TOM GALVIN

FOREWORD BY CHARLES D. ALLEN

*DEPARTMENT OF COMMAND, LEADERSHIP, AND
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When I began the Leading Change course in 2014, it was largely conducted as a literature review of articles from business school magazines and popular authors from the private sector. In the three years since, it became apparent to me that what War College students wanted was something far more practical and suited for the unique context of military organizations. They wanted a guide that could help them think through change problems. For example, rather than telling students what a good vision statement looks like, teach them to actually write one. This primer is the result of four years' teaching the Leading Change elective course at the Army War College.

I did not accomplish this alone, and have several to thank for their contributions. U.S. Air Force Colonel Lance Clark was co-instructor for two years and co-authored with me the first attempt at such a Primer in 2015. Professor Chuck Allen also co-authored that effort, and worked with me on several separate projects related to change that informed my approach to this work. Dr. Kristin Behfar co-instructed with me in 2018 and introduced me and the students to new ideas that have been incorporated into the text.

I also thank the Department Chairs during this period—Colonel Mik McCrea, Colonel Bobby Mundell, and Colonel Dale Watson—along with the Department electives coordinator Professor Doug “Muddy” Waters for their support in establishing and sustaining interest in teaching change. Moreover, I commend Dale in particular for his commissioning of the Driving Change and Innovation Area of Concentration in the War College resident program. Finally, I thank the Department’s educational technicians—Chiquita Morrison and Genny Hobson—for their support to the elective and for their sharp eyes on the final version of this Primer.

FOREWORD

Charles D. Allen

If you dislike change, you're going to dislike irrelevance even more.

Gen. Eric Shinseki, 34th Army Chief of Staff¹

Readers of this publication inevitably will ask themselves why another book on change and why they should read this one. Serendipitously in the past week, I received an email from a university executive education program citing research that 77 percent of human resource leaders and practitioners report their organization is in a constant state of change. More revealing is that 85 percent of those surveyed report unsuccessful change management initiatives in the past two years. This is consistent with the commonly accepted statement that 70 to 80 percent of organizational change efforts fail.

While military personnel may dismiss the civilian and business contexts as demonstrating the lack of discipline and leadership, I contend such an attitude of dismissal is based on flawed assumptions. We only have to look at these opening decades of the 21st century to find examples of turbulence and churn in the domestic and international environments. Concomitantly, the U.S. military has divested itself of previous operational concepts to test and develop new concepts to address emergent national security challenges. Building military capabilities requires the introduction of new doctrines, organizational structures, and programs of record for equipment, facilities, and services. Arguably, several change efforts for programs like Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), Army Future Combat System, Army Force Generation, and Grow the Army have mixed records of success (and failure). Developing new concepts and building capabilities in the military force

¹ Mackubin Thomas Owens, "Marines Turned Soldiers", *National Review Online*, December 10, 2001.

require change to existing practices, structures, and behaviors – personal, organizational, and institutional.

Members of the military profession talk a great deal about the enduring nature of war and seek to make a compelling case of its changing character in the 21st century. Accordingly, senior leaders of the profession must make assessments of their strategic environments and judge which internal processes and structures are still relevant and which need to be adjusted, realigned, or created. More important, the compelling case for internal change must be established to engender the commitment of organizational members who implement it and to the stakeholders who provide needed support and resources. Thus, the profession requires the capability to monitor and discern trends in the external environment and the capacity to assess whether the current trajectory is appropriate to achieve relevance in some desired future state. Leaders within the profession have the responsibility to determine what adjustments to existing organizational capabilities are necessary and how they are to be applied, as well as by whom. Successful change management requires monitoring progress toward achieving the core purpose of the organization through a well-designed and executed strategy.

In this Change Management primer, Dr. Tom Galvin makes the assertion that senior leaders must be change agents, whether they are in the operating force that performs warfighting functions or in the generating force that enables the capabilities and builds the capacity for the military force. Accordingly, leaders must understand what external factors drive change, why change is necessary for their organization, how they and their people react to change, and how to lead and manage successful change efforts. The “what”, “why”, and “how” of change require leaders to have a solid foundation in change management. This foundation extends beyond abstract concepts and theory and must be practical for successful implementation. The use of frameworks to identify key dimensions of change and the associated questions to perform the organizational diagnosis are key.

In sum, another book on change is needed because our world is dynamic, therefore our leaders must be adaptive in response to

change. They also must have the agility to learn and be proactive in maintaining their relevance as national security professionals. Organizations remain relevant because change is a core capability through their processes, structures, and people. Military professionals should read this document because of the unique context of the defense establishment. It must prepare for an uncertain future with many variables beyond its control. It must be ready to contend with emerging threats by developing and enabling new capabilities – thus, embracing change is imperative. This primer will provide a solid theoretical foundation on the nature of change, as well as practical guidelines to lead and manage change successfully.

Charles D. Allen
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CHAPTER 1. THE CHALLENGES OF “LEADING CHANGE” IN MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS

Making change happen is a popular topic among U.S. Army War College students and with good reason. There are endless problems to fix, procedures to improve, new ideas to introduce, and an ever-growing and evolving array of state and non-state actors chomping at the bit to challenge the U.S. Furthermore, systems and processes in use by the military rarely seem to bring about change at the desired speed.

This is not a problem confined to the military. Organizational change scholars have lamented that the failure rate is high for change efforts in the corporate world to achieve their goals. Sensing opportunities, a number of scholars and consultants began presenting models and frameworks for learning and practicing *change management*. Each presented change as a sequence of x steps or series of y phases. Books, courses, and official certifications followed. One can now spend a few hundred to a few thousand dollars to take courses or attend programs in change, receive a recognized certificate, and potentially be hired as a “change manager.” One particularly popular book has not only been included in the Army War College curriculum as a seminal reading in change, the same book is also referenced within Army leadership doctrine. Although books such as these are easy to digest, non-controversial (in the sense that there is little in the logic open to obvious dispute), and immediately practical; they only directly address the process of leading change. Only when a leader knows precisely what to change and why do such models have any utility.

A seminal article in the *Journal of Management Science* by Andrew Pettigrew bears this out. In his study of a transformational change effort in a chemical firm, Pettigrew challenged the dominant change management paradigm as being solely *process-oriented*, ignoring two critical factors in the situation.² First are the *contexts* that the organization is in--both

² Andrew M. Pettigrew, “Context and Action in the Transformation of the Firm,” *Journal of Management Studies* 24, no. 6 (1987): 649-670.

the internal context of the organization, such as the situation facing the leaders and members at the time in question. Second is the *content* of the change effort, explaining how the organization articulates the impetus behind the change, the purpose for changing, and the path to success. Each of these factors evolve over *time*, leaving historical imprints on the organization. The article begat what became known as Pettigrew's Triangle, shown in Figure 1.

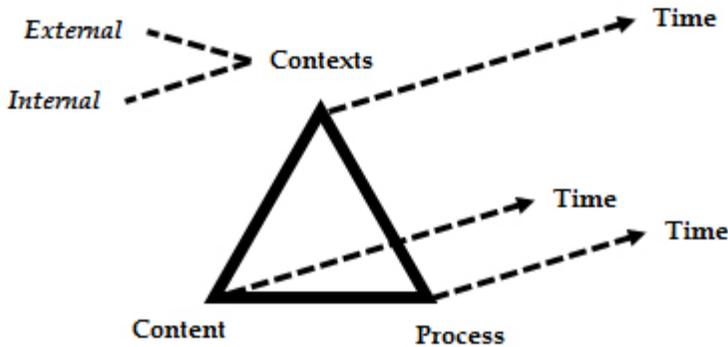


Figure 1. Pettigrew's Triangle³

Looking at military change efforts through Pettigrew's lens, there are three systemic problems that emerge with using traditional change management models alone. First, these models concentrate primarily on *transformational* change--the well-defined, well-bounded effort in which a leader or *proponent*⁴ determines the new end state and drives the organization toward that end state. Known as the *life-cycle* approach to change, it provides a simple narrative on how change occurs. It takes a perspective that the organization should operate as a unified whole as it moves from the current state to a desired future state, with the change effort fully planned and intensely managed.

³ Andrew M. Pettigrew's (2009) briefing slides. In Harry Sminia, "Pioneering Process Research: Andrew Pettigrew's Contributions to Management Scholarship," *International Journal of Management Review* 18, no. 1 (2016), 114. Used with permission.

⁴ This paper uses the term *proponent* to describe leaders and organizations leading or promoting a change effort, generally related to matters within their expertise, authorities, or interest. For example, a change related to human resource management is likely to have a "1" entity (Joint Staff J-1 or service G/A/N-1) as the proponent. The leaders and project officers within that proponent vested in pursuing the change effort will be referred to as *change agents*.

However, this is not the only way change occurs in a functionally diverse and geographically distributed organization like the U.S. military. Sometimes it is “bottom-up” whereby localized change efforts occur independently with the best ideas or best practices permeating the organization. Military writers have long called for the adoption of a culture of innovation to encourage such bottom-up behaviors.⁵

Second, many such models, and indeed much of the early change literature, treats resistance as an obstacle to be overcome or suppressed.⁶ This perspective may be attractive to military officers in instances of top-down change, where a commander or senior leader is directing a transformation to address a crisis or fix a known problem despite unit or member reticence. However, resistance take many forms, especially in extremely large and complex organizations such as the U.S. military. Sometimes the resistance is against driving change from the top, as the unit believes it can achieve the intended effects better in bottom-up fashion. Sometimes the change effort makes sense at the strategic level but does not translate to the individual level, leading to confusion, disinterest. Other times, members question the priority – *why put all the efforts “here,” when from our perspective the more pressing problem is over “there”?*

Third, the U.S. military has hundreds (thousands?) of change efforts simultaneously underway. Every new weapon systems program, organizational realignment, headquarters consolidation, gain or drop in end strength, and other efforts by the defense enterprise each constitute a change effort. Even at the 4-star level, senior leaders are working to initiate transformational change amidst a turbulent sea of on-going change. Although the organization desires a harmonious path toward a central vision

⁵ See Leonard Wong, *Stifled Innovation? Developing Tomorrow's Leaders Today* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2002); David A. Fastabend and Robert H. Simpson, “ADAPT OR DIE,” *ARMY Magazine* 54, No. 2 (February 2004): 14-18, 20-22; and John F. Price, Jr., “US Military Innovation: Fostering Creativity in a Culture of Compliance,” *Air & Space Power Journal* 28, no. 5 (September/October 2014): 128-134.

⁶ Sandy Kristin Piderit, “Rethinking Resistance and Recognizing Ambivalence: A Multidimensional View of Attitudes Toward an Organizational Change,” *Academy of Management Review* 25, No. 4 (October 2000): 783-794; John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 122-123. Kotter’s treatment of resistance is largely focused on identifying and overcoming “troublesome supervisors” who impede progress for self-serving reasons.

(e.g., expressed in strategy documents or service concepts), these multiple change efforts all compete for a finite amount of resources and attention. This challenge is exacerbated by the evolutionary nature of each change effort, which frequently adjusts to keep pace with the continual changes in national security environment and military requirements.

Therefore, U.S. military change efforts face challenges that go beyond what general-purpose process models can fix. From the author's perspective, below are some challenges that vex military senior leaders when it comes to change.

FEAR OF "BREAKING" THE ORGANIZATION TO FIX IT

Consider construction of a new highway. Since no one was using it, construction could proceed so long as land was available. Now, consider improving the same highway after years of use (widening, repaving, repairing, etc.). Change becomes disruptive, and the process must allow for continued use of the highway at reduced levels of capacity. It will inconvenience drivers, close exits, reroute traffic, increase law enforcement presence, and require vigorous adherence to safety regulations. What is more, improvement can likely only occur over a 5 to 10 mile (8 to 16 km) segment at a time, thereby requiring multiple phases and prolonging the disruption for years or decades. Construction was simple, straightforward, and quick. Improvement is complex, highly involved, and takes much longer.

Change in a large organization can feel the same way. No matter how many "Pardon our dust while we improve your service" signs that organizations display, change is inconvenient and brings about uneasiness and discomfort.⁷ Organizations must continuously improve while still competing in their particular markets. The U.S. military is no exception; after all, it provides for our national security, a vital professional service on which the nation relies. This allows little room for error and constrains the appetite for introducing new capabilities if it means reducing readiness or accepting significant risk.

⁷ Eric Hoffer, *The Ordeal of Change* (Titusville, NJ: Hopewell, 1951), 3-6.

As a government organization, the U.S. military has the additional responsibility to act as good stewards of taxpayer dollars. Reducing redundancy, along with the required administration and reporting associated with government work, can cause organizations to hold core operations sacred and allow less wiggle room for experimentation or innovation. Particularly for subunits that perform vital services or are subject to strict timelines or other external constraints, there is typically less interest in putting today's marginally-effective processes at risk in favor of pursuing the uncertain promise of a better way. Consider the anxiety often experienced when "new" information technology solutions emerged to automate paper-based processes and make them more efficient, only to require extensive workarounds when the system failed to account for all the informal ways that members actually employed the process. This means proposals for change must thoroughly explore and carefully weigh all opportunities and risks.

PURSUING EFFICIENCIES BUT IGNORING HIDDEN COSTS

People seem to naturally presume very large organizations are inherently too large, giving rise to debates like: What is the difference between an organization with two-million people and one with one-million-nine-hundred-thousand? Why fifty installations when forty-five might do? In an environment of performance driven by numbers, lowering the numbers is always attractive, especially if there is the promise of "savings" to reinvest in "other priorities."

Senior leaders often promote *efficiency* as a reason to change. At the strategic level, seeking efficiency generally leads to some form of centralization, under the presumption that consolidating a capability reduces the overall expenditure in providing that capability. However, efficiency is a term easily misused as it is a matter of perspective. For example, consolidating the provision of a common service at a central location (e.g., information technology help desks) may allow similar levels of customer responsiveness while permitting reduction in manpower. However, the local effects of the consolidation may include reduced productivity as users are reluctant to use the help desk and instead try in vain to fix problems themselves, and lost time

as problems are subject to “elevation” (with associated time lags) to higher-level service professionals. Such costs are hidden from the decision maker, whose primary concerns were reducing the tangible cost of funding the capability and providing consistent and reliable service to all members. The differences in perspective can breed frustration and cynicism among mid-level leaders within the organization who perceive the consolidation as neither efficient nor effective, even when all the statistics point to consolidation as being successful.⁸

Moreover, even invoking efficiency as a reason risks engendering defensive responses in the U.S. military. As a profession, the military considers effectiveness to be paramount, with efficiency as a lesser concern (while still valuing the importance of stewardship and minimizing waste).⁹ This leads to internal strife over certain change efforts whereby financial managers see risk in busted budgets and program cost overruns, while the operations community sees risk in readiness levels, deterrence posture, and service members’ lives. Both represent categories of hidden costs that are very difficult to estimate, let alone quantify in detail.

PROGRAMMED CHANGE OVERWHELMING INNOVATION

The U.S. military manages its resources and organizational energy through programs. Organizational leaders sometimes designate specific programs as *programs of record*, introducing two dynamics that can inhibit innovation. The first surrounds the strong sense of importance that programs of record earn as a result of organizational leaders conferring such a title in a stereotypically top-down fashion. Efforts not supporting those programs organizational leaders have advocated are often dismissed, unsupported, or undercut. The second surrounds the access to assured resources programs of record gain. Its rigorous budget process causes the U.S. military to program the overwhelming majority of its resources, leaving relatively few

⁸ Personal experience of the author while assigned to multiple large headquarters organizations in the 2000s when the U.S. military underwent a series of information technology help desk consolidations.

⁹ Don M. Snider, “The U.S. Army as a Profession,” in *The Future of the Army Profession*, 2nd ed., eds. Don M. Snider and Lloyd Matthews (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 14.

resources available for more discretionary, experimental purposes. Although the U.S. military does not need to program all change efforts in this way, military leaders must approve expending resources to support almost any change effort. This potentially squelches interest in pursuing bottom-up innovations.¹⁰

A similar problem surrounds another commonly-used tool, the so-called “best practice.” By their nature, best practices showcase a more effective or efficient way of doing a task as pioneered by a subunit or staff. This new way may or may not be generalizable, but senior leaders hungry for innovative solutions often latch onto a best practice and promote it as an enterprise-wide solution before it has demonstrated long-term benefits or been considered for applicability in other contexts. As “best practices” emerge, they can be shared and either adopted or adapted across the force. But, once a “best practice” becomes a declared standard or program of record, it ceases its innovative influences and takes on a programmed character. Done too hastily, organizations risk losing the important local context that gave rise to the best practice, instead implementing the idea in less suitable conditions which risks failure (or lessened success).

INITIATING CHANGE AS A PERCEIVED RESULT OF AN EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER ISSUE

There is little getting around the fact that some changes are imposed upon the U.S. military from outside.¹¹ Congress is one stakeholder that routinely imposes itself coercively on the military. In response to something the military did or failed to do, Congress has numerous means at its disposal to forcibly bring about change: (1) funding or not funding something the services requested, (2) legislating requirements for additional reporting or conducting “studies,” (3) expressing grievances publicly through

¹⁰ Fastabend and Simpson, “ADAPT OR DIE,” 16, talked about the U.S. Army’s addiction to “process” and specifically criticized the dampening effects on innovation of the current programming process within the Department of Defense’s Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution system (PPBE).

¹¹ This is an inherent obstacle to any government or public sector change effort according to Frank Ostroff, “Change Management in Government,” *Harvard Business Review* 84, No. 5 (May 2006): 141-147, 158.

the media or through hearings, including calling senior leaders to testify, and (4) holding up confirmations or promotion lists.

Another key stakeholder is the American public. Army doctrine establishes this vital relationship well and it applies to all services, “Trust underwrites our relationship to the Nation and the citizens we protect. Without the confidence of the citizens, we could not maintain the All-Volunteer Force.”¹² An important manifestation is a harmonizing of societal norms with the military. When military norms differ substantially with social norms, the potential for society to lose trust in the military increases, as evidenced how changes in societal attitudes toward homosexuality pushed the military towards their integration.¹³

Whether it is Congressional action, news reports, or another media, the source of a complaint against the U.S. military is likely to be widely known. Any change effort initiated, renewed, or otherwise appearing connected to that external impetus may spur natural resistance from within the military rank and file unless leaders demonstrate full ownership. Service members and civilians are more willing to pursue a change created and endorsed by its leaders, and more likely to distrust ones where leaders appear to be reacting to events or placating stakeholders.

The challenge for leaders, particularly in times of crisis, is to balance external stakeholder demands or expectations with enacting necessary change in the organization’s best interest. For a given crisis, a sufficient internal response may involve training or education to reinforce existing values, norms, or procedures. However, the nature or severity of the crisis may require public action, such as the punishment or removal of certain officials, while new procedures and reporting requirements are imposed, even if they would be unnecessarily disruptive.

Resistance or ambivalence toward such externally-driven changes is a challenge for leaders. Leader reluctance to change is hard to hide.¹⁴ Remote subunits will have difficulty

¹² U.S. Department of the Army, *The Army*, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, September 2012), 2-3. Hereafter *ADP 1*.

¹³ Charles D. Allen and Willam G. Braun, “TRUST: Implications for the Army Profession,” *Military Review* 93, No. 5 (September/October 2013): 73-85.

¹⁴ Piderit, “Rethinking Resistance,” 787-788.

understanding the impetus if the impact of the external event only reaches the Pentagon. Leaders should restate or alter the context to place themselves as change agents and wrest the initiative from the external stakeholder. This increases, but does not guarantee, the chance of the organization understanding and accepting a change effort.

LEADING CHANGE EFFORTS IS (UNFORTUNATELY) NOT A CORE COMPETENCY

Organizational change scholar Frank Ostroff compared transformative change efforts between the private and public sectors and found that an obstacle that government organizations inherently face is that its people tend to be selected and promoted more for their mastery of standing policies and their technical expertise, and not because of prior experience in leading change efforts.¹⁵ This is certainly true in the military, where the majority of junior leaders focus on enforcing existing policies and regulations and operating within established doctrine. When these leaders take initiative and bring about changes, they tend to be evolutionary, small-scale, localized, or temporary. It is not until reaching senior levels of leadership that leading change becomes a required component of joint professional military education.¹⁶

ORGANIZATION OF THIS PRIMER

The Primer is divided according to three themes. The first (Chapter 2) is the role of the senior leader as a *change agent*, oriented toward the effective and efficient application of change-

¹⁵ Ostroff, 142.

¹⁶ Joint professional military education standards illustrate this. In Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), *Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP)*, CJCS Instruction CJCSI 1800.01E (Washington, DC: Joint Staff J-7, May 2015), the Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) standards Level I (“JPME-I”) for Intermediate-Level Colleges require officers, in the context of joint *operational* leadership to “comprehend critical thinking and decisionmaking skills needed to anticipate and recognize change, lead transitions, and anticipate/adapt to surprise and uncertainty” and “analyze the importance of adaptation and innovation on military planning and operations” (p. E-C-3, emphasis added). JPME-II standards for Senior Service Colleges require officers, in the context of joint *strategic* leadership, to “Evaluate the skills, including communication synchronization, needed to lead organizational change and transformation and to build and sustain innovative, agile, and ethical organizations in a joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational environment” and “Evaluate how strategic leaders develop innovative organizations capable of operating in dynamic, complex and uncertain environments, anticipate change, and respond to surprise and uncertainty” (pp. E-D-3 and 4, emphasis added).

related concepts that align with the organization's situation and goals. Unlike change "managers" who use process models like tools in the toolkit, change agents are attuned to the environment and the organization within it. They are self-aware leaders who align the form and function of change with the requirement.

The second theme is about the treatment of organizational change in the literature. Chapter 3 focuses on forces of social and organizational change that are prevalent in any environment. It encompasses change that merely happens in the absence of intent. Chapter 4 shifts the focus to leader strategies and problem definition. What does the literature say about the options and strategies leaders can employ? It concludes with the change strategy used in the remainder of the Primer.

Each of chapters 5 through 9 present one phase of pursuing a change effort from a leader's perspective - organizational diagnosis (Chapter 5), envisioning the desired state or "ends" and the change strategy or "ways" (Chapter 6), planning and implementing change (Chapter 7), and ultimately sustaining or terminating a change effort (Chapter 9). A special section on resistance is included in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER 2. SENIOR LEADERS AS CHANGE AGENTS

Strategic leaders are proactive toward change. They anticipate change even as they shield their organizations from unimportant and bothersome distractors. Generally, strategic leaders know that change requires influence grounded in commitment rather than force compliance. ... Strategic level leaders make the most-sweeping changes and ones that focus on the most distant time horizon.

Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 6-22 (emphasis added)¹⁷

It is easy to put such words into doctrine, much harder to put them into action. Senior leaders are often under pressure to address short-term challenges and crises at the expense of thinking proactively and long-term. Also, as junior or mid-level leaders, they probably had more direct interface with the service members and civilians in their formations and the families with them. Leaders could measure their commitment to the organization and mission more directly. Being a strategic leader at the enterprise level means guiding a two million person organization with trillions of dollars in assets. Keeping abreast of what is going on is much more complex and requires more energy.

But, successful senior leaders overcome these challenges and make change happen! The best general officers, senior civilians, and colonels/captains/GS-15s are masters of change.¹⁸ They find ways to bring attention to problems, propose solutions, pave the way toward their implementation, and speak “truth to power” and face down naysayers and resisters. They are the doers of their organization. Yet, they are also the best critical thinkers, knowing instinctively what changes are helpful and what may be too risky. They exemplify putting the organization’s needs over their own.

¹⁷ U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 6-22 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, August 2012), 11-4. Hereafter “ADRP 6-22”

¹⁸ For simplicity, from this point forward, military officers of rank O-6 (colonel and Navy captain) and equivalent civilians (e.g., GS-15) will be referred to as *colonels*. The term *senior leaders* will include colonels plus flag-level officers and civilian equivalents.

In other words, they are *change agents*. Change agents are those with the will and abilities to make their organizations better, whether in performance, morale, alignment with the environment, efficiency, and so on. It is more than a part of the duty description. It is an orientation, an attitude, and part of the strategic leader's identity. They enact this role by acting as *internal consultants* who advise organizational leaders on the needs, ways, and means of exercising change in the organization. This chapter explains what being a change agent is about and expressing the benefits and challenges of serving as an internal consultant.

WHAT DO CHANGE AGENTS DO?

The choice of the term "change agent" is purposeful—they require both leadership and management qualities. Flag officers and senior civilians are change leaders, are these setting climates favorable to implementing change, top-down or bottom-up. They also set personal examples of acting as change leaders and provide vision and direction to their organizations to foster change. Meanwhile, colonels often find themselves acting as change managers to a greater degree, working together in groups or teams and engaging with organizations to analyze organizations and build strategies and plans to operationalize their superiors' vision.¹⁹ The below subsections cluster the tasks that change agents perform into five broad categories. These correspond to the change processes discussed in later chapters.

They look for problems... always

Quality problem definitions are hallmarks of quality change agents. But, in practice this is extraordinarily difficult to do because while the symptoms are probably easier to identify, the underlying problems are difficult. If the problems are with the people in the organization, they may make the problem elusive by covering their tracks or withholding information.²⁰ Members may also be quick to protect the *status quo*.

¹⁹ Paul Gibbons, *The Science of Successful Organizational Change* (New York: Pearson, 2015), 32-34.

²⁰ Gordon Lippitt and Ronald Lippitt, *The Consulting Process in Action*, 2nd ed. (San Diego, CA: University Associates, 1994), 23-24.

Change agents recognize these concerns but are not deterred by them. Rather, they interpret member behaviors as signals that something is amiss—something that suggests the organization is not the best it can be. Change agents pursue those signals and perform diagnoses on the organization to determine if there are processes, systems, or behaviors that reduce organizational performance or are harmful to the organization’s reputation or the health, morale, or welfare of its members.²¹

They envision the right answer

If the current state of the organization is unacceptable, then what does right look like? Change agents are capable of developing and articulating vision, a mental image or picture of the organization’s desired future state.²² This vision, however, is not the negation or elimination of the symptoms of the problem. Pursuing only the symptoms is a signal of a quick-fix mentality that leaves problems undisturbed and ensures the return of symptoms at a later time. When envisioning the desired state, the change agent also raises questions about factors or symptoms being ignored that also might contribute to the problem.

They forge the path to success

Too often, visioning stops at the point of setting the desired state. Change agents take the next step, envisioning how to get “there.” This is crucial in military organizations, where the price of getting change wrong or doing half the job is counted in failed campaigns and unnecessary loss of life. The size and complexity of military organizations demands more than pictures or slogans to drive change. Change agents envision the desired path to success in the forms of commander’s intent, concepts, and strategies that explain to members the why and how of change, and what they should expect to be their roles in it.

They plan and manage change

Change agents know that change does not happen because the leader says so. It takes a plan. It takes energy and resources,

²¹ Gibbons, *Science of Successful Change*, 163.

²² Kotter, *Leading Change*, 71-72.

especially time. It also takes perseverance, as the organization pursues change while the mission continues. Like fixing a highway without blocking traffic, it takes longer to change an organization than it takes to form a new one. Good change plans include the proper divisions of labor across the organization, well-designed metrics of success, thoughtful pacing of change to ensure the effort is kept on track without interfering with other priorities, and due consideration for continuity in the face of routinely changing leadership.

They know when and how to stop!

There are few things more effective at building cynicism toward change than failed change. Change efforts not only fail due to poor visioning or planning, but also because they either stopped abruptly, such as when the leader departs. Or, they lingered long after they were useful, which may happen when stakeholders maintain greater commitment to the change effort than the organization does or a dedicated minority within the organization takes disproportionate interest in keeping it alive.²³ Change agents recognize that terminating a change effort requires as much thought and vision as initiating it. They ensure that the organization reaps any benefits of having undergone the effort, even when the overall effort falls short of its goal. They also ensure that the organization knows that an effort is concluded, which removes ambiguity and helps members reprioritize their energy.

HOW DO SENIOR LEADERS ACT AS “INTERNAL CONSULTANTS”?

Public and private sector organizations alike hire consultants to provide advice and counsel to leaders, especially regarding the need for change. External consultants are typically brought in when the leaders want an independent analysis of the organization, or leaders may choose a favored consultant who performed well in a previous circumstance. The consultant thus enters into a contractual agreement with the leader, who grants funds and access to the organization in exchange for analysis,

²³ Lippitt and Lippitt, *Consulting Process*, 34-35.

advice, strategies, plans, or other outcomes.²⁴ Part of the external consultant's task is to learn about the organization, at least enough so to develop and provide quality deliverables.

Internal consultants perform the same task. They are members of the organization who take on a consulting role for the leaders, performing research, rendering advice, or developing strategies and plans. There are advantages and challenges of being an internal consultant. On the one hand, they are already familiar with the organization and have access based on their assigned duties and responsibilities. The learning curve is less steep than for an external consultant. On the other hand, they receive few benefits (especially no additional pay) and may not receive relief from other duties.

What separates internal consultancy from one's ordinary duties is precisely that consulting falls outside of one's ordinary duties. If one's duty is to advise a leader on decisions regarding a warplan or weapon systems program, it does not involve consultation as described here. It becomes consulting when the advice is about how leaders think about the problem or make decisions, or questioning how the organization identifies and collects the data and information feeding the advice.

Responsibilities in the Military Context

From their extensive experiences within the military, senior leaders are expected to act as internal consultants for their organizations. For example, senior leaders are *stewards of the military profession*, responsible for ensuring the professionalism of military members and the institutions—DOD, joint community, and services—that put the profession's domain of expert knowledge into practice.²⁵ Thus, senior leaders have a vested interest in ensuring the profession's culture of trust, autonomy, and capability to perform its mission effectively.²⁶

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 20-23.

²⁵ Thomas P. Galvin, *Enhancing Identity Development in Senior Service Colleges* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, December 2016), 21.

²⁶ Don M. Snider, "Will Army 2025 be a Military Profession?" *Parameters* 45, no. 4 (Winter 2015-2016): 39-51.

Another senior leader responsibility is *thinking critically and reflectively* to discriminate information, identify problems, evaluate options, and continuously learn.²⁷ At the strategic level, leaders must learn to operate comfortably in environments with incomplete or biased information, and must be attuned to questioning the validity and reliability of what is available and digging for more.²⁸

Third is to be a *strategic advisor and communicator* who displays moral courage in speaking up, even if it places the individual leader at risk.²⁹ As a stakeholder in the organization, the internal consultant has the right and obligation to communicate problems to the leadership—speaking, in Aaron Wildavsky’s words, “truth to power.”³⁰ This can be very difficult if the leadership is the source of the problem or is adamant about ignoring it and the consequences.

Ethics of Being an Internal Consultant

Consulting, whether internal or external, invokes a number of ethical questions and dilemmas. Clearly, the integrity of consultant is paramount—if the consultant appears to engage and advise solely for self-serving purposes or provides incomplete deliverables, the leaders should terminate the relationship. Being a consultant on a particular matter should also be finite. In order words, their role is ultimately to render themselves obsolete, such as when the problem is fixed or when the leader has decided to take (or not take) action.³¹

There are several ethical challenges unique to internal consultancy that are exacerbated by the hierarchical nature of the military and its strong top-down culture. First, speaking truth to power involves challenging the hierarchy, its power structures, and leaders’ standing—all of which come back on the internal

²⁷ Galvin, *Enhancing Identity Development*, 24.

²⁸ Douglas E. Waters, “Senior Leader Competencies,” in *Strategic Leadership Primer*, 4th ed., ed. Thomas P. Galvin (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College press, in press).

²⁹ Galvin, *Enhancing Identity Development*, 29.

³⁰ Aaron Wildavsky, *Speaking Truth to Power: The Art and Craft of Policy Analysis* (Boston: Little Brown, 1979).

³¹ Harry Levinson, *Organizational Assessment: A Step-by-Step Guide to Effective Consulting* (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2002), 13-16.

consultant.³² The dilemmas the internal consultant faces is only partly whether to speak, but how and why.³³

A second ethical challenge is one's own standing and relationships within the organization. If a member from deep within the organization is tasked by a commander to investigate an issue (e.g., climate or morale problem), that member must avoid letting the opportunity go to his or her head. The good of the organization is at stake, and the consultant must strive for maximum objectivity and maintain professionalism. Consultants who assume an elevated status may harm relationships within the organization vital to the conduct of ordinary duties after the consultation has concluded, or create distrust between the members and their leaders.³⁴

A final ethical challenge is when the consultant finds that leaders are initiating the investigation to drive change on a predetermined timeline, or that the primary concern of the leader is short-term or intentionally limited in scope (e.g., driven by the need to show progress or accomplish something during their tenure). Similar, internal consultants may also find themselves being manipulated by the leader into particular solutions, despite the evidence that other solutions would be better.³⁵ Such situations can lead to cynicism over the change effort. However, internal consultants must suppress any initial instincts to resist or walk away. Instead, they should learn and empathize with the leader's perspective, such as what is driving the predetermined

³² Ibid., 38. Beverly Scott and B. Kim Barnes, *Consulting on the Inside: A Practical Guide for Internal Consultants* (Alexandria, VA: ASTD Press, 2011), 20 warn that internal consultants must maintain advocacy for change without becoming the change leader or champion, lest they become marginalized should the organizational leader depart or withdraw support for change efforts.

³³ A personal anecdote: One time I was teamed with an external consultant who had long-standing ties to the commander. I was a junior officer and the commander was very senior, and known for a short temper. The external consultant was acting in ways that essentially sought to prolong the contact, potentially costing the command a lot of money. Recognizing the need to have the contact conclude at a fixed point, I gathered a coalition including the command's lawyer, several senior directors, and others who had expressed concerns to me about the contractor. We then successfully presented our case to the commander as a group and the consultant was released.

³⁴ Another personal anecdote: I was tasked discreetly one time to investigate strained relationships within a multinational headquarters staff, and found that it had constructed separate informal "stuffs" stovepiped by language. I had to approach the task very carefully not to alert the leaders of these informal channels of what I was investigating.

³⁵ Lippitt and Lippitt, *Consulting Process*, 89-92.

solution and why? Is it a mandate from the stakeholder? Also, why change *now*? What are the risks and benefits of alternative timelines that satisfy leaders and stakeholders while ensuring the continued functioning of the organization? The consultant may be able to negotiate solutions that satisfy both leaders and consultants.³⁶

IMPLICATIONS

Complacency may be the enemy, but change is not necessary one's friend.³⁷ As a change agent, senior leaders have a responsibility to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of their organizations, create new organizations when needed, or disband them when they are no longer needed. Easily said, but doing it is complex. As an internal consultant, senior leaders must draw attention to problems and propose solutions from the inside. This can incur risk to senior leader and increase anxiety and tensions within the organization. It falls to the judgment of the senior leaders how to approach change requirements, how to engage with leaders and members, and ultimately how to put change into action. There is no magical formula for this, beyond being aware of the forces at play in the environment and the tools of change that are available. These will be addressed in the next two chapters.

³⁶ One more anecdote: One of my commanders performed an internal consultancy role regarding a large-scale organizational re-structuring. The stakeholder (a political appointee) was forcing a solution designed to show change, but the 'how' and 'why' was not thought through very well and the result would have been the creation of broken organizations. Open resistance against the idea had gotten others in trouble, as the stakeholder was unwilling to engage alternatives to the end state. However, the commander found considerable room for negotiating the ways that the end state would be achieved, and the negotiations succeeded in producing a long-term suitable and feasible solution.

³⁷ Kotter, *Leading Change*, 36.

CHAPTER 3. IDEAS ABOUT SOCIAL CHANGE

As prominent organizational scholar David Schwandt described, change is both a verb and a noun, the act of making something different and signifying the difference itself.³⁸ Leaders are more apt to think of change as a verb, a purposeful intervention to achieve some goal. However, before one can intervene, it is important to understand change as it ordinarily occurs in the environment. In complex human systems, change is constantly happening as people strive to stay naturally aligned with their environment. This chapter is about *change as a noun*.

This chapter does not attempt to recreate or summarize the entirety of social or human systems change theories. Rather, it proposes four questions about change in social contexts that will be helpful for contrasting with change interventions, discussed in the remainder of this primer. Each question is answered with one representative framework to offer useful ideas about social change for the purposes of analyzing military organizations. The Bibliography section of this Primer provides some competing perspectives for additional reading.

HOW DOES CHANGE HAPPEN WITHOUT INTERVENTION?

Example: Open systems theory, Katz & Kahn (1966)

Societies and organizations are *complex adaptive systems* in which knowledge of all the individual components of the system does not equate to understanding the system as a whole.³⁹ *Complex* refers to the idea that individuals can interact such that the behavior of the whole differs from the sum of the interactions, and they are *adaptive* in that the individuals can modify their behavior based on the environment.⁴⁰ It is then said that the adaptations cause the *emergence* of new systems behavior.

³⁸ Syllabus for “Human Systems Change,” HOL 8703, The George Washington University, 2013.

³⁹ Buckley (1968); John H. Miller and Scott E. Page, *Complex Adaptive Systems: An Introduction to Computational Models of Social Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 3.

⁴⁰ Bruce MacLennan, “Evolutionary Psychology, Complex Systems, and Social Theory, *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 90, no. 3/4 (Fall/Winter 2007): 169-189. <http://web.eecs.utk.edu/~mclennan/papers/EPCSS1.pdf> (accessed 23 May 2018).

Complex adaptive systems theories were an outgrowth of *open systems theory*, presented by organizational scholars Daniel Katz and Robert Kahn in the 1960s. Open systems theory explored the interaction of societies and organizations with its environment, rather than looking at the organization in isolation as was the case previously. The advantage of open systems theory for present purposes is how it describes complex adaptive behaviors in simple language and shows how societies and organizations change behavior through the natural interaction with their environments. Katz and Kahn presented the characteristics of open systems, a few of which are explained below, using the term *system* to mean either society or an organization.

Systems import energy from the outside environment and then transform that energy into something that it exports back to the environment. Katz and Kahn said that “no social structure is self-sufficient or self-contained,” and that systems would die or break apart without stimulation from outside.⁴¹ The response comes in the forms of actions and attitudes that spur the emergence of new behavior within the system. One form of input is *negative feedback* from the environment, providing cues as to the alignment of the system with the outside world.⁴²

Systems strive toward a state of equilibrium, whereby the system governs the amount of inputs and outputs to maintain a sense of constancy or predictability, otherwise known as *steady state*. It is not stasis by any means, the flow of inputs and outputs continues. However, governing the flow serves the purpose of ensuring the survival of the system and preservation of its character (e.g., behaviors it prefers).⁴³ The system also self-governs how it grows and expands, integrates, and coordinates its activities. Growth spurs differentiation into new capabilities and contexts, which either changes the systems behavior or potentially causes a split into a separate new system.

All of this is change. To an outside observer, the system behaviors overall may not appear to change much, but the

⁴¹ Katz and Kahn, *Social Psychology of Organizations*, 25, referred to this as *negative entropy*, defined as the capacity to prevent the system from falling apart.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 27.

individuals within the system sense the activity all around them. They feel the flows of inputs and outputs and notice their individual changes in behavior and alignment with the system, but may not have a shared understanding of the system as a whole. Hence, they may view all this activity as churn and not necessarily oriented toward some desired state.

The final characteristic of an open system is *equifinality*, that a system can reach the same state through many different ways. So, determining causes of phenomena in a system is challenging.

HOW DOES CHANGE BECOME HABITS AND PRACTICES?

Example: Strong structuration theory, Stones (2005)

To separate change from chaos, a mechanism is needed to coalesce the micro-level changes in the environment into something useful. One sees something good or desirable and repeats it. Sooner or later, this repetition becomes a habit shared by individuals. A new rule or structure has been added to society. More people adopt it and share it, until it no longer works – and the cycle starts all over again. How does this occur?

Structuration describes how people in a social system (society or organization) respond to the environment, how the environment responds to people, and how people and the social system remembers all these interactions. It began with the work of Anthony Giddens, who described the adaptive nature of societies, noting how their structures (formal rules and relationships) led to action (physical or cognitive activity).⁴⁴ The lesson learned or the changes in individuals performing the action (increased experience, mistakes) then adjusted the structure, producing a recursive cycle. As Rob Stones explains:

Structures serve as the “medium” of action as they are the material and social context, grasped through memory and awareness of current circumstances, upon which agents draw, and in relation to which they strategize about the future, when they engage in social practices. Meaningful and ordered social action would be impossible

⁴⁴ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1984).

*without this “medium.” Structures are also, however, the outcome of these practices of agents.*⁴⁵

So how does this become purposeful? How might an individual choose how to interact with the system, perhaps steering it toward some preferred state? Rob Stones extended Giddens’ theory to more clearly explain the role of the individual as the interface between the structure and the action, adding a couple steps to the feedback loop.⁴⁶

As an example, consider the role of the military commander, both leaders in their organizations. In general, one should not think of the commander as an automaton filling a role, but instead has great agency over how the position is defined. The *internal structures* are those that the individual brings to the role of commander, that he or she has general dispositions for how to do things (e.g., habits or preferences), plus particular responses specific to the environment. Using the examples of commander and their bosses (e.g., higher commanders or civilian authorities), assume that the boss has called for a meeting. The commander filters the situation through the internal structures and determines a response to the request—some sort of action such as immediate direct call to the boss or direction to the administrative assistant to set up the meeting for later. The outcome of that action spurs a response from the boss, such as surprise at a rapid contact or disappointment over delays. Knowledge of the boss’ reaction informs the commander’s internal structures—good way to proceed in future, mistake to avoid, something else?⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Rob Stones, “Futures-in-Train, Strategic Contexts, and Political Wisdom: A Framework for Case Study Analysis,” *Rivista Pic-Ais. Cultura e Comunicazione* 1 (2010): 56-67.

⁴⁶ Rob Stones, *Structuration Theory* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).

⁴⁷ This example is inspired by the analysis in Structuration and social identity theories: Qualitative methodologies for determining skills and competencies for the information profession in the 21st century. Judith Broady-Preston Aberystwyth University, Aberystwth, UK *Performance Measurement and Metric* 10, no. 3 (2009): 172-179.

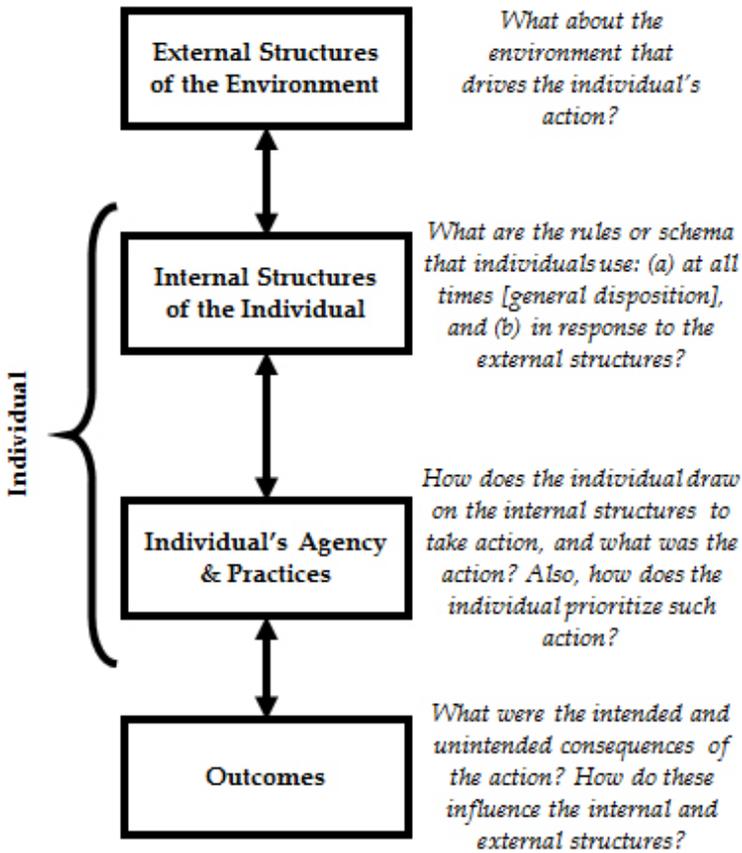


Figure 2. Strong structuration theory⁴⁸

This model furthers the explanation of how churn occurs in the organization. The boss and commander, along with any interactions between their respective organizations, shape the relationship. A positive relationship builds trust, while a negative one can cascade as individuals in the commander's organization start to avoid or downplay contact with the higher headquarters. The internal structures become barriers to communication. Out of

⁴⁸ Image prepared by author, adapted from Ibid. and Rob Stones, *Structuration Theory*, 84-88.

the churn, however, emerge habits and practices captured by the organization. That process is the subject of the next theory.

HOW DO THESE HABITS AND PRACTICES BECOME EMBEDDED?

Example: Institution theory, Scott (2013)

When we think of habits and practices, the term *culture* might come to mind. Organizational culture describes “how things are done around here,” which may or may not be what the organization actually wants. A considerable body of literature has sought to define culture as a combination of structures, habits, norms, values, and attitudes. One popular framework is Edgar Schein’s three-layered model of artifacts, norms and values, and underlying assumptions. These are sorted into the most tangible and easy to change to the least tangible and most difficult to change. W. Richard Scott’s formulation of institution theory adds granularity to culture by breaking out different types of artifacts and showing how they interact, how they create habits, and how they break them.

Institutions are “multifaceted, durable social structures, made up of symbolic elements, social activities, and material resources.”⁴⁹

Institutions represent ways of understanding activities and behaviors of collective bodies, and thinking about how they do and should function.⁵⁰ Although durable, institutions are dynamic and undergo a life cycle of being “created, maintained, changed, and [then they] decline.”⁵¹ As

Figure 3 shows, these activities and behaviors fall under one of three categories – regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive. Think about *regulative* activities as the formal structures that compel the members of the organization to do or not do something—laws, regulations, formal ties that require

⁴⁹ W. Richard Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2014), 57.

⁵⁰ Roy Suddaby et al., “Organizations and Their Institutional Environments – Bringing Meaning, Values, and Culture Back In: Introduction to the Special Research Forum, *Academy of Management Journal* 53, no. 6 (2010): 1234-1240.

⁵¹ Mary Jo Hatch and Tammar Zilber, “Conversation at the Border Between Organizational Culture Theory and Institution Theory,” *Journal of Management Inquiry* 21, no. 1 (2012): 94-97, 95.

compliance or risk sanction. *Normative* activities are informal (or less formal) and regard what members should do, while *cognitive* addresses the shared understandings of the members.

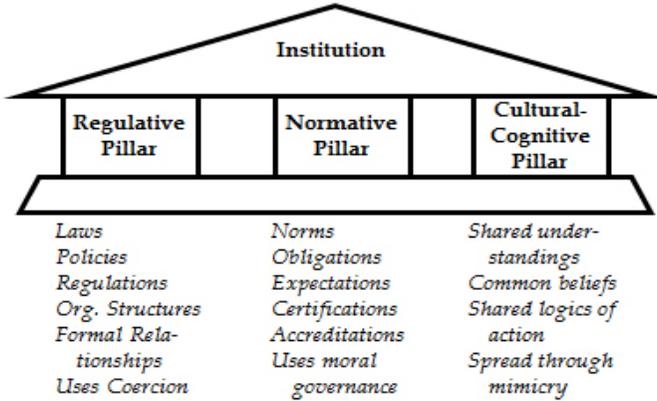


Figure 3. Scott's three pillars of institutions⁵²

The linkage between structuration and institution theories is straightforward—out of the churn of ordinary interactions with the environment, organizations develop learned habits which in turn embeds changes in the organization's behavior and shapes further interactions with the environment.⁵³ Consider the following example. Budget cuts at the national level force the services to seek efficiencies in their operations. The services have constructed a number of internal structures that guide their ordinary responses to such cuts—such as a taxonomy of rebuttals or approaches to negotiated solutions. These have been institutionalized in the service culture. What are the formal mechanisms for engaging in the matter? What words or data work best to convey the service's positions? What are the norms associated with their presentation, such as which Congressional leaders to engage first and how to prepare and present the message? What is the shared understanding of the situation—is

⁵² Image prepared by author, adapted from Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 60.

⁵³ For example, Stephen R. Barley and Pamela S. Tolbert, "Institutionalization and Structuration: Studying the Links Between Action and Institution," *Organization Studies* 18, no. 1 (January 1997): 93-117.

the military destined to win the arguments or lose them and face unacceptable risk?

And then, what if the services' responses no longer work? If the national leadership expects different answers, then the services must make choices whether to provide what is expected or stand one's own ground. Either way, the relationship with the stakeholder changes, and this in turn alters how the organization will respond to budget cuts in future. Perhaps it needs a new formal policy or regulation regarding the development and provision of information to higher. Perhaps it requires new norms regarding how the service defends its resource requirements. Perhaps the members of the organization must develop new shared understandings of the national fiscal situation.

HOW DO SUCH HABITS AND PRACTICES CEASE?

Example: De-institutionalization processes, Oliver (1992)

Obviously, not all habits are good, and it is desirable that people recognize and eliminate bad habits once recognized. But in the ordinary social context, all habits are potentially subject to breaking over time as the original incentives for creating the habit become distant memories or newer habits form.

Scholars refer to this natural habit-breaking process as *de-institutionalization*, defined as how habits simply "weaken and disappear."⁵⁴ In other words, something in the environment causes a "gradual erosion of [a habit's] taken-for-granted character," such that it loses its meaning and eventually people stop exercising it.⁵⁵

Scholars have found that such erosion comes about from specific pressures which could be either naturally occurring in the environment or intentionally induced. Institutional scholar Christine Oliver identified several such pressures such as poor organizational performance, conflicting internal interests, competition, social fragmentation, and decreasing historical

⁵⁴ Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 166.

⁵⁵ Lynne G. Zucker, "Where do Institutional Patterns Come From? Organizations as Actors in Social Systems" in *Institutional Patterns and Organizations: Culture and Environment* (Cambridge, MA: Ballenger, 1988), 26.

continuity.⁵⁶ When these pressures exist, an institutional practice dissipates or becomes rejected by members, creating room for alternative practices to appear, which may replace the old practice.⁵⁷ Importantly, outlawing an institutional practice alone does not cause its de-institutionalization; it is the cognition that rejects the practice or allows its dissipation that matters most. Figure 4 depicts several pressures that contribute to an institution being discontinued.

Three types of pressures, shown on the left side of Figure 4, can cause institutions to weaken and disappear.⁵⁸ *Competitive pressures* cause the utility or legitimacy of an institution to be called into question.⁵⁹ Such pressures arise because the practice is having a detrimental effect on organizational performance or its member commitment and is therefore simply being abandoned despite still being codified.⁶⁰ *Functional pressures* arise when the increase in technical or administrative requirements exceeds the value of the institutional practice. As the practice becomes too complex or cumbersome, members may abandon it. Finally, *social pressures* can cause members to become fragmented over the value or utility of a practice, “causing divergent or discordant” beliefs.⁶¹

As political, functional, and social pressures cause an institution to weaken, two other types of pressures may present themselves, some trying (perhaps desperately) to preserve the presence while others hasten its dissolution. *Inertial pressures* constitutes an “active intervention to maintain the institution.”⁶² Oliver included the following are possible sources of inertia: (1) Investments in fixed assets that the institution relies on, which makes abandoning the practice costly; (2) Internal coordination that the practice facilitates, such that abandoning the practice would leave an uncomfortable void; (3) desires for predictability;

⁵⁶ Christine Oliver, “The Antecedents of Deinstitutionalization,” *Organization Studies* 13, no. 4 (1992): 563-588, 567.

⁵⁷ Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 171.

⁵⁸ Oliver, “Antecedents.”

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 568.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 567. Oliver’s original term was “Political Pressure,” however in practice all three categories of pressure achieve political effects on an organization or society. This was certainly true regarding social pressures leading to DADT’s repeal. Oliver herself used “competitive pressure” synonymously.

⁶¹ Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 169.

⁶² Zucker, *Institutional Patterns*, 26.

(4) desires to show steadfastness and purpose; and (5) fear of disruption or stepping into the unknown.⁶³

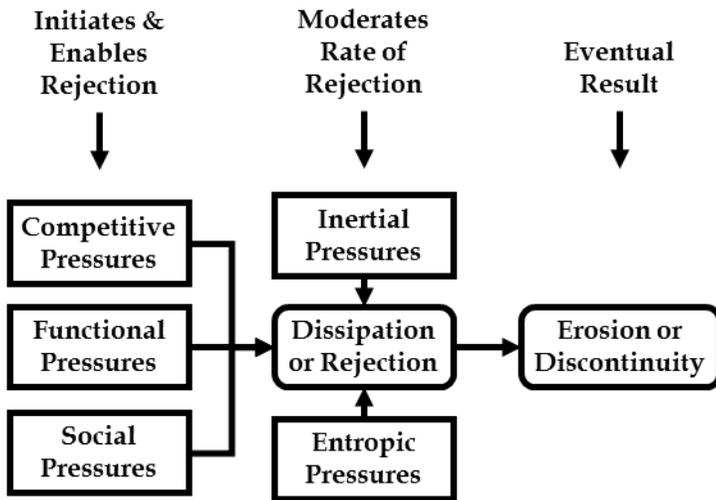


Figure 4. How institutions weaken and disappear⁶⁴

Accelerating the institution's demise are *entropic pressures*. Entropy is "a tendency toward disorganization in the social system" that causes "erosion or decay in an institutional phenomenon."⁶⁵ In other words, left alone, any habit (except the most vital ones) will eventually wither away and cease on their own because the organizational members will forget why the practice is in use, forget how to exercise the practice, or fail to transfer knowledge of the practice to new members.⁶⁶

An implication of this model is that breaking bad habits is difficult by leader dictum alone. The leader must choose which pressures to apply and what message to communicate to convince members to abandon the habit. This can mean presenting a clear and attractive alternative or sanctioning activities that protect the old way.

⁶³ Oliver, "Antecedents," 580.

⁶⁴ Adapted by author from *Ibid.*, 567.

⁶⁵ Lynne G. Zucker, *Institutional Patterns and Organizations: Culture and Environment* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1988), 26; Oliver, "Antecedents," 580.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

CONCLUSION

In combination, these four theories help describe the various forces of change pulling and pushing on organizations at any given time. Change is thus presented as the accumulation of effects of actions by individuals within a social context, along with the barriers or paths of resistance that those individuals must present. They also show how a lot of churn may be present, yet not everyone feels like change is actually occurring. If the organization's culture is highly resistant, the organization will pursue activities aligned with its comfortable *status quo* even if the situation demands otherwise. Or, if the organization's culture is pliant and responsive to the external environment, members may become overwhelmed and confused, desiring more stability.

Against this backdrop, the question becomes how leaders can intervene in the environment and direct this continuous, adaptive change activity toward a specific goal or outcome. This is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4. DEFINING THE CHANGE PROBLEM

Attention now turns to how leaders intervene in that environment and make change happen for a named purpose – “I want the organization to *<pick one: grow, develop new products or services, perform its mission better, become more efficient, fix what’s broke, do better at communicating with the public or stakeholders or customers.>*” Change agents must identify the purpose, goal, and strategy and seeing it through from start to finish. The leader may depart the organization while the effort is still underway, but the effort continued under the successor. Leading change is not about the individual leader, it is about the intervention itself. *This chapter and all that follow are about change as a verb.*

How to intervene is a difficult question, one that has spawned a considerable amount of research. This chapter provides only a survey of concepts and tools that have emerged from this work. The approach in this chapter is to present one (of many, many) strategies for defining problems and then present frameworks that can help the change agent decide whether a problem is worth pursuing and how to communicate that problem to others. I begin with the original fundamental conception of change as a verb, Lewin’s three-step model, as it provides the foundation under which numerous change management models follow.

HOW DOES A CHANGE INTERVENTION WORK?

Example: Unfreezing-moving-refreezing, Lewin (1951)

Lewin’s (1951) conception of change is still quite popular today; his three phases – *unfreezing, moving, and refreezing* – still persist as the fundamental basis for planned change efforts, and is readily mappable to numerous change models presented by other authors.⁶⁷ Figure 5 depicts these three stages.

⁶⁷ Kurt Lewin, *Field Theory in Social Science* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951); For example, see Table 1 of Mildred Golden Pryor, et al., “Challenges Facing Change Management Theories and Research,” *Delhi Business Review* 9, no. 1 (January-June 2008): 1-20 http://www.delhibusinessreview.org/V_9n1/v9n1a.pdf (accessed November 14, 2017).

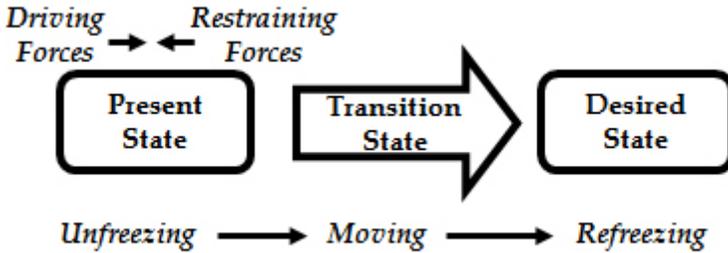


Figure 5. Lewin's planned change⁶⁸

First, leaders must jolt the organization out of its complacency. Lewin included both *driving* and *restraining* forces that acted upon the organization in the present state, while more recent authors tend to associate these forces as present through the change (for example, restraining forces during refreezing seek to undo the change and restore the old state). Lewin's second phase is *moving*, actually undergoing the change, followed by *refreezing*, which is embedding the change into the culture as the new normal. Ideally, this is when the change becomes permanent and the organization resists returning to the old ways.

The importance of Lewin's model, which is shared by other models that followed, is the energy that the organization must expend at each phase. There is significant energy put into getting an organization ready to change. This may include efforts to convince the organizational members that the current path is not sustainable or there is an important problem to fix. The organization must also acknowledge the planned strategy for change prior to, during, and after moving to the new state.

HOW DOES ONE IDENTIFY A PROBLEM?

Lewin's model is mainly process, and as explained in the Preface, change agents need to supply a bit of context and content. In essence, before one begins unfreezing the organization, one needed to have figured out what was broken in the organization in the first place. There is an apocryphal quote often attributed to

⁶⁸ Graphic adapted by author from Lewin, *Field Theory*.

Albert Einstein, “If I were given one hour to save the planet, I would spend 55 minutes defining the problem and five minutes resolving it.”⁶⁹ Whether Einstein actually said it or not, the quote is powerful. Leaders, especially in military organizations, desire action. They may not always have the patience to define a problem thoroughly so that the most optimal plan can be developed. Unfortunately, traditional process-oriented change management pays little attention to problem definition—such models typically assume the leader or change agent already knows what is wrong.

That is an improper assumption. In very large organizations like militaries, problems are very difficult to define and even more difficult to explain to others. What one sees as a “problem” may not be a problem at all to either the leader or other members. It can therefore be challenging to develop a common perspective on what problem exists and what it means for the organization.

Here is a real-world military example. In 2000, Chief of Staff of the Army General Eric Shinseki announced an effort to transform the Army and included with it was the direction to change the Army’s standard headgear from the patrol cap to the black beret, which would signify the move to a more expeditionary Army. He noted the black beret’s use by the Rangers, one of the Army’s elite forces with an expeditionary mission. The beret’s use across the force would symbolize widespread adoption of a key quality of the Rangers.⁷⁰ But what was the problem being solved? Was it the lack of an expeditionary mindset, or an anti-expeditionary culture among the force? Would not the other elements of the transformation have instilled expeditionary behaviors through the fielding of new equipment? The move to the beret did not bring about the intended effect, because the solution was detached from the problem. In essence the right questions were not the ones being asked.

⁶⁹ Garson O’Toole, “I Would Spend 55 Minutes Defining the Problem and then Five Minutes Solving It,” *QuoteInvestigator.com*, May 22, 2014, <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2014/05/22/solve/> (accessed May 8, 2018).

⁷⁰ “United States: Badge of Honour,” *The Economist* 359, no. 8226 (Jun 16, 2001): 34. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/224036312?accountid=4444> (accessed May 23, 2018).

Example: Spradlin's (2012) questions for problem definition

In a *Harvard Business Review* article from 2012, Dwayne Spradlin provides a series of five questions to help change agents move from asking *if* a problem exists to defining it clearly.⁷¹ He prefaces it with an example of unclear problem definition in industry similar to the black beret example--in essence, the problem is A and has effect B. When the worker complains about B and asks for assistance, it is because B is tangible and clear. But, the problem remains A. Defining A, according to Spradlin, involves asking the questions such as the following:

First, *what is the basic need?* The change agent must suspend the desire to grab a quick solution and dig into the real problem. Indeed, it begins with a recognition that there is dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs. Something is missing, broken, overdone, unnecessary, redundant, etc. Effect B is there, and it begs for a response. But, to get to A, one must ask *why?* Why is it missing or broken...? A challenge in large military organizations is the natural difficulty in tracing causal links in complex adaptive systems, but asking *why* on a persistent basis can uncover underlying assumptions and behaviors that are closer to problem A than the perceived symptoms.

Second, *can you justify the need?* In the grand scheme of things, does this problem matter? Is it worth the effort to change the organization to fix the problem? Is the risk to the organization great or small? The next subsection will present a model from Andrew Pettigrew that helps make such an assessment.

Third, *what has been tried before?* There is a great likelihood that others have come to perceive the same problem and attempted to solve it. Perhaps something worked for a time, or perhaps all prior attempts failed. Why? Such information with help change agents eliminate poor solutions and anticipate resistance to change from those involved with or witnessing the problem's history.

From this, the change agent should proceed to write down the problem statement, *in the change agent's own words*. The elements

⁷¹ Dwayne Spradlin, "Are You Solving the Right Problem?," *Harvard Business Review* 90, no. 9 (September 2012): 84-93, <https://hbr.org/2012/09/are-you-solving-the-right-problem> (accessed May 23, 2018).

of the problem statement are straightforward and should incorporate the answers to the above questions, the dissatisfaction that members feel about the problem, and the sense of importance attached to the problem. That this problem statement is in the change agent's words is critical. The process of engaging others and developing the problem into a change effort is likely to cause the problem to change. But *what caused the change agent to pursue the problem in the first place?* The change agent should preserve the original statement as the difference between it and what change problem the organization decides to undertake is important. Perhaps this difference is significant enough to pursue as a second change effort? Again, change agents are always looking for problems to solve, and should not give up on the original idea if it warrants change, albeit at another time.

WHAT IS DRIVING THE PROBLEM?

John Kotter's first step in managing change is establishing a sense of urgency.⁷² One can establish such urgency by drawing from either the external or internal contexts. In other words, something in the environment has brought about conditions that render the organization's current state problematic. If the organization does nothing, it risks falling into a future state that is *undesirable*. At best, it loses its competitive advantage. At worse, the organization ceases to exist. Therefore, change agents express the need for action in stark terms.

If the conditions are external, theoretically the change agent's task is simpler. However the change agent presents the situation and the undesirable future state, the solution involves banding leaders and members together against the external "threat." Naturally, if the problem is internal, the change agent faces a challenge of convincing possibly opposing parties of the nature and character of the "threat," particularly when there are opposing views on how threatening the situation is.

To communicate what is driving the problem, the change agent must do two things: First, develop a clear sense of the crisis unfolding. Gundel's typology of crises will help do that. Second, the change agent must determine who in the organization will be

⁷² Kotter, *Leading Change*, 35-51.

most receptive to the idea that the crisis exists. This is the harder step because the change agent may have to shape the environment in order to improve such receptivity. Pettigrew's (1992) receptive contexts for change provides ideas for accomplishing this.

Example I: Gundel's (2005) typology of crises

A challenge for leaders is presenting this situation without sounding alarmist, in other words making the outcome implausibly dire to artificially stir up fear and anger. This risks the crisis being too easily dismissed. Instead, leaders must construct the story rationally, showing an understanding of how crises unfold. A representative way of doing this is through crisis scholar Steve Gundel's typology of four crises which organizations face. The typology is built on two axes--the *predictability* of the crisis (easy or hard) and the *influenceability* over the crisis by the organization (easy or hard). The four types of crisis are depicted in Figure 6 and are described below. The likely character of the organization's responses are depicted in the gray boxes and explained at the end of this section.

Conventional (easily predictable and influenceable). These sorts of crises are those that the organization would ordinarily be expected to handle without much leader intervention. Snow removal in cold-weather cities is an example – failure to respond to a snow event would appear very problematic for the city. Stories of such crises unfolding would suggest that the organization's problems do or would render it unable to handle crises that it is normally expected to, with the outcomes being embarrassing or dangerous.

Unexpected (not predictable but easily influenceable). Unexpected crisis situations come about when the hazard is not foreseen or foreseeable, thereby inhibiting direct preventative measures. Yet, the organization still has the capability or capacity to respond, probably in novel or unforeseen ways. On the other hand, poor responses may cause the organization to appear flat-footed and not adaptive. In the snow removal case, an unpredictable event might be the introduction of an oversized load being transported over a highway during an unexpected snowfall. The subsequent crash and closure of the highways would be an unexpected crisis as snow removal and first

responders would face a dangerous and complex situation. Leaders could use this type of crises to explain an undesired future state whereby the organization lacks capacity--thus is incapable of adapting or growing to meet unexpected needs.

		<u>Influenceable</u>	
		<i>Easy</i>	<i>Hard</i>
<u>Predictable</u>	<i>Hard</i>	<u>Unexpected Crises</u> <i>e.g., unusual traffic accident</i> <i>Response: defend org. and adapt as needed</i>	<u>Fundamental Crises</u> <i>e.g., catastrophic failure or 9/11 terrorist attacks</i> <i>Response: possible transformation of the org.</i>
	<i>Easy</i>	<u>Conventional Crises</u> <i>e.g., ordinary snow removal</i> <i>Response: fix the problem or else...</i>	<u>Intractable Crises</u> <i>e.g., natural and industrial disasters</i> <i>Response: adapt org. and defense as needed</i>

Figure 6. Gundel's typology of crises (with annotations) ⁷³

Intractable (predictable but not influenceable). Some crises are ones that can be foreseen but are beyond the organization's capability or capacity to prevent or respond to them. In essence, one can take prudent steps to prepare, but otherwise the organization is forced to react as the crisis unfolds. Natural disasters fall in this category. Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and the like are generally predictable in the sense that certain parts of the world have a propensity to experience certain types. Leaders might describe the undesirable future state in such cases as a lack of capability – they can see such crises unfolding but are powerless to respond.

Fundamental (neither predictable nor influenceable). These crises are the doomsday scenarios, where the hazard could not be foreseen and the organization is generally incapable of preventing or influencing the crisis. Ordinarily, these would be extremely rare and powerful. Natural examples would include the worst of

⁷³ Adapted from Stephan Gundel, "Towards a New Typology of Crises," *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management* 13, no. 3 (2005), 112. Responses in gray boxes are from the author.

all possible earthquakes and tsunamis. The catastrophic failure of the Internet or the Global Positioning System that so much of society depends is another. This is the worst-case scenario that leaders might avoid when discussing the undesired future state, as others may view such cases as far-fetched. However, leaders may resort to this type of story if the cause of the organization's problem is external and is the result of systemic neglect by a stakeholder that also affects other organizations. The undesired future state is therefore a combination of lacking capability and capacity at multiple levels.

How should military organizations respond? Naturally, it will depend on the situation. For example, critics of the organization may use any crisis to put political or social pressure on organizational leaders, and their criticisms can range from factual to emotional to completely fabricated.⁷⁴ The gray boxes in Figure 6 represent likely expectations for senior leaders during and after the crisis. Conventional crises constitute evidence that the organization has either failed to fulfill its mission in some way or was prevented from doing so. In either case, stakeholders will expect corrective action to preclude a future repeat of the crisis.

Intractable and unexpected crises are similar in that the military organization will likely have to defend itself and explain to stakeholders that the crisis was beyond their immediate control, but that some amount of change might be needed to avert a future repeat. After all, military organizations are not ordinarily empowered to change their mission and available resources without authority of their parent organization. As intractable crises are more predictable, stakeholders are likely to demand change--whether in the organization or external to it. In contrast, unexpected crises might engender resistance to change when the crisis is perceived as exceptional or unusual, or might signal to stakeholders that future instances should be expected and therefore change is a must.

As for fundamental crises, organizational responses can range from essentially surrendering to the situation to all-out pursuit of

⁷⁴ The remainder of this section is based on Thomas P. Galvin, *Communication Campaigning: A Primer for Senior Leaders* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, under development).

transformational change. Military organizations are far more likely to follow the latter, using the fundamental crisis as a clarion call for action to expand the mission set and garner resources in kind. An important question, however, regards roles and missions between the military and other government agencies. There is risk of militarizing a solution to a problem that might belong elsewhere, complicating the response. Is This a Problem Worth Pursuing?

Example II: Pettigrew's (1992) receptive contexts for change

Just because the change agent has found a problem does not necessarily mean that it requires immediate action. The change agent must recognize when the right time to act is now or that the better choice is to wait. The change agent, especially if an internal consultant, does not have infinite energy to expend, and must take into account the receptivity of the organization to pursuing the effort along with the risk the organization assumes of doing nothing. If the organization is not receptive because the problem is not salient or the perceptions of risk are low, then the change agent should either delay the action until conditions are right or take action to ramp up the urgency.

This is not an easy decision to make. Fortunately, Andrew Pettigrew developed a set of receptive contexts that the change agent can leverage to encourage the organization to change.⁷⁵ The eight contexts in his model tend to reinforce each other, such that the presence of one can encourage the presence of another. These eight factors follow:

1. *Quality and Coherence of Policy.* The more clear, concise, and actionable the organization's rules and norms are, the easier it is to articulate problems in useful terms and therefore the organization is more receptive to change.
2. *Key People Leading Change.* Organizations are more receptive to change when key leaders are more receptive and show willingness to change. It is important that these leaders hold positions from which they can champion

⁷⁵ Andrew M. Pettigrew, Ewan Ferlie, and Lorna McKee, *Shaping Strategic Change: Making Change in Large Organizations, the Case of the NHS* (London: Sage, 1992).

and lead change. If holding the wrong position, their efforts at change could be marginalized.

3. *Presence of Environmental Pressures.* These need not be large-scale oppressive pressures from stakeholders or society. Rather, the pressures can be small in scale and come from inside or outside the organization. What counts is how they cause the organization to see how risky the *status quo* is. The next subsection will cover crises, which is a particular type of pressure.
4. *Supportive Organizational Culture.* Do organizational members feel free to challenge and change the meaning of organizational success? Is the climate conducive to doing things better or differently?
5. *Cooperation Between Leaders and Key Internal Stakeholders.* Internal stakeholders of an organization are those who make significant contributions to the organization's success due to expertise, experience, or special trust and confidence from the general membership. When empowered, these internal stakeholders can be great enablers of change. When relationships with leaders are strained, internal stakeholders are less likely to cooperate.
6. *Co-operative Networks among other Organizations.* When members have strong supportive and change-friendly relationships with peers in other organizations—both vertically and horizontally—the organization is likely more receptive to change.
7. *Simplicity and Clarity of Goals and Priorities.* These lead to better shared understandings about the organization's mission, purpose, vision, and definitions of success. These in turn help change agents and members recognize what is right and wrong with the organization.
8. *Fit Between Change Agenda and Local Contexts.* In large distributed organizations, the problem looks differently at each location. For transformational change, this means that the problem and solution must make sense at each affected base/station, suborganization, and operation. The change effort may require abandoning the one-size-

fits-all approach or it must be communicated suitably for each affected location.⁷⁶

These factors provide a ready checklist of ways that leaders and change agents can shape the organization to make it more receptive to change. However, these factors should not be assumed for any given problem. The nature and character of the problem influences how these factors enact the environment. For example, the overall goals and priorities of the organization may be clear until confronted with the problem in question.

HOW DOES ONE MEASURE THE IMPACT OF THE PROBLEM?

Example: Galvin's principles of preparedness (2016)

Militaries are *preparedness organizations* whose day-to-day activities serve to ensure the organization is prepared to perform its mission, *not necessarily to perform its mission*. Whereas private sector and many other organizations perform its mission and measure its success in actual and measurable terms, such as profit margin, military organizations optimize their *potential* to fight and win wars. Their preparedness to fight does not guarantee victory on the battlefield when called upon, but it does increase the probability of victory. Military organizations thus use measures of preparedness to determine their comparative advantage against a potential opposing force. For example, a military has a comparative advantage over another military if it has an important capability that the opponent lacks.

In many cases, however, militaries use comparative advantage more against itself at a different time than it does other militaries. In other words, a military will recognize when its own capabilities are decreasing or degrading, and thus will compare itself to a previous time when those capabilities were strong and relevant. This time-based perspective allows the military to explain the impacts of a problem in clear terms. The language of preparedness therefore provides a stable set of measures that

⁷⁶ Andrew M. Pettigrew, Ewan Ferlie, and Lorna McKee, "Shaping Strategic Change: The Case of the NHS in the 1980s," *Public Money & Management* 12, no. 3 (1992): 27-31.

allow the problem to be explained as comparative disadvantages affecting the force's potential to fight in the next war.

Military preparedness literature provides various descriptors of comparative advantage.⁷⁷ These provide the adjectives and adverbs to describe the impact of a problem in terms of the military's potential abilities to fight and win on the battlefield. Eight are listed below:

- *Aligned with Assigned Roles and Missions* – How well or poorly does the organization's mission and structure match what is actually needed to fight and win? A problem of alignment is when the organization has the wrong capabilities with which to fight – like having horse cavalry when armored cavalry was becoming common.
- *Overmatch (or Qualitative Superiority)* – Does the organization lack a capability that it needs to fight and win against anticipated opponents, or do they have overmatch over the organization? Modernization brings new materiel capabilities to sustain such overmatch, but there is also a human dimension. Leader development, education, resiliency and fitness also provide overmatch.
- *Sufficient (or Quantitatively Superior)* – Given a capability, does the organization lack capacity – manpower, materiel, information, etc.--to fulfill its responsibilities? Numbers of ready units provide only part of the answer, which includes how many of them can deploy where needed to influence the situation and seize initiative.
- *Adaptable* – To what extent is the organization ill-structured, equipped, trained, and ready to handle uncertainty, or the requisite variety of missions it may face? It is a potential problem if, during the fight, the organization finds itself incapable of realigning or

⁷⁷ These are derived from the eight *principles of preparedness* discussed in Thomas P. Galvin, *Military Preparedness*, Faculty Paper (Carlisle, PA: School of Strategic Landpower, 2016). These are also described in Thomas P. Galvin (Ed.), *Defense Management Primer*, 1st Ed. (Carlisle, PA: Department of Command, Leadership, and Management).

restructuring its capabilities as required to sustain comparative advantage.

- *Interoperable* – Does the problem indicate an inability to plug-and-play with others, internally or externally? Is the organization inhibited from assembling capabilities into tailored force packages for employment? Is the organization unable to add or subtract capabilities with minimal disruption to those employed? Can the force package interoperate with external entities, such as other government agencies or allies and coalition partners? Interoperable organizations maximize the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of its parts.
- *Mobilizable and Sustainable* – Can the organization respond to a mission requirement as quickly as needed? This can include assessment of the qualities and locations of available facilities, infrastructure, outsourced capabilities, logistics, and other critical support for operations. It also addresses surge capacity to set the theater and project national power.
- *With Foresight* – How well does (or can) the organization balance short-term with long-term requirements, such as ensuring proper manning and equipping for today while continuously modernizing for the future? This principle speaks directly to risks associated with trading current unit readiness for modernization. Balance is critical.
- *With Will to be Prepared* – Is the organization lacking the resources or access to national resources such that it is unable to be prepared? Or, is the organization signaling to adversaries that the organization is in any way unprepared to fight and win and appears unable to become prepared?⁷⁸

⁷⁸ These are derived from the eight *principles of preparedness* discussed in Galvin, *Military Preparedness*. These are also described in Thomas P. Galvin (Ed.), *Defense Management Primer*, 1st Ed. (Carlisle, PA: Department of Command, Leadership, and Management).

HOUSTON, WE HAVE A PROBLEM! . . . NOW WHAT?

So, how does one lead change in a large organization like the U.S. military? What is clear is that the change agent must employ a systematic yet flexible approach to understanding the organization, understanding both the driving and restraining forces associated with change. Then, the change agent determines the most feasible, suitable, and acceptable approaches available. The change agent must do this in environments of limited access to information and the need to socialize any ideas. However, this exposes any budding change effort to risk. *The moment the change agent has engaged with another member of the organization, whether to discuss problems or solutions, a change effort has effectively begun.* This is because the conversation immediately mobilizes at least one other person, in support or in opposition. In this view, many change efforts exist but are stopped during the initial stages of socialization or during their formative periods. Like hatchlings of a sea turtle, hundreds emerging from a nest but only a handful survive the dangerous trek to the ocean depths, only a few change efforts overcome initial opposition.

Communication is the key. From the initial idea to full implementation, change agents are communicators and champions of the effort. Being a champion, however, does not mean promoting one's own idea, but in asking questions and finding out what makes the idea useful and palatable to others.

Figure 7 shows five phases of constructing and implementing change—diagnosis, vision, concept, plan, sustain/terminate—along with questions that the change agent should explore.

Each of these phases has a strong communication component, because the change agent will depend on the organization and network of external stakeholders continuously and will encounter opposition throughout. *Diagnosis* is about problem identification, but in a probabilistic sense. Because causality is extraordinarily difficult to determine in complex adaptive environments, what the change agent views as a problem may be seen by others as mere symptom of a different problem. The change agent must avoid becoming trapped in these ambiguous causal chains and instead derive a most likely explanation of the organization's observed shortcomings.

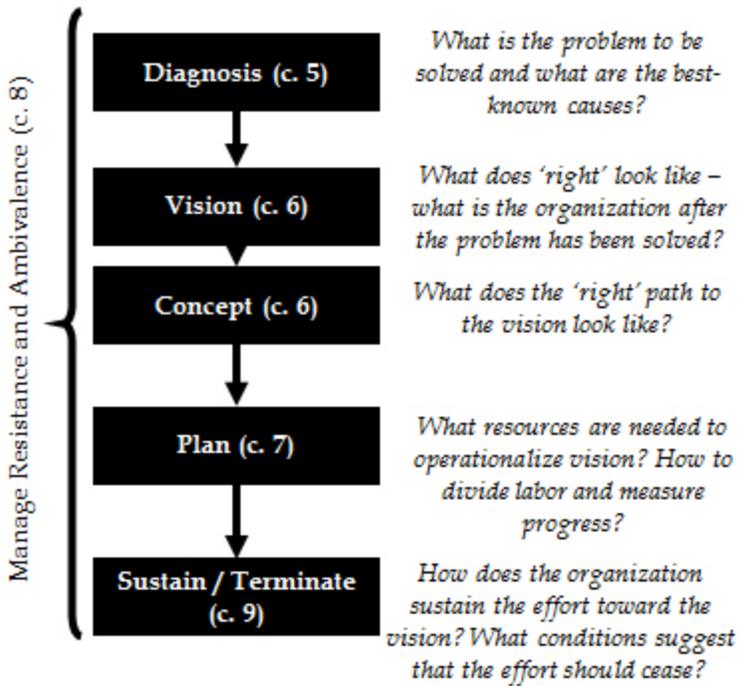


Figure 7. Developing and implementing change⁷⁹

Envisioning is the next phase, but there are two parts to it. Typically, business literature talks about vision statements, a mental image of a desired future state.⁸⁰ Crafting vision statements are difficult enough, but in large organizations the greater issue is describing how the organization can best reach the desired state. In other words, *in addition to envisioning the ends, change agents must also envision the ways*. Indeed, it is in the ways that change efforts often derail because while stakeholders agree on the desired outcome, the strategy is in dispute due to conflicting priorities and disagreements over best approaches. Thus, two products of envisioning emerge, hopefully in close succession – the *vision* of the ends and the *concept* of the ways.

⁷⁹ Graphic developed by author. Parentheses identify the corresponding chapter numbers in this Primer.

⁸⁰ For example, Kotter.

Opposition, in the form of *resistance* and *ambivalence* (i.e., conflicted feelings toward the change), is present in all phases, but takes on new meaning during envisioning. As members and stakeholders alike recognize the change idea, opposition mobilizes to attempt to stop the effort or provide checks and balances against it. But while change management literature treats resistance as a problem to be overcome coercively, the greater and more dangerous problem for military organizations is ambivalence—manifesting itself as a lack of energy, misunderstanding, or diffusion of priorities. These can either inhibit progress toward implementation or cause the effort to stall or linger.

CHAPTER 5. DIAGNOSING THE CURRENT STATE

Is the organization doing things right? Is the organization doing the right things? What is being missed?⁸¹

To effect change in any form at any level, it is important to determine what needs to be changed. For very large organizations where the environment is dynamic, internal performance factors are difficult to measure. Thus, deciding what needs to be changed *and at which level* is tougher. As stated above, when communicating the need for change across a very large organization, different subunits may have completely different perspectives on whether or not a change effort is urgent or even required. An Army-level mandate from the Pentagon may not resonate much at a battalion in Fort X in the continental U.S. or Base Y in a forward deployed location.

The challenge for change agents within a very large organization is to get past the symptoms and indicators of a problem and seek the root causes. This helps address the issue of changes being, or appearing to be, externally driven. Recasting the sense of urgency in terms of underlying causes help separate the crisis from the problem and positions leaders to demonstrate more ownership of the change. There are many diagnostic models available, but most have a common structure that involves feedback loops – moving from signal detection to data collection to analysis to findings. As internal consultants, leaders identify signals of problems through interactions with other members and stakeholders, observations, and performance indicators. Complaints, difficulties, or unsatisfying experiences are potential signals. If the leader chooses to investigate, the next step is to determine what data to collect, from where, and how.

However, the change agent and the senior leader or commander are generally not the same person—and if commanders initiate diagnoses, they will often do so through a

⁸¹ Thomas P. Galvin, "Assignment: Special Assistant to the Commander," *Military Review* 95, no. 2 (March-April 2015): 33-38, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1660802032> (accessed April 8, 2015).

staff proponent or project officer who becomes the change agent. Thus, change agents conduct diagnoses for the following purpose: to provide the senior leader with the *best explanation* for what is unsatisfying about the organization's current state, and providing *best advice* about whether to pursue change.

A detailed process model for diagnosis is beyond the scope of this book. Instead, this chapter addresses three essential questions about conducting diagnoses. The first regards the relationship between the senior leader and change agent serving as internal consultant, per Chapter 1. The outcome should be an agreement, possibly a contractual arrangement, giving the change agent the necessary authority to proceed with the diagnosis.⁸² The second question regards how to determine what data to collect and analyze. Organizational performance models help us understand how different processes and systems, from the quantifiable and tangible to the abstract, fit together to provide a whole picture of the organization. The final question is about the challenges and pitfalls of undertaking a diagnosis.

HOW DOES ONE CONDUCT A DIAGNOSIS?

This section breaks the question into two parts: what to do, and what to watch out for. Neither are necessarily easy, especially when the senior leader and change agent are not on the same page or when the change agent initiates the effort bottom-up.

Example I: Lippitt & Lippitt (1986) guide for consultants

As internal consultants, change agents must balance ones' assigned duties and responsibilities against the need to initiate and pursue change. The scope of change efforts in very large organizations requires change agents to involve others in the diagnosis. Only rarely can change agents pursue a thorough diagnosis on their own. Moreover, the diagnostic effort requires legitimacy, which can only be conferred by senior members of the organization. A change agent may be able to independently

⁸² Scott and Barnes, *Consulting on the Inside*, 69-77 discusses the importance and necessary details of the agreement to ensure clarity and protection for the change agent. Having such an agreement is important regardless of the subsequent nature of the change effort as it will provide the change agent with the necessary access to collect data and conduct a proper diagnosis of the organization.

initiate an investigation, but will face roadblocks unless a senior leader empowers the change agent to act. In such circumstances, the change agent uses the initial inquiry to gather evidence that a problem exists warranting the senior leader's attention. The senior leader in turn grants authority.

The consulting process, regardless of internal or external, involves a series of steps by which the change agent can proceed with the necessary authority. Lifelong business consultants Gordon and Robert Lippitt suggested phases of a senior leader-change agent relationship that permits the diagnosis to take place.⁸³

1. *Initial Contact.* If top-down, the senior leader has identified a problem and selects and empowers the change agent. If bottom-up, the change agent identifies a problem and alerts the senior leader who, in turn, empowers the change agent to continue or selects a different change agent (theoretically, one with the requisite expertise).
2. *Contract and relationship.* The "contract" in a military organization is likely a verbal order rather than written agreement, but the purpose is the same. Senior leaders set the requirements and boundaries of the diagnostic effort and provides the change agent with necessary resources and access.
3. *Collect and analyze data.* Change agent should undertake a systematic approach to determining what data is necessary to clarify the symptoms of the problem and pursue the causes.⁸⁴

A challenge in very large organizations is the senior leader's ability to sustain legitimacy of the diagnostic effort. Without legitimacy, organizational members may be reticent to expose flaws or too eager to assign blame, skewing the analysis. But legitimacy can be tough to sustain, as senior leader face many

⁸³ Paraphrasing the first three phases from Lippitt & Lippitt (1986), Chapter 2, "Phases in Consulting." They also included three phases to cover strategy, implementation, and sustainment and termination - referenced in subsequent chapters of this Primer.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

competing priorities. The worst scenario is the bottom-up case, where the change agent raises a problem, the senior leader agrees but takes limited ownership, and the change agent takes action under the assumption that full legitimacy to the effort is granted. Ideally, the senior leader and change agent should have routine contact, but in very large organizations this may not be possible. Regardless, it is incumbent on both senior leader and change agent to sustain, and occasionally, re-energize the diagnostic effort until it is complete.

Example II: Harrison's (1990) three dilemmas

However, one also cannot assume that senior leader and change agent see the aims of the diagnostic effort in the same way. Change agents should therefore consider Harrison's (1990) three dilemmas that consultants typically face when negotiating the terms of a diagnostic effort.⁸⁵ The first is the *goals dilemma* that governs the scope of the effort. Is the intent to pursue a narrow issue that change agents can diagnose and report upon quickly, or does it require a much broader and longer-term effort? Larger projects induce more risk, as they often encompass a broader spectrum of goals which face a greater likelihood of diverging interests between the organization and its personnel. Certainly the larger the diagnostic project, the greater the chance leaders across the organization will perceive its goals and priorities differently. This could complicate the change agent's ability to collect data as goals could require a spectrum of deliverables from merely providing information to fully developing change strategies. Further, diagnostics by internal consultants is especially risky as the leader may encounter a lack of cooperation or even be ostracized by others for getting their noses too far into other people's businesses.⁸⁶

Harrison's second dilemma is the *participation dilemma*, described as follows: Does the consultant decide to do it all, or involve others? Discretion may mandate the former, especially if

⁸⁵ Michael I. Harrison, "Hard Choices in Diagnosing Organizations," *Journal of Management Consulting* 6, no. 1 (1990): 13-21.

⁸⁶ For a more detailed discussion about ethical challenges facing consultants, see Gordon Lippitt and Ronald Lippitt, *The Consulting Process in Action* (San Diego, CA: University Associates, 1986), 77-98. (Chapter 5, "Ethical Dilemmas and Value Guidelines")

the subject of the diagnosis is sensitive and ripe for organizational backlash. This method also usually produces a more objective result, although it risks the consultant missing out on important information only available from organizational members. Wider involvement by the organization is probably better for less sensitive studies, as organizational members may be more forthcoming with data and ideas. It may also result in better organizational commitment to the resulting recommendations.

Harrison's third dilemma relates to *politics*, which Harrison defined as regarding who benefits from the organizational assessment – the whole organization or just a specific entity?⁸⁷ Although the assessment may aspire to benefit the whole organization, it may actually end up only benefitting only the senior leader. Perceptions concerning the study will not only affect how participants will support or resist the data collection effort, they can also have a profound impact on the consultant's ability to perform duties outside of the study and after its conclusion.

The above also highlights two important ethical concerns that warrant the internal consultant's attention. First is the importance of *confidentiality*, particularly when studying problems within an organization that may shed light on poor performance of individuals.⁸⁸ Trust is absolutely critical for the internal consultant, both with the sponsor and with any and all participants; the internal consultant must do everything possible to maintain this trust.

The second is *objectivity* and removal of bias, including when the sponsor appears to be pursuing the study with preconceived outcomes in mind.⁸⁹ This is particularly important in defense enterprise situations whereby senior defense officials are looking to justify a *fait accompli* despite substantive evidence supporting a different course of action. Unfortunately, the pre-made decision may well have come from much higher authorities and the sponsor may have no choice. In such cases, the consultant has a responsibility to present, in an unbiased manner, the available

⁸⁷ Harrison, 18.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Lippitt & Lippitt, 97.

evidence and his/her recommendation in the best interest of the organization. This is not always easy and may require courage on the part of the change agent.⁹⁰

HOW DO WE DETERMINE WHAT DATA TO COLLECT AND ANALYZE?

Example I: Weisbord's (1976) six-box model

Weisbord (1976) developed his six-box model as a result of two decades' consulting experience. The model addressed two concerns of his: (1) previous models were too complicated to be of use, and (2) the gap between theory and practice. Thus, Weisbord designed the model as a simple way for leaders to approach questions about the organization's performance without undergoing the cumbersome process of applying tenets from the spectrum of organizational theorists. See Figure 8.

Weisbord's diagnostic model incorporated both formal and informal structures and processes, which he expressed as the system that exists on paper versus what people actually do.⁹¹ He cautioned against assuming problems within the organization are personality-driven, and therefore confined to particular individuals. Weisbord's experience was problems of that nature tended to take root across organizations and become embedded in the organizational culture, such that removing the individuals in question would not solve the whole problem.

Organizational leaders can use the model two ways - either to assess strengths and weaknesses in general or to conduct a forensic analysis on a particular product or service that failed to meet expectations. In both cases, it is important that the consultant

⁹⁰ Personal anecdote of the author. A new commander I worked for was intent in instituting a change effort within the headquarters based on work done at another base. However, because the change effort was being imposed without a proper diagnosis done on the organization, resistance across the staff was significant. After digging into the source of the methodology and determining that continuing the effort did more harm than good, I had to confront the commander. I only did so after garnering support from several directors who felt similarly that the change effort was failing. Ultimately, the commander re-oriented the effort and assigned responsibility to a higher-ranking staff officer who was better postured to conduct a diagnosis. I would leave the organization a short time later.

⁹¹ Salvatore Falletta, *Organizational Diagnostic Models: A Review and Synthesis*, Human Resources Intelligence Report (Sacramento, CA: Leadersphere, 2008), 9. Also see Weisbord, 432.

determine and sustain the proper scope of analysis. Thus, a review of readiness reporting could assess the readiness reporting system writ large or tackle one particular problematic report (e.g., one where the process of generating readiness data clearly and measurably failed). In either case, applying Weisbord's model can help ascertain the differences (and their relative importance) between formal and informal systems -- between *what is* and *what ought to be*.

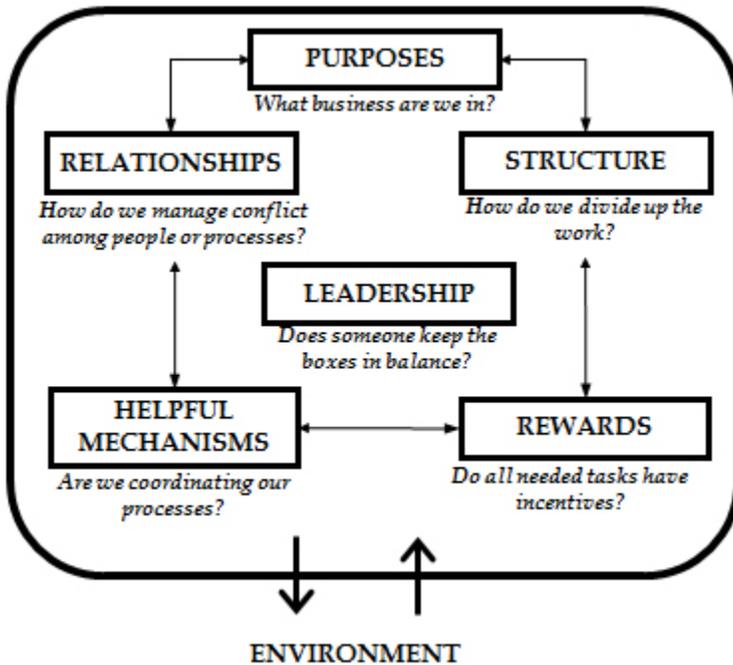


Figure 8. Weisbord's six-box diagnostic model⁹²

Example II: Burke-Litwin (1992) model of performance & change

Weisbord's model is by no means the only suitable model, and different models have emphasized different aspects of organizational behavior. A second, more complex model is the

⁹² Marvin R. Weisbord, "Organizational Diagnosis: Six Places to Look for Trouble With or Without a Theory," *Group and Organizational Dynamics* 1, no. 4 (December 1976): 430-447, 432. Adapted by author using modified descriptions of the boxes.

Burke-Litwin (1992) model of organizational performance that assesses twice the variables separated into two levels of analysis.⁹³

The model neatly divides into two nested levels, as shown in Figure 9. The *transactional* factors are inside the gray box and govern the management of routine activities. These include: (a) *management practices* that govern how managers apply resources “to carry out the organization’s strategy,” (b) *policies and procedures* that foster work and provide rewards and sanctions, (c) *structure* that sets authorities and responsibilities vertically and horizontally, (d) *work unit climate* that encompasses member commitment to the organization include affect and expectations, (e) *tasks and individual skills* that set required behaviors of members, (f) *individual needs and values*, (g) *motivation* to accomplish organizational goals, and (h) *individual performance* as the overall outcome at the transactional level. *Transformational* factors are associated with leading change in the organization. The Figure includes five: (a) *external environment* that includes any outside factors influencing the organization, (b) *mission and strategy* as declared by the leaders and as accepted or understood by members, (c) *leadership* as exemplified by personal example and strategic direction given by leaders, (d) *culture* being the way the organization operates, and (e) *organizational performance* as the outcome.⁹⁴

Two key implications of the model. First, *transactions determine organizational climate*. Five types of transactions affecting climate include: (1) effects of mission clarity or lack thereof, (2) roles and responsibilities related to structure and managerial practice, (3) establishment of standards and commitment to them, (4) fairness of rewards, and (5) customer focus versus internal pressures.⁹⁵ Each of these relate to interactions among one or more of the transactional (gray) portion in Figure 9, and thus allows for a ready set of factors to pursue when dealing with issues of climate. The model professes these transactions produce incremental change in an organization.

⁹³ W. Warner Burke and George H. Litwin, “A Causal Model of Organizational Performance and Change,” *Journal of Management* 18, no. 3 (1992): 523-545.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 531-533.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 533.

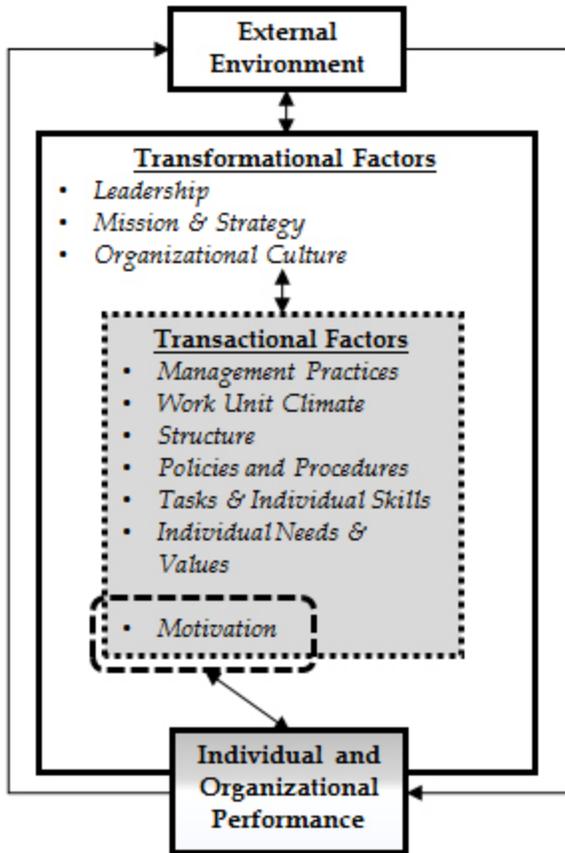


Figure 9. Burke-Litwin (1992) model - simplified⁹⁶

The model's second implication is *culture change requires transformation*.⁹⁷ Transformational variables, shown as the white boxes in Figure 9, represent change stemming from organizational interactions with the environment, including those with stakeholders like Congress, allies and partners, industry, or other federal agencies. Given the level at which these interactions occur, the model attests these transformational variables produce more holistic change within an organization.

⁹⁶ Adapted by author from Ibid., 528. In the original diagram, each factor is indicated in its own box with direct feedback arrows to each other factor as appropriate.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

HOW DO WE CONDUCT THE DIAGNOSIS?

Example – Miles and Hubermann's tactics (1994)

With the diagnosis challenges in mind, there are a number of published strategies for performing the analysis and articulating the results despite possible incompleteness or inconsistencies in the data. In reviewing various models, Miles and Hubermann's (1994) thirteen tactics stand out as particularly useful.⁹⁸ Instead of promoting a large, comprehensive strategy that may not fit each organization perfectly, their thirteen tactics constitute a somewhat sequenced menu of tools consultants can use at their discretion. This paper summarizes eight tactics below that are broadly applicable for military organizations:

Noting Patterns and Themes. Recurring patterns in the data can often suggest important findings, such as “variables involving similarities and differences among categories” or “processes involving connections in time and space.”⁹⁹ The authors warn, however, the detection of patterns is just a first step, and the consultant must not overlook disconfirming evidence from elsewhere in the data.

Seeing Plausibility. Sometimes the data may seem random, with no clear patterns (or at least not enough to explain everything going on). Using intuition, the consultant attempts to draw out possible explanations for what otherwise might not make sense. But, once such an explanation is proffered, evidence of it must be pursued. Otherwise, it remains an unproven hypothesis and not necessarily something that the organization must fix.

Clustering. Are there patterns among the patterns? This tactic pulls together patterns and plausible explanations to categorize them as wholes. For example, patterns of distrustful behaviors across multiple subcommands might suggest a broader trust issue for the major command under study.

⁹⁸ Adapted from Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994), 245-287. (Chapter 10, “Making Good Sense- Drawing and Verifying Conclusions)

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 246.

Making Metaphors. Metaphors are a way of making sense of complex ideas. Clustering the patterns may produce categories that are technically useful, but might not offer helpful explanations. In a case involving massive backlogs of administrative staff work in a particular supervisor's office, there is a measurable difference between that office being a "road block" versus simply being "vigilant" or "enforcing standards." Miles and Hubermann offer a question that can help in articulating findings: "If I only had two words to describe an important feature at this site, what would they be?"¹⁰⁰

Counting. How many times an issue arises and how consistently it surfaces can be important clues. Counting instances of key points raised in interviews or evidenced in the records can help prioritize the key findings. Which are pervasive and deserve more attention? Which are mildly interesting or, in the end, rather ho-hum (or are only important to a few members of the organization)?

Making Contrasts and Comparisons. This is another way of sifting through the many patterns that may emerge. How does something compare between two organizational units: leaders and the rank and file, two separate garrisons, two independent commands, etc.? Sometimes the differences are consistent with expectations--for example one would expect some natural differences to show when comparing garrison services between continental U.S. and overseas-based commands. However, differences that are unexpected or not easily explained may indicate a significant finding.

Partitioning. Sometimes the pattern is not a single pattern, but is comprised of three or five different and important components, each of which may be a finding in itself. The backlogging problem mentioned earlier could be the result of several important findings integrated together into one big problem - (1) undermanning of the admin staff, (2) lack of training, (3) lower-

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 252.

level supervisors pushing up poor products, and (4) confusing or conflicting guidance from above.

*Noting Relationships Between Variables.*¹⁰¹ A variable is a number or condition in the data that can change. Sometimes it can be quantified, like processing time for a staff action, or categorized, such as morale being high, moderate, or low. If you note that low morale tends to accompany longer processing times, it may indicate an important relationship. Relationships can take on many forms: (1) *correlated*, meaning that whenever one goes up, the other goes up (e.g., pay increases and morale) or when one goes down, the other goes down; (2) *inverse*, meaning whenever one goes up, the other goes down or vice versa (e.g., stress management training and sick days); (3) *causal*, meaning that one going up appears to cause the other to eventually go up.

Using such tactics effectively means getting beyond the obvious, which typically appears at lower levels of analysis. Widespread problems at the individual level will appear as evident patterns across the organization. However, taking action at the strategic level requires reducing those patterns to identify the *systemic* problems that require strategic-level intervention; the organization could merely apply a plethora of localized actions to resolve widespread problems that do not command such strategic level attention.

CHALLENGES AND IMPLICATIONS

Performing the diagnosis amounts to collecting data, conducting analysis, and determining the key problems to solve through a change effort. While it sounds simple, the challenge for the consultant lies in the incomplete, errant, or misleading data with which he/she must contend. Data from interviews with organizational members, for example, can be biased by either the participant (e.g., trying to steer the findings) or by the consultant (e.g., pushing a preconceived notion of what's going on). Consultants must carefully review data collected from records or knowledge management systems to ensure its trustworthiness and reliability – not all organizations input the same data the same

¹⁰¹ Miles and Hubermann offer this as their tenth tactic. The others are not included as they are increasingly complex and go beyond the scope of this Primer.

way, and not all organizations are equally diligent about their record keeping. The condition of the data will be a factor in the levels of confidence in the findings.¹⁰²

Even with the best possible data, there are three challenges that consultants should consider in their analyses. The first is *levels of analysis*, which Burke-Litwin discusses in the form of the transformational-transactional boundary.¹⁰³ It is important that defense managers not confuse strategic with “macro.” In fact, some strategic issues of the defense enterprise are “micro” in nature – consider human resource management whereby performance across the entire defense enterprise is effectively gauged one Soldier at a time, then aggregated in the form of statistics. Defense managers must be clear and consistent about the levels of analysis they are using.

The second challenge is *defining terms*. A perfect example where this becomes extremely important is when discussing vague terms such as “efficiency” or “economy” when diagnosing organizational behavior. For example, consider how different stakeholders might weigh the efficiency of common installation activities such as medical clinics, family housing, or morale, welfare, and recreation facilities and services. Is the service efficient in that the activity provides the maximum level of service for its available resources? Or that the customer receives expeditious service? Or that the activity provides service with minimal waste of resources and minimal undesired effects (e.g., environmental damage)? A detailed definition of terms, and the consistent use of them, is key.

The third and greatest challenge is the *distributed environment* and its impacts on the reliability of any data collected. A service or joint-wide study will naturally involve a global array of agencies and stakeholders, with the potential for extensive remote data collection. Critical thinking, objectivity, and identification of bias become vital in ensuring the rigor and quality of the data collection, analysis, and presentation of findings. Even under the

¹⁰² Ian Hodder, “The Interpretation of Documents and Material Culture,” in N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000), 703-717.

¹⁰³ Burke & Litwin, 529-530.

most favorable considerations when all parties involved in a study support the objectives and are transparent in their contributions, the consultant must consider parochial interests and local issues. A respondent in an overseas command may question how well defense managers in the Pentagon “understand” the situation in theater, and can offer errant data. The defense manager must also continuously self-reflect on one’s own data collection methods. Do they introduce bias or presuppose an assumed problem or solution? Do they gather all the data the consultant intends? Sometimes, important performance data only comes to light in face-to-face sessions or working groups, which is not always possible due to limited time and travel budgets.

CHAPTER 6. ENVISIONING THE CHANGE – VISION AND CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

What does a successful future for the organization look like after the change effort is “complete”? This is the purpose of *vision*, a mental image of a desired future state.¹⁰⁴ After determining the problem and its likely causes, the senior leader develops a vision and disseminates it internally and externally. The goal is a shared understanding of the desired future with the problem solved, in hopes of building of unified effort in support of the change.

If only it were that simple, of course. It is easy to list out the desired qualities of a vision—for example, John Kotter uses “imaginable, desirable, feasible, focused, flexible, and communicable.”¹⁰⁵ It is quite another to actually write or speak a vision to someone else—supporter, adversary, or neutral party. Here are just a few reasons why *envisioning*, the process of developing and disseminating a vision, is challenging for members of a very large organization like a military.

1. *Vision only makes sense to stakeholders.* If the impetus for change is a stakeholder mandate, a leader may feel pressure to ensure the change effort is understandable and acceptable to the stakeholder first. But if the members do not get it, the effort is not likely to succeed. (Corollary: Vision only makes sense to the organization’s leadership and is not understood among members.)
2. *Vision lacks depth.* The vision should be a fully fleshed out image that others can understand and appreciate. If the vision is only expressed as a slogan, members may not understand how the organization will achieve it. Too many times, the vision is reduced to a “bumper sticker” that is easily dismissed. (On the other hand, if the vision is uninspiring, it too will be easily dismissed.¹⁰⁶)
3. *Conflict with other change efforts.* The military has many change efforts going on at once, each consuming

¹⁰⁴ Kotter, *Leading Change*, 72.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ With thanks to a reviewer for this insight.

organizational energy and time. Does the vision sound like that of another on-going effort? Does the vision conflict with or contradict it? These can cause change efforts to be derailed for being redundant, duplicative, and unnecessary.

4. *Perceived problem-solution mismatch.* As previous chapters show, not everyone will share a common view of the problem statement, so leaders may expect some pushback based on misunderstandings and misperceptions. But some perceptions are caused by the leader withholding information, intentionally or unintentionally. Perhaps there is fear that too much information invites resistance (a well-founded concern sometimes).¹⁰⁷ Maybe the problem is complex and the solution only addresses what is feasible at the time.

The lesson is that envisioning is not just about articulating the change effort's goal or end state, but also its strategy. It must answer *what, why, and how*. While these components may be expressed in pithy slogans and bullet points, there has to be an underlying story of how the leader sees the vision being realized. The leader then has to determine how much of the story is necessary to disseminate. While divulging the full story would be ideal, it may not be possible.

The sequence of questions presented in this chapter provide a general approach to writing that story. It begins with a general question about visioning, what it is and how one goes about it. The next is to revisit the principles of preparedness from Chapter 4, but using them as a lens for the future state rather than the current, problematic state. After this, the leader constructs the

¹⁰⁷ Personal anecdote of the author: I had the opportunity to participate in a strategic planning effort in which the going-in position was the likely reduction of the organization by one-half to two-thirds of its manpower and relocation to a less desirable host city. The sensitivity surrounding the effort was naturally high as many within the organization were at risk of losing their jobs. Despite wide understanding that a transformational effort was unavoidable due to extenuating circumstances, morale was a deep concern as the organization still had to perform its mission. Therefore, the planning team had to exercise very strict controls on information available. The team employed a system of "trusted agents" who had to sign non-disclosure agreements. Although the resulting change plan did not get implemented as quickly as intended, the result was a feasible, suitable, and executable plan that avoided unnecessary levels of resistance.

vision of the ends--the undesired future state of not taking action and desired future state as an outcome of deliberate change. Then the leader considers all available paths of the current state and develops a *concept--the vision of the ways*--that describes conceptually *how* the organization will pursue the vision.¹⁰⁸

HOW CAN ONE CONSTRUCT THE FUTURE?

Constructing the future is as simple as building a mental image, but this is not enough to spur a change effort. The mental image must be expressible in terms that stakeholders, organizational members, and others can understand. For example in the corporate world, John Kotter asks questions such as how realizing the vision would affect customers, stockholders, and employees.¹⁰⁹ When changing military organizations, the same question applies. How would realizing the vision affect the nation, other government agencies, service members, the defense industrial base, allied nations and partners, and the nation's adversaries? Leaders and change agents need to have answers ready for these questions they promote the vision.

Thus, while the vision must be inspirational in some way, there has to be a logic to the underlying story that connects today with the future. A way of going about this is *forecasting*, using various techniques to rationally construct the future based on what is known both historically and present-day. Forecasting is different from *prediction*, which is a more general activity of expressing a future state. One can predict something will happen at some future time without the use of a model or time frame (e.g., *it will snow next winter*). Forecasting is more probabilistic, requiring a methodological approach to analyze data and relationships to identify a plausible outcome according to an established timeline.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Kotter, 71 refers to these visions as "vision" (sensible and appealing picture of the future) and "strategies" (a logic for how the vision can be achieved). *Concept* is the term more often used in U.S. military organizations to express such logics, so this Primer will use the term *concept* in this way.

¹⁰⁹ Kotter.

¹¹⁰ There is much debate over the distinction between prediction and forecasting. I chose these definitions based on ResearchGate, "What is the difference between Prediction and Forecast?" *ResearchGate.net*,

Example: Chambers et al. (1971) forecasting techniques

There are many techniques for constructing forecasts dependent on the quantity and quality of data available, consensus or dissensus of interpretation, and the time horizons. A seminar 1971 article in *Harvard Business Review* by Chambers, Mullick, and Smith presented a compendium of these techniques to help leaders choose.¹¹¹ A thorough treatment of these techniques is beyond the scope of this paper, but War College professor Craig Bullis provides a useful summary, shown below in Figure 10.

The types of forecasts that change agents perform tend to be qualitative because of the reliance on expertise. These methods involve the leader or change agent gathering perspectives in the forms of stories, opinions, or qualitative assessments of data. Example methods include the Delphi method involves explicit gathering of perspectives from subject matter experts, market research methods that test the probability of outcomes from the creation of new capabilities, and historical analogy that use the past to project the future.¹¹² Although Chambers et al. imply that such methods involve participation by others, they do not require it. Leaders may elect to forecast based on their own experience, but at the risk of overlooking factors that experts might identify.

Quantitative methods can be useful for projecting trends and patterns into the future, so long as the available data is reliable.¹¹³ These sorts of time-based forecasts are very important in military culture when it comes to resources and readiness, such as projecting future costs.¹¹⁴

However, forecasting is not a one-time activity. Rather, it is a continuous action of scanning and assessing the external

https://www.researchgate.net/post/What_is_the_difference_between_Prediction_and_Forecast (accessed May 24, 2018).

¹¹¹ John C. Chambers, Satinder K. Mullick, and Donald D. Smith, "How to Choose the Right Forecasting Technique," *Harvard Business Review* 49, no. 4 (July 1971): 45-74.

¹¹² Chambers, et al.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ For example, E. Deacon Maddox, "Improving Tactical Cost Forecasting to Optimize Readiness," *Army.mil*, May 5, 2014, https://www.army.mil/article/125005/improving_tactical_cost_forecasting_to_optimize_readiness (accessed May 24, 2018).

environment. Each engagement with experts or reading of the data provides feedback that leaders use to re-assess the forecast. The goal is for the vision to gain clarity in the leaders' minds, which in turn allows greater clarity to be expressed as the leader engages with others. Clarity is critical to forecasting, and ultimately the final vision.¹¹⁵ Leaders can express a clear vision in fewer words, but with greater consistency in meaning.

	Potential Benefits	Potential Shortcomings
Qualitative Forecasting <i>(exploiting individual and group expertise to propose possible futures)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverages recent tacit knowledge. • Capable of providing a quick response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited to the perspectives of those included in the group. • Leadership is required to manage the perspectives and egos in the group
Quantitative Forecasting <i>(gathering and manipulating data to provide estimates)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate estimates of the outcome variable. • Assertions supported by "objective data" can better align with many cultural expectations. • Identification and measurement requirements of variables can cause the organization to more rigorously evaluate existing methods, processes, and outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model estimates are only as comprehensive as the variables included. • Some critical variables do not lend to precise measurement. • Accurate models of the underlying behavior may not exist. • Correlation ≠ Causation.
Scenario-writing and estimating <i>(both qualitative and quantitative for forecasting a specific future)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates leaders' consideration of many aspects associated with a unique possible future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time consuming. • Requires multiple models and forecasts to capture the complexity of most strategic issues.

Figure 10. Overview of forecasting methodologies¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Kotter, 73.

¹¹⁶ R. Craig Bullis, *An Introduction to Forecasting the Future External Environment*, Working Paper (Carlisle, PA: Department of Command, Leadership, and Management, 2017).

HOW DOES ONE DEVELOP THE DESIRED AND UNDESIRED FUTURE STATES?

Attention now turns to the first level of visioning--creating *visions of the ends*. The change agent constructs two visions of the ends, called the *desired* and *undesired future states*. Each of these are forecasts.

A challenge for leaders is to construct these forecasts holistically - not narrowly focused on the problem and only those factors directly related to it. Leaders must contextualize the problem across the whole organization, otherwise the change effort may properly belong at a subordinate level. Thus, constructing them in one's own mind is similar to that of renovating a building. The leader must know that merely addressing flaws may have second-order effects elsewhere in the design. The renovation must correct the problems while keeping others from arising.

Example: Galvin's (2016) principles of preparedness - redux

It is helpful to use a common language to express current state, undesired future state, and desired future states. This common language will be the terms of comparative advantage - the principles of preparedness from Chapter 4. The undesired future state is therefore the accumulated disadvantage brought about by failure to act, while the desired future state is a vision of the organization with its competitive advantage restored or sustained in the face of external and internal pressures. Below are the principles restated with the aims of guiding leaders to express undesired (U) and desired (D) futures.

- *Aligned with Assigned Roles and Missions* - (U) What does the organization look like at a future time when it has fallen completely out of alignment with the environment? Irrelevant? (D) What does a better aligned organization look like? How does fight and win better than in the current state?
- *Overmatch (or Qualitative Superiority)* - (U) What does the organization look like at a point where it is overmatched such that the competitive disadvantage is enduring? (D)

How does any new capabilities in the future state provide the decisive advantage? What else is the organization capable of doing because of its new state of overmatch? Explain in terms of how the battle, campaign, or war unfolds from pre- to post-conflict.

- *Sufficient (or Quantitatively Superior)* – (U) What does the organization look like at a point where its capacity is permanently lacking? There is not enough and there would “never” be enough? (D) How does the newly gained capacity overwhelm adversaries or change conditions in the environment? How is this capacity employed, preserved for flexibility, or applied in new or innovative ways?
- *Adaptable* – (U) What does the organization look like that is incapable of adaptation? Permanently too slow to act or react and always a step behind? (D) How is the organization postured to adapt to a changing environment, especially the battlefield? How does it reorganize to provide different capabilities in response to adversarial action?
- *Interoperable* – (U) What does the organization look like that is unprepared to interact with others in the environment? As it requires undue time to collaborate, cooperation, and interact with others in times of crisis or operations? (D) How is the organization better suited to co-operate and collaborate with others across the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational environment? How does this co-operation lead to greater success and lower risk to the force?
- *Mobilizable and Sustainable* – (U) What does the organization look like that is only able to approach operations in a mode of “come as you are”? No ability to generate additional capability? (D) How is the organization better able to generate capability and capacity faster than before? Or to establish the advantage by posturing forces to deter and dissuade adversaries?

- *With Foresight* – (U) What does the organization look like that has utterly mortgaged the future in favor of the current? Or the current in favor of the future? (D) How does the organization benefit from the balancing of current and future requirements? How does it resolve the inherent tension between them?
- *With Will to be Prepared* – (U) What does the organization look like without the requisite authority, autonomy, or resources to act in accordance with the mission? (D) How do relationships with stakeholders embolden both stakeholders and the organization? How is receipt of adequate resources complemented by adequate stewardship of those resources? How does the competitive advantage of the organization influence national security decisions?

Some rules of thumb. First, *the desired future state should not be expressed as the opposite of the current state*. The vision is a constructed future, not a deconstructed past. Thus, negations such as “not,” “never,” “no longer,” and so on must be avoided. While the desired future state does indeed distance the organization from the current state, the vision must also account for plausible second- and third-order effects of achieving that distance.

Let us use the problem of the lack of intratheater airlift capacity with its root cause in needing more cargo planes. The desired future state includes having bought those planes. One could say that the organization *no longer* has a capacity shortfall, but that is not a good vision because one cannot easily measure a negative. Instead, the vision should construct what the future state looks like with the added planes. Are more airbases required? What kinds of planes? What can the joint force do that it could not before due to the lack of capacity? As this example shows, constructing the vision is more than addressing the problem, it is showing how the solution integrates into the mission.

The second rule of thumb is to *avoid making the undesired state sound unduly alarmist*. The same process is then used to construct

the undesired future state, the state in which the status quo is extended into the future such that the organization risks mission failure. It is relatively easy to express an undesirable future state because expressing negatives are easier than positives. Anyone can point out a flaw. But one must not merely take the individual flaws of the current state and magnify them. That is an alarmist stance which is not likely to convince others that the current state is untenable. Rather, change agents must construct the undesired future state as a forecast in which the organization's preparedness degrades over time due to natural complex adaptive behavior. The principles of preparedness are again used as the measures, which in turn helps explain the contrast between desired and undesired future states.

Surprisingly, perhaps, the undesired future state should limit negotiations also. "We *cannot* do something" is unconvincing and may not be true. Negatives are very difficult to prove. Thus, the approach is to construct the state of failure. For example, a better description from the vision might be, "The capability degrades to the point where adversary X gains overmatch, and this means..." This allows the change agent to *show* the future in ways that others can mentally reconstruct this undesired image. Having done so, it will be much easier for the change agent to communicate the urgency of taking action.

HOW DOES ONE DEVELOP THE CONCEPT?

Example: US military's Commander's Intent (2012)

Now attention turns to the second level of visioning--the *vision of the ways*. In other words, what does the path from current to desired future state look like? This will be referred to using the common military term of *concept* to differentiate it from strategy or plan. In this Primer, strategies and plans come about once enough details about the change effort are sufficiently clear that the leaders and change agents can negotiate the means required. At the concept stage, the means discussion is actually a barrier to change. Members and stakeholders alike may fall into a zero-sum trap where they protect resources against harvesting and defend the status quo rather than listen to the proposed change effort and judge it on its merits. The zero-sum trap is very common at the military service level where there are many "good ideas" floating

around but the finite amount of resources are spoken for--hence, to pursue a new “good idea” means taking away resources from someone else. The solution is to have a solid concept that convinces leaders that the change effort is feasible, suitable, and acceptable such that the tradeoffs with other change efforts are worth allowing.

Military officers are accustomed to concepts, whether it is the concept of operations for a battle and a concept for large-scale organizational transformation such as the Army Operating Concept.¹¹⁷ The Primer will adapt the structure of the U.S. military’s *commander’s intent* as it contains the main elements of a concept. The commander’s intent is defined as follows:

*A clear and concise expression of the **purpose of the operation and the desired military end state** that supports mission command, **provides focus** to the staff, and **helps subordinate and supporting commanders act** to achieve the commander’s desired results **without further orders**, even when the operation does not unfold as planned.¹¹⁸*

For organizational change efforts, the above translates to the purpose of the change, the key tasks that the organization must accomplish, and how the change effort will be governed until termination when the desired future state is achieved. The purpose should express both the urgency of avoiding the undesired future state and the importance of pursuing the desired future state. The key tasks should list broad approaches to adjusting each of the preparedness variable, such as “what must the organization do to increase its capacity? Establish overmatch? Improve interoperability?” and so on. The governance structure can include estimates or expectations of time frame to complete the change, methods of oversight and reporting, and communication and synchronization tasks.

Like the vision of the ends, the concept should not include negations but may include actions to avoid and key risk factors that could cause early termination of the effort. Once all the

¹¹⁷ U.S. Department of the Army, *The Operations Process*, Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 5-0 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, May 2012).

¹¹⁸ U.S. Joint Staff, *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 3-0 (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Staff, January 2017).

elements are established, the concept should be described as a story telling of the journey from the current state to the desired state. Obstacles and barriers should be presented as challenges that the organization can and must overcome.

HOW DOES ONE COMMUNICATE THE VISION AND CONCEPT?

Example: Baldoni's (2003) four "I's" of communicating change

There are three products needed to take the mental image of the desired future state and present it to others. The first is the *vision*, defined for present purposes as the story of how the organization functions when the desired future state is achieved. The second is the *vision statement*, a symbol of the vision that embodies the vision in few words and/or symbols. To those who understand the organization and the vision, sharing the vision statement should be sufficient for passing on the vision's meaning. But most members and stakeholders will expect that as leaders present vision statements, that the visions are presented and explained with them.

If possible, leaders should use the vision as the beginning of a conversation with members. Communication scholar John Baldoni wrote that leadership messages should accomplish four things—*inform, involve, ignite, and invite*.¹¹⁹ At one level, the purposes of vision and concept is to convey the current state, undesired future state, and desired future state. But it should also be to involve the members of the organization in the discussion to address shortcomings, misperceptions, gaps, redundancies, and other issues. The vision should then ignite energy and action and encourage members to take part.

Leaders should express both the vision and concept in *practical* and *actionable* terms. Visions that are too esoteric, abstract, or impractical cannot be communicated effectively across a wide array of audiences. The vision must both explain

¹¹⁹ John Baldoni, *Great Communication Secrets of Great Leaders* (New York: MacGraw-Hill, 2003), 32-34.

and justify the desired state, are make clear that the concept will lead to a suitable, feasible, and acceptable change plan.

The third product is the *concept*, which is the vision of the ways. The concept presents in story form the path that the change effort will take—how will the organization move from the current state to the desired state? What are the expectations of disruptions to current capabilities necessary to permit new or improved capabilities to form and grow? What roles do members and stakeholders have in making change happen? Military leaders can use the *concept of the operation* portion of an operation order as a metaphor: (1) commander’s intent that expresses how leaders see the change effort occurring, (2) key tasks for the organization to accomplish, and (3) key phases or decision points expressing what gets accomplished in the short, medium, and long-term.

The following are some rules of thumb regarding concept development and communication based on how leaders construct the vision. Leaders should consider which of Baldoni’s purposes is dominant in expressing the vision. Does the leader perceive the need to devote extensive energy conveying information about the change, or is it mostly about garnering support and acceptance? These rules of thumb will also contribute to planning and implementation of the effort in the next chapter.

- If the purpose of informing is dominant, that may mean that the situation and change effort are complex and difficult to convey, and the change effort may rely on subject matter expertise for success. The concept will likely involve clear divisions of labor based on expertise to keep the effort structured simply. The concept will therefore likely use “lines of effort” or other structures to emphasize compartmented, independent action with integrative mechanisms.
- If the purposes of involving are dominant, that may be because of controversy or uncertainty that inhibits clarity of the vision, or may result from tensions within the organization. There may also be concern about unity of effort. Leaders should consider emphasizing ways and means of participation on the front end—separating aspects of the vision that are unassailable to the leader

from those subject to negotiation. The concept may also involve experimentation at local levels to encourage emergence of good ideas.

- If the purpose of igniting is dominant, does that signal significant resistance to the change effort? Or, is it about cynicism toward change in general due to failures from before? Leaders can take the results of diagnosing the organization's climate and culture and address key factors in the concept. If the problem is complacency, then the vision should jolt the members out of their comfort zone while the concept lays out the path aside (as attractively as possible). The concept may have to be more detailed in the short-term to encourage members to take the first steps. If the problem is cynicism, leaders should consider what failed in the past and present the concept as a contrast. How will this change effort differ from what's been tried before?
- If the purpose of inviting dominates, this could be because of a trust issue with the leadership, so members expect that the leader must set the example. The concept, therefore, puts the leader front and center and expresses the way ahead normatively – do as I say and as I do. The concept would likely include a single proponent directing action rather than dividing and conquering through lines of effort. The proponent must answer directly to the leader and act on behalf of the leader. The concept must therefore explain how the leader will sustain legitimacy of the change effort personally, to include after successions of leaders.

Naturally, the above are not mutually exclusive. Leaders can draw ideas from all four of Baldoni's purposes depending on the nature of the change required and the context.

CHAPTER 7. PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING CHANGE

With the vision and concept established, leaders turn their attention to planning that assigns means against the ends and ways. Ideally, the organization assembles a planning team to handle the requisite details of putting the concept into action. However, leaders should still make the important decisions about structuring the change effort. This chapters covers three major considerations requiring leader guidance—launching the change effort, synchronizing progress, and measuring effects. Everything in this chapter must be addressed and determined to the maximum extent possible *before* the change effort is launched. While the plan can change during implementation, deferring portions of the planning effort to post-launch is risky. Leaders should assume that the situation will expose gaps in the plan and it will be difficult for the organization to adapt.

This chapter presents five key elements or building blocks to a deliberate change plan--phases, divisions of labor, types of activities, coordinating mechanisms, and measures of progress. The resulting plan should align well with the concept discussed in the previous chapter.

WHAT ARE THE PHASES OF PLANNED CHANGE?

Example: Burke's (2002) three phases of change

As the change effort moves from idea to implementation, it may require increased levels of detail and planning to earn support. But in turn, there may be delays and calls for “more studies,” “more time,” “the right conditions,” or other need. If the leaders and change agents are not careful, questions will surface about where the change effort stands. *Are we doing something, or just gathering more data and ideas?* Even when vision and concept are communicated robustly, confusion will creep in because members and stakeholders both have a lot of other things on their plates. Plus, anything that sounds like a delay could embolden opponents to the change.

So a simple framework to break the effort into well-defined, although overlapping, phases can help situate the effort in the organizational context. W. Warner Burke (2002) identifies three phases of planned change – *pre-launch*, *launch*, and *post-launch*.¹²⁰ These phases represent different degrees of implementation and not clear stop-start points. Launch, for example, represents when implementation has gone public, with expectations that members and stakeholders alike acknowledge and enact the plan as appropriate. The below discuss each phases in detail.

Pre-Launch – Moving from Idea to Implementation

According to Burke, the *pre-launch* phase is when proponents formulate the change effort and socialize it with key stakeholders. In other words, leaders have identified a problem and demonstrate intent to solve it. Diagnosis and envisioning are part of the pre-launch, because at any given time the leader retains the ability to stop the effort without much enduring impact on the organization. Military organizations may designate pre-launch activities and products as “pre-decisional” or otherwise non-binding in an effort to allow the ideas to develop into an actionable plan.

Pre-launch is also when the vision is released to key leaders and members of the organization and stakeholders, who in turn share the leader’s idea.¹²¹ In military organizations, these key members will often include the command group, directors, and special staff. They may also include subject matter experts and advisors.

Planning, for the purposes of developing the idea into a suitable, feasible, and acceptable plan is also a pre-launch activity. Along with developing an architecture to direct and coordinate organizational activities, planning also provides a valuable feedback mechanism to the leaders and change agents. *Did the staff receive and understand the vision and concept? What in the vision can and cannot be accomplished? Does that necessitate other deliberate change efforts?* The goal is getting the effort ready for launch,

¹²⁰ W. Warner Burke, *Organization Change: Theory and Practice* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002), 273-295.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 279-280.

which is the decision point where the leader certifies the change effort as having begun.

Launch – Toward Full Implementation

Burke's *launch* phase is about putting the change effort into action. Of note, this could be different from the public announcement starting implementation of a change effort. Launch may occur in a private meeting among the leader and inner circle of trusted advisors. The key is that when the change effort launches, there is no going back. The organization immediately and officially is placing energy into the effort and stopping it takes a second change effort.¹²²

Burke describes the launch phase as when the message is spread, the planning of the initial events take place, and the organization is fully engaged on the pending change effort.¹²³ Doing so requires organizations to deliberately decide to engage the organization and grant authority to the proponent to build the strategy, develop the plans, and acquire the resources in detail. *Launch*. Therefore, transforms the question from *if* a change effort will occur, to *when* the change effort occurs.

Launch is also not confined to a single event but to a sequence of activities designed to bring attention to the change effort. It is designed to change the context of the organization, such that members and others become aware of and accept that the change effort is the right thing to do.¹²⁴ Launch can therefore take weeks or months, as the organization strives to inform and demonstrate the change effort through initial and follow-on activities, producing what Kotter describes as "short-term wins."¹²⁵

Post-Launch – Full Implementation

If the *launch* is done well, *post-launch* should be a non-event. For the construction of the new building, *post-launch* begins with the proverbial first shovel striking the ground, as proponents have already completed the hard work of preparing everyone for

¹²² Saku Mantere, Henri A. Schildt, and John A. A. Sillence, "Reversal of Strategic Change," *Academy of Management Journal* 55, no. 1 (2012): 172-196.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 280.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Kotter, 117-130.

the construction of the building. All that's left is the construction (or implementation).

It is rarely that simple, of course, as the proponent must stay heavily engaged in monitoring progress and proposing adjustments to the change effort as required. Both Burke and Kotter agree, as do we, that communicating the change vision must never cease. There is a risk of waning interest and organizational energy levels once *post-launch* begins, or when the next major milestone is achieved, such as Initial Operating Capability.¹²⁶ The effort is no longer exciting or new. Senior leaders especially must be careful not to “move on” prematurely, leaving the proponent to navigate the messy business of implementation entirely on his/her own. However, senior leaders are extremely busy and have numerous, competing, urgent priorities – thus the proponent plays a key role in keeping both the appropriate and the acceptable levels of senior leader attention on *post-launch* change efforts.

In post-launch, an old military adage comes to the fore – *no plan survives first contact with the enemy*. Often, despite the best efforts to develop comprehensive strategies and plans, the actual implementation of the change effort brings unforeseen barriers to surface. It is similar to that first shovel hitting a pipe or opening a sinkhole that was not indicated on any utility plan, map, or in anyone's memory. Key for proponents is to swiftly identify the new barriers, determine their impact on the strategies and plans, and make adjustments. Again, if the organization properly launched its change effort, these early challenges should not negate the change vision; rather, adjustments to the implementation strategies or plans should be sufficient.

HOW DOES ONE ORGANIZE THE EFFORT?

Example: Van de Ven and Poole's (1995) four motors of change

One of the traps that leaders can fall into is the notion that interventions only come from the “top,” and that all change must

¹²⁶ Initial Operating Capability (IOC) is often used to describe when a new or transformed organization has achieved a minimally acceptable level of capacity to assume the organization's mission. We wish to stress that deciding what IOC means would be a *pre-launch* or *launch* decision, but achieving IOC is very clearly *post-launch*.

be planned as monolithic actions. This is consistent with how change management is often presented in popular business literature—the change effort must become the organization’s focus and resistance is to be suppressed or overcome. Naturally, sometimes this is the case in military organizations where weapons systems programs and associated training and fielding should be centrally controlled and managed due to its breadth and complexity. This perspective leads to a common architecture of change efforts (also sometimes called “strategic plans”).¹²⁷

In a 1995 review analyzing numerous theories of change, scholars Van de Ven and Poole noted Lewin’s concept was but one of many, and different forms of purposeful change could occur in an organization simultaneously. Rather than approaches, they referred to these forms as *motors* that differed according to the scope and nature of change processes employed.¹²⁸ Each motor represents a general architecture for a change effort, and as motors can be combined, so too can the architectures of change efforts in military organizations.

Life Cycle Motor – Traditional Engineered Approach

Life-cycle motor is the simplest of the four motors. It has clearly defined start and endpoints, and the organization (or a clearly definable and independent part, such as an experimental unit) pursues the goals *in toto*. Van de Ven and Poole used a farming metaphor, whereby the organization sets out the vision and detailed plan at the start and implements it, the changes occur across the organization, and then the benefits are “harvested” as permanent changes in culture, structure, and/or processes.¹²⁹ Of note, this motor’s end point may not be a true end. Organizations

¹²⁷ Experience of author. This use of the term ‘strategic plan’ is more of a communication campaign than change effort, as the vision is more aspirational and its actual achievement is less important than striving toward it. Or, the organization knows it lacks the resources to fully embrace a deliberate change effort, so the strategic plan provides a ready slate of activity should the organization realize favorable conditions for change.

¹²⁸ Andrew H. Van de Ven and Marshall S. Poole, “Explaining Development and Change in Organizations,” *Academy of Management Review* 20, no. 3 (July 1995): 510-540.

¹²⁹ For example, the U.S. Army designated the 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division at Fort Bliss as the Army Evaluation Task Force to test and evaluate Army modernization technologies as an experimental force. See U.S. Army Capabilities Integration Center, “Brigade Modernization Command,” February 15, 2011, *U.S. Army Home Page* at “STAND-TO!,” https://www.army.mil/article/51926/brigade_modernization_command (retrieved January 24, 2017).

may only partially achieve their goals, or the environment demands changes of direction; hence the loop back to the start.

In military organizations, this is often the preferred motor. The leader articulates the impetus for change and desired future state, promulgates a unifying vision, and drives change via a pre-planned phased approach with clean divisions of labor and formal (often exhaustive) coordinating mechanisms. A general diagram of this approach is shown in Figure 11.

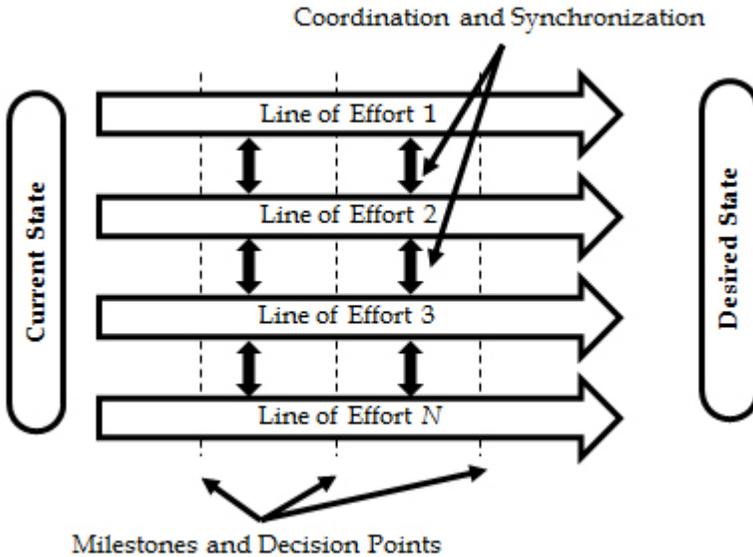


Figure 11. Traditional engineered approach (life-cycle motor)¹³⁰

Named change efforts, such as the Army Transformation or procurement of any major weapons system, most often exercise this motor of change as it facilitates the programming and budgetary process in the U.S.¹³¹ Life-cycle changes can also engender the necessary structures and processes to track and

¹³⁰ Original graphic by author.

¹³¹ This is because U.S. military organizations (whether joint or service) do not have the disposable assets to pursue the change effort and must therefore petition Congress for resources. It does this by preparing a thorough program with goals and milestones expressed through annual budgets, such that programmers can adjust should Congress allocate the resources differently.

report progress. For weapon systems, a minted “program of record” falls under a project office with assigned manning to oversee development, acquisition, fielding, and sustainment. Similarly, DOD and its services centrally manage other change efforts (like Army Transformation) under a designated proponent.

Teleological Motor – Compliance Approach

The teleological motor can be described as either top-down strategic direction or bottom-up innovation driving change toward a single desired goal. The leader may set the desired future state but there may not be a practical way of dividing the labor. Therefore, a formal plan such as the engineered approach above is not suitable. Instead, the organization uses the desired future state as a beacon, and takes independent, semi-autonomous action to head in the trajectory set. There may be fits and starts and deviations from the shortest path, but recognition of the desired future state is sufficient to guide the organization.

The teleological motor functions on a cycle of negative feedback, in which the organization takes action ostensibly to pursue the goal and then adjusts based on the remaining delta to the goal, which Van de Ven and Poole called *dissatisfaction*. The reassessment need not be formal, and in fact may occur in continuous fashion. However, the unclear or uncertain path could mean that the organization may spin its wheels—its change efforts continuously falling short, possibly even making things worse, while the goal remains elusive. This is in contrast with the evolutionary motor where the organization allows or fosters multiple innovative efforts in hopes that diversity will produce a best practice. See Figure 12.

When would leaders leverage such a motor? When the change effort is aimed at compliance of something across units or members. One can view the current state as representing a state of 0% compliance with the change, and the desired future state as 100%. While such efforts may involve mandatory training or education which has the appearance of using the life-cycle motor, they may not necessarily change the underlying behaviors and attitudes that leaders want eradicated. Subsequent instances of

these behaviors resurfacing provide evidence of the goal not being achieved, spurring renewed action.¹³²

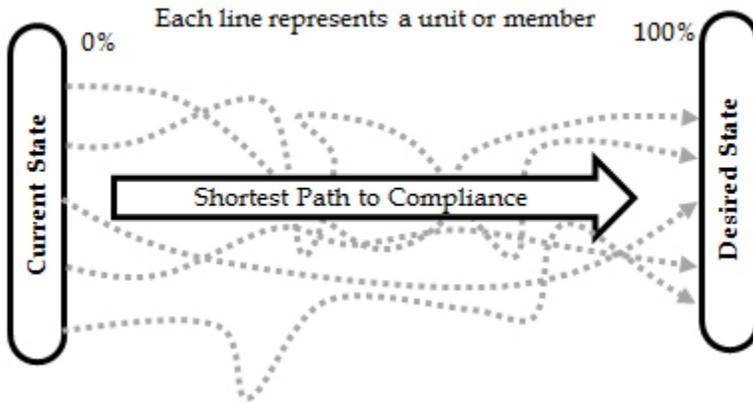


Figure 12. Compliance approach (teleological motor)¹³³

Evolutionary Motor - Experimental Approach

When the *evolutionary* motor is exercised, organizations pursue a predetermined set of goals in multiple ways, harnessing so-called best practices and abandoning those that do not work as well. Van de Ven and Poole used a Darwinian analogy to explain this motor, such that disparate units or members try new ideas or conduct formal experiments. Some are adopted, but notionally in a competitive environment only a few survive. The surviving ideas make adjustments to any environment changes. Meanwhile, new competing ideas enter the fray. Key for this motor is understanding that each of the prescribed change initiatives only affect a portion of the organization. See Figure 13.

¹³² The teleological motor has been exercised in the military's efforts to eradicate sexual harassment and assault, for example. Establishment of new organizational structures aside, the effort has centered on changing lingering gender attitudes by reinforcing professional values and providing better support for victims. However, the life cycle motor is insufficient as progress (as measured in reductions of instances of these crimes) cannot be phased. In other words, goals of X% reduction each Y months or changes in attitudes are intractable. For a discussion from a policy perspective, see Margaret S. Stockdale, et al., "Coming to Terms with Zero Tolerance Sexual Harassment Policies," *Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice* 4, no. 1 (2004): 65-78.

¹³³ Original graphic by author.

Within the defense enterprise, the evolutionary motor operates slightly differently; “losers” in the selection process do not necessarily disappear, but are more likely absorbed or co-opted. An example of this lies in the support functions, such as communications and logistics, which often emerge as service-specific solutions to warfighting requirements (and sometimes break down further to separate conventional and special forces solutions). These semi-independent initiatives exercise their own acquisitions and procedures. However, over time “best practices” typically emerge from one or a few initiatives, spread throughout the joint force and become the new norm. Another example is when DOD imposes a standard solution (such as a joint agency taking over broad responsibility for the function).

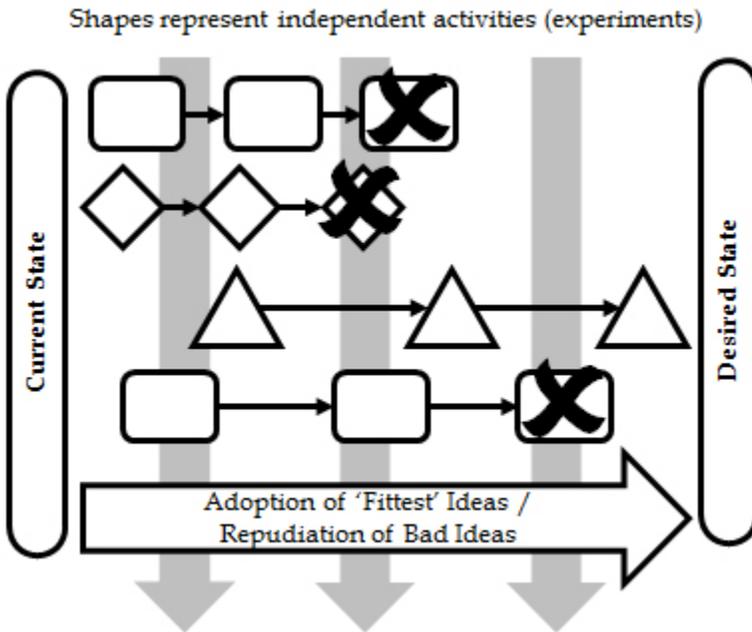


Figure 13. Experimental approach (evolutionary model)¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Original graphic by author.

Dialectic Motor – Synthetic Approach

The *dialectic* motor operates in the opposite fashion from the life-cycle motor – multiple-entities in a constructive mode. Internal controversy fuels the dialectic motor, whereby two (or more) views of how to accomplish things are in continuous conflict, creating conditions by which the organization evolves through the synthesis of the conflict. Synthesis could be a negotiated compromise or one side winning, but in either case it is only temporary if the controversy remains unsolved.

Figure 14 shows what the architecture of this approach looks like. Note that the most advanced stage does not appear to reach the desired state. A source of such dialectics is paradox, of which the U.S. military has plenty because of its wide-ranging mission yet constrained resources. For example, the question of whether to prioritize either conventional or unconventional (e.g., counterinsurgency) forces manifests itself in competition for resources and training between the traditional combat arms and Special Forces.¹³⁵ The paradox is exacerbated by unknowns in the environment, such as the dynamic threat posture, which makes it difficult for leaders to pin down a desired synthesis.¹³⁶ Consequently, while leaders may have a desired synthesis in mind, there is limited agreement and the underlying paradox remains unresolved.

As a constructive motor, this is a difficult form of change around which to plan. In times when the conflict is muted, meaning each side can pursue its own goals independently, then an organization essentially has multiple life-cycle change efforts running simultaneously among separate communities. It is when conflict springs due to environmental factors (e.g., global crises, state of overseas operations) and stakeholder concerns (e.g., fate of on-going programs and budget constraints) that this motor activates and the sides square off. While leaders may attempt to impose a top-down compromise or choose sides, this is more

¹³⁵ See Matthew Cancian, “FM 3-24-2.0? Why US Counterinsurgency Doctrine Needs an Update,” *Modern War Institute*, February 21, 2017, <https://mwi.usma.edu/fm-3-24-2-0-us-counterinsurgency-doctrine-needs-update/> (retrieved January 24, 2018).

¹³⁶ Andrew Hill and Dale Watson, *Strategic Leadership Primer*, 4th ed., ed. Thomas P. Galvin (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College press, in press), Chapter 2.

likely to only tilt the balance in the short term and not permanently resolve the controversy. It is very difficult to predict the outcome of synthesis in advance.

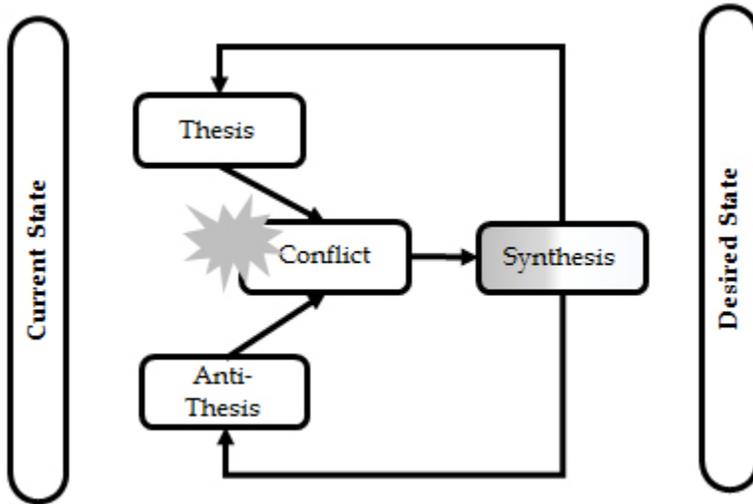


Figure 14. Synthetic approach (dialectic motor)¹³⁷

Combining Motors

It is important to acknowledge that one or more of Van de Ven and Poole's motors can combine to drive change.¹³⁸ One can imagine how the teleological and evolutionary motors can work together when considering efforts to resolve a complex problem requiring localized solutions, with the best practices emerging and consolidating efforts toward an emergent enterprise-level effort. Or, the dialectic and life-cycle motors working simultaneously as competing, possibly mutually exclusive, visions (e.g., convention vs. COIN (counter-insurgency)) spawn independent but comprehensive and discrete life-cycle based change efforts, which might see limited overlap. As a force, the competing vision still synthesizes toward satisfaction of the national security strategy or budget proposal. The Department of

¹³⁷ Graphic by author adapted from Van de Ven & Poole, "Explaining Development," 520.

¹³⁸ Van de Ven and Poole, "Explaining Development," Section III, 526-532.

Defense and the services exercise all four motors in the aggregate across the hundreds of on-going change efforts.

WHAT TYPES OF ACTIVITIES CAN BE EMPLOYED?

The above architectures establish the divisions of responsibilities among leaders, members, and those vested with coordinating responsibilities. But, it does not specify what kinds of activities that anyone would perform. One can imagine the same architecture being employed under different leaders – one being an authoritarian who exercises very strong control, and one who prefers to have the effort be more participative. These can represent strategies for choosing what types of activities the leader prefers for the change effort.

Example: Chin & Benne's (1989) strategies of change

These strategies are the methods leaders use to engage with followers to make change happen. As with Van de Ven and Poole, Chin and Benne (1989) conducted a historical analysis of change strategies studied during the previous century and narrowed them down to three classes: *rational-empirical*, *normative-reeducative*, and *power-coercive*.¹³⁹ Notably, the authors did not exercise value judgments as to which is better, but observed any change effort can exercise any strategy beneficially or harmfully.

Rational-empirical strategies - a scientific approach

According to Chin and Benne, the rational-empirical strategy is most common in America and Western Europe. They rooted this strategy from the Enlightenment and Classic Liberalism, which assumes people are rational actors who will tend to follow rational self-interests. It views change as purposeful to achieve “a situation that is desirable, effective, and in line with the self-interest of the person [or collective].”¹⁴⁰

While rational-empirical labels a single category, the two terms represent different manifestations, with *rational* referring to

¹³⁹ Robert Chin and Kenneth D. Benne, “General Strategies for Effecting Changes in Human Systems,” in W. G. Bennis, Kenneth D. Benne, and Robert Chin (Eds.), *The Planning of Change*, 4th ed. (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt, 1985), 22-45.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

qualifiable logics, and *empirical* to the quantifiable. In short, these represent changes that leaders drive through data based on assumptions of what constitutes clear evidence of achievement or progress toward a desired state. One of the earliest theories in this category was “Taylorism” or scientific management, an effort to use incentives to change assembly line behaviors (measured quantitatively in terms of individual capability and capacity) and improve productivity.¹⁴¹ Although this particular strategy is often reviled due to its impersonal consideration of workers, remnants of Taylorism remain today in efforts to increase throughput in making products or providing services. Another set of rational-empirical strategies followed *psychometrics* and *sociometrics*, past efforts to measure aptitudes and attitudes of individuals as means of managing personnel. As tools of organizational change, these strategies called for replacing organizational members with those deemed better fit for a particular job description, or moving personnel around the organization to more productive locations based on their specific talents. However, these approaches have been criticized as prioritizing personality over job performance.¹⁴²

One strategy in this category still widely used is *operations research and systems analysis*, or ORSA. The ORSA provides detailed mathematical evidence to analyze the environment and identify both the need for change (sense of urgency) and the decision support tools to enable planning and implementation of change efforts. DoD widely employs ORSA tools (e.g., the DOD’s Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution system, service specific force management analysis processes, combatant command capability requirement models).¹⁴³

Although data-driven change efforts can be well-informed, and progress readily measurable, such strategies are not without detractors. In particular, change efforts driven by “the numbers”

¹⁴¹ See Marvin R. Weisbord, *Productive Workplaces Revisited: Dignity, Meaning, and Community in the 21st Century*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004) for a detailed description of Taylorism and its impact on private enterprise throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries.

¹⁴² “Why Workplaces Must Resist the Cult of Personality Testing,” *The Conversation*, February 27, 2012, <http://theconversation.com/why-workplaces-must-resist-the-cult-of-personality-testing-5540> (accessed 24 January 2018).

¹⁴³ For more information, see Thomas P. Galvin (Ed.), *Defense Management: Primer for Senior Leaders*, 1st ed. (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, in press).

can seem inflexible and impersonal. They rely on accurate and valid data entry and analysis, meaning the numbers sufficiently and correctly represent the statuses of the organization, change efforts, and the overall environment such that the achievement of the “right numbers” equates to achievement of the change goals or vision. This requires accurate data, and valid models that wholly reflect the subject of the model, lest the change effort produce unintended results or unwanted second-order effects.

Normative-reeducative strategies – change as therapy or training

Normative-reeducative approaches assume individuals are still rational and intelligent, but driving change is better done by influencing sociocultural norms and value systems. In effect, change involves altering one’s personal norms--knowledge and habits--along with attitudes, skills, and relationships. Strategies often involve the use of internal or external consultants who encourage and foster change efforts both individually and organizationally.¹⁴⁴ Normative (therapeutic) and reeducative (training) constitute two variations based on how consultants are used--toward instituting new or adapted norms through self-reflection and corrective action or instilling change through training, education, and coaching.¹⁴⁵

Normative, or therapeutic, strategies assume that change efforts must address a matter of human relationships or morale within the organization. Consultants are thus oriented on diagnosing the root causes of a problem and encouraging members to adopt a new outlook. *T-Groups* were one such strategy, where groups of organizational members sought to identify and address problems through facilitated dialogue.¹⁴⁶ A more modern and current variety is *action research*, which adds reflection and communities of practice to systematize research

¹⁴⁴ Chin & Benne, 31.

¹⁴⁵ Kenneth Benne himself saw the lines between the two as very “blurry.” Kenneth D. Benne, “The Processes of Re-Education: An Assessment of Kurt Lewin’s Views,” *Group & Organization Studies* 1, no. 1 (March 1976): 26-42.

¹⁴⁶ For a history of T-Groups beginning with their inception by Kurt Lewin, see Scott Highhouse, “A History of the T-Group and Its Early Applications in Management Development,” *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice* 6, no. 4 (2002): 277-290.

and solution development as social activities.¹⁴⁷ One could ascribe the military's integration of homosexuals as having used a normative strategy, whereby the force adopted a new normal after recognizing shifting values in society and among service members themselves.

Re-educative, or training, strategies differ in that they address problems with completing tasks or other more technical aspects of the organization's functioning. Whereas therapy (normative) may address matters of culture, re-education focuses more on process -- how to do things better. Improvement is a matter of training within the organization to ensure the appropriate individuals understand the solutions (new processes). Many changes involving human resource management, such as performance appraisals (e.g., the Army's Officer Efficiency Reporting System), invoke this type of strategy in which organizations undertake a combination of training and counseling to guide members to new ways of doing business.

Although these strategies address the impersonal shortcomings of the rational-empirical strategies, they can also create havoc if used improperly. They require willing organizations that desire the intended results. A normative strategy will be unsuccessful if the organization rejects the declared new normal, while re-educative strategies may face resistance if the new way of doing things seems more expensive or unnecessarily difficult compared to the present process.

Power-coercive strategies - using autocratic or formal ways

Power-coercive strategies seek to impose change upon an unwilling or very compliant organization. Here, the best path to change may be the shortest, whereby an assumed legitimate authority declares the change to occur, and the organization makes it happen. Certainly this follows the traditional concept of

¹⁴⁷ Kurt Lewin was also a founder of action research. For more, see Clem Adelman, "Kurt Lewin and the Origins of Action Research," *Educational Action Research* 1, no. 1 (1993): 7-24. Also, *action learning* is similar to action research in methodology, except the purpose is more explicitly organizational learning whereas action research is focused on research outcomes in theory and practice. See Michael Marquardt, *Optimizing the Power of Action Learning: Real-Time Strategies for Developing Leaders, Building Teams, and Transforming Organizations*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Brealey, 2011).

military command--what the commander (or leader) says, goes. However, command authority is not the only form this takes. Legislation, policy changes, and doctrine are also coercive, directing that the organization adopt behaviors or attitudes. In all cases, compliance is a necessary ingredient for success. If the authorities' directions go unheeded, change fails to occur.

However, power-coercive strategies can also occur bottom-up, as the rank and file of an organization can mass in protest against an unjust policy or regulation, or in support of a desired change.¹⁴⁸ While less common in military organizations, there have been plenty of instances where the voices of unjustly treated service members have brought about significant changes in the military structure and culture, such as in the aftermath of highly-publicized reports of sexual harassment.

Conflict or confrontation is the ultimate engine of these strategies, whether it is war (e.g., the need to develop and field the MRAP (Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected)), non-violent actions (protests or negotiations), judicial decisions, or altering power structure (e.g., reliefs of command). This conflict can be beneficial, driving toward a more desirable state of the organization, or detrimental, placing the organization's survival in a state of risk. These strategies also depend on the organization's views of its leaders. Leaders who use power-coercive strategies when the organization would prefer more participative varieties (i.e., normative) risk alienating the members and undermining the intended change.

On the other hand, power-coercive strategies to change are strongly beneficial in times when organizations face crises of their own doing or are facing an external mandate, even when the change goals are widely accepted. Implementation of the 1986 *Department of Defense Reorganization Act* ("Goldwater-Nichols") is a good example. The dominant approach was continued emphasis by senior military and civilian leaders on the benefits of operating as a joint force. It was not so much an autocratic use of power as it was persuasive, but it was coercive nonetheless

¹⁴⁸ Chin & Benne, 40, specifically cited Gandhi's civil disobedience and strategy of nonviolence as an example.

because the Law had to followed both in letter and in spirit. Provisions of joint professional military education, publication of joint doctrines, and norming of joint assignments became both part of one's military career, but the stakeholders also demanded a culture change toward jointness. Achieving this required continued leader reinforcement over several years.

HOW DOES ONE SYNCHRONIZE ACTIVITIES TOWARD THE VISION?

Example: Gersick's pacing of change

Synchronizing the lines of effort (LOEs) can occur in multiple ways. In a seminal article on organizational change, Gersick (1994) described two ways change efforts tend to progress – *time-driven* and *event-driven* – noting change efforts often exhibit both.¹⁴⁹ One can argue most change efforts in the U.S. military exhibit time-driven behaviors, where the calendar dictates the creation or presence of key milestones. The annual budget process (Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution), cyclic reports and testimony to Congress (from annual to quarterly), and internal progress reporting tend to have fixed timeframes. In the Defense Acquisition System, Milestone decisions are similarly time-driven, as completion of one Milestone sets a “deadline” for the next, and the ability to meet that deadline (regardless of its feasibility or accuracy) drive perceptions as to whether the effort is on schedule. In other words, an effort initially assigned a three year deadline, even though it would logically take four years to complete, is “behind schedule” even though it may be proceeding as logically expected.

Time-driven change suits military culture well because it assumes a proactive orientation--by programming the effort out over time, the organization is more likely to achieve long-term goals. It also allows senior leaders to better manage their calendars, scheduling important decisions or milestones well in advance; this dynamic spurs pursuing and sustaining *momentum* in change efforts.

¹⁴⁹ Connie J. G. Gersick, “Pacing Strategic Change: The Case of a New Venture,” *Academy of Management Journal* 37, no. 1 (February 1994): 9-45.

Event-driven change tends to be more reactive, as the change effort progresses based primarily on events and requires more certainty about what success looks like. Such change efforts must often resurrect momentum, despite remaining stagnant for significant periods at a time. Gersick analogized event-driven change as a thermostat, rather than the alarm clock of time-driven change. That is, when an event occurs that kindles the needed sense of urgency, the leader should ramp up the effort. Determining when an effort should be event-driven can be tricky. Altering a common, popular, or well-ingrained business practice may require a specific triggering event for the organization to receive it favorably. On the other hand, if no such event occurs over an extended period, and the leader still views the change as needed, he/she may have to introduce time-driven strategies to facilitate the change.

If time-driven, then stakeholders will expect “in-progress reviews” at various time intervals (either fixed, such as “quarterly” or “monthly,” or variable based on leadership availability); in anticipation of these milestones, LOE proponents will establish intermediate goals to meet prior to the in-progress review, using these goals as key indicators of overall progress toward the desired end state. If event-driven, like those based on Congressional hearings or a specific precursor condition in one of the LOEs, in-progress reviews may be less frequent or relegated to an as-needed basis. In either case, successful synchronization requires developing a clear and well-understood roadmap annotating each LOE’s role in achieving the desired state.

HOW DOES ONE MEASURE PROGRESS AND KEEP THE EFFORT ON TARGET?

The operative word in this question is *measure*. The word connotes quantification, as though there were a ruler or meter capable of precisely explaining how far along the change effort is. However, much of the desired future state is complex and dynamic in practice, with progress being understood subjectively. Political considerations also come into play as there will be actors in the environment with a vested interest in painting change efforts as failures no matter what actually occurs.

During pre-launch and launch, leaders should be concerned mostly with measures of performance. Leaders will want to know: (1) how well is the vision, concept, and plan conveyed to the intended audiences, and (2) did audiences receive and understand them as intended? The following are specific questions to gauge the success of the launch effort.

1. What was the desired reaction of members and stakeholders to the launch of the change effort, and to what degrees were those desires realized?
2. What was the expected reaction of opponents of the change effort, and to what degrees were those expectations realized? To what extent are they weakened or emboldened?
3. To what extent is the vision, concept, and plan being shared as is by the audiences? Therefore, to what extent are they being changed or manipulated, or what misperceptions or misrepresentations are being introduced?
4. To what extent are members showing changes in their commitment to the organization? Commitment is a measure of enjoying being part of the organization, feeling obligated to it, and feeling free to depart.
5. To what extent are organizational efforts to correct errors and misperceptions of the message having an effect?

Post-launch sees the emphasis shifting to measures of effectiveness, which should indicate general progress toward the vision (or at least the end state as defined in the concept). Planning post-launch implementation requires early consideration for several barriers. The first barrier regards the energy required to ensure the appropriate and necessary collection of data to gauge progress. Especially if the change involves participative methods or distributed efforts, collecting data may be highly involved and analysis difficult. As with *post-launch*, organizations may divert energies to more pressing short-term concerns, in addition to facing the risk of implementers cutting corners to satisfy the

proponent's demand for numbers in light of an upcoming milestone, decision brief, or other event. Similarly, the proponent may divert his/her own energies--possibly causing the change effort to drop in priority. Proponents must determine if the available data is sufficient to render a suitable assessment of progress to satisfy decision makers as they decide to continue the change effort as planned or adjust it in some way.

The second barrier regards the turnover of leaders involved, both at senior and proponent levels. Although the U.S. military stresses the importance of continuity as leaders transition, this does not always translate into the unabated continuance of change efforts initiated by a predecessor. Also, external stakeholders do not necessarily abide by the desire for continuity. For example, programs requiring Congressional funding may occasionally find themselves unfunded or underfunded simply based on changes wrought from the election cycle. While not all such turnovers can be predicted in advance, many can. It is incumbent on proponents to proactively communicate change efforts to new leaders and stakeholders.

Change efforts must strike the balance between what the organization can actually do, and the levels of energy required to sustain the change effort and maintain the appropriate levels of leader attention. Proponents should therefore not view the governance plan as permanent and immutable, as the situation may have changed such that timing or conditions driving decision points and milestones must also change. At the same time, proponents must also guard against organizational intransigence or procrastination whereby delaying the change effort constitutes a slippery slope to its premature demise. Thus, proponents should repeatedly review the governance plan during the change effort's life cycle to ensure leadership remains focused on the change vision and attentive to what the effort requires of them to attain completion and eventual realization of that vision.

In addition to raw indicators of change (such as percentages of activities completed), measures of effectiveness for the change effort can be developed from any of the following questions.

Leaders should align any resulting measures with the competitive advantage that the change effort is purported to enhance.

1. To what extent do organizational members and stakeholders continue to maintain awareness of the change effort?
2. To what extent are organizational members and stakeholders willing to contribute to the change effort (perhaps despite many other ongoing change efforts)?
3. To what extent is there growing active resistance to the change effort? Are these indicators of new environmental factors, change fatigue, or other considerations not necessarily planned for?
4. To what extent are members and stakeholders satisfied with progress?
5. To what extent are success stories captured and leveraged? Are people aware of important victories and celebrating them, or are they treated as ho-hum and not interesting.
6. To what extent are changes in organizational structure, culture, processes and systems, etc. being embedded in the organization as “new normals”?
7. To what extent is the change effort influenced by:
 - a. Changes in member personnel, especially leaders?
 - b. Changes in stakeholders, particularly those with the greatest decision making authority over the organization?
 - c. Other on-going change efforts in the organization?

Note that many of these questions regard the attitudes of the personnel in the organization far more than the physical matters of the change. What is important to remember is that changes in structure are straightforward and easy to measure but do not convey effectiveness. If members do not undergo a commensurate transition, then they will likely sustain old habits despite the changes in structure around them. That will result in an ineffective change effort that wastes organizational energy.

CHAPTER 8. RESISTANCE AND AMBIVALENCE

Naturally, when one's goal is to lead change, the *status quo* constitutes an adversary. In Kotter's view, the *status quo* perseveres in one of two ways – through the deliberate acts of those seeking to preserve it, or organizational barriers preventing individuals from supporting the change.¹⁵⁰ The former constitutes the traditional view of *resistance*, whereby people stand as obstacles in the way of progress. In Kotter's view, change efforts must quell resistance--if a "troublesome" supervisor gets in the way of change, he or she should go.¹⁵¹

The trouble with Kotter's use of "troublesome" is its oversimplicity. It draws from a classic narrative of a worker who has developed particular skills and knowledge which the change effort will make obsolete or require to change, and the worker does not wish to go along. It easily fits as the barrier to change using the *life-cycle motor*. The organization must change as a unitary whole; therefore, anyone not on board is an obstacle requiring removal. The message is "fix thyself or go home."

In the million-person organization using all motors of change, this view of *resistance* is too narrow. The *dialectic motor*, in particular, expects that some form of anti-thesis exists. When one considers the natural tensions that exist within the U.S. military, opposing perspectives are ever present and synthesis is necessary. For example, consider joint-service tensions or interservice rivalries, where these competing views are not merely entrenched but borne out of history, culture, and discrete areas of expertise. Change efforts that hold too closely to the life-cycle model and view resistance solely as an obstacle never gain that required synthesis. The desired change will ultimately not occur or fall far short of the goals.

In these organizations, the real challenge is *ambivalence*, which stems from both the thick vertical hierarchy and the global dispersion of the force. Simply put, forces in the field are not likely

¹⁵⁰ Simplified view of Kotter, *Leading Change*, 102.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

to understand the impetus behind a change effort, nor see its benefits in the same way. Time and distance cloud the message, and the priorities in the Pentagon do not always translate to the priorities in a geographic combatant command overseas, a major service command or base on the west coast, or a Reserve or National Guard unit. Even if all parties agree with the vision, they may do so passively. Perhaps they have too many things on their plate already, or they are uncomfortable taking the lead or getting involved until they see progress.

However, ambivalence is not strictly an obstacle; rather it is a potential source of energy ripe for change efforts to harness. This section begins with a summary of a paper on various conceptions of resistance and ambivalence at the individual level. It then follows with a focused discussion on how these forces come to bear across a very large organization. This chapter starts at the individual level of analysis – how does each member of the organization independently respond to change.

HOW DO PEOPLE REACT AND COPE WITH THE CHANGE SURROUNDING THEM?

Example I – Transition theory, Bridges (1991)

As American philosopher Eric Hoffer observed, change is highly unsettling, even when recognized as necessary.¹⁵² Thus, even when a U.S. military change effort is widely accepted and embraced, the organization still undergoes an uncomfortable and uncertain transition toward the new normal; this often involves a reluctance to let go of the old ways, regardless of how poor or ineffective they were.

Bridges (1991) differentiates *change* from *transition*, defining the latter as a psychological phenomenon with a multi-phase “process that people go through as they internalize and come to terms with the details of the new situation [that] change brings about.”¹⁵³ That is, change causes a transition to take place.

¹⁵² Hoffer, *The Ordeal of Change*, 3-5.

¹⁵³ William Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, 1st Ed. (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1991), 3.

Whereas Lewin depicted changes as a sequence of three phases, Bridges' depicts the three phases of transitions as partially overlapping and highly variable between and within individuals.

The first phase which dominates the early part of the transition is named *Ending, Losing, Letting Go* (hereafter simplified as "letting go"). It represents the condition of stopping doing something that is familiar. In contrast to Lewin's unfreezing, which orients on the potential for the new, this represents the disorientation associated with ceasing the old way. Often in the U.S. military, letting go can be very difficult especially when combat success forged the old ways of doing business. The cliché *if it ain't broke, don't fix it* comes to mind. Bridges suggests organizational members need to be able to grieve, openly acknowledging the discomfort and thereby dealing with it.

Bridges calls his second phase *The Neutral Zone*, which he referred to as an emotional "no-man's land" marked with high anxiety as one take a "journey from one identity to the other."¹⁵⁴ The challenge for proponents is to stay the course and guide the organization through the neutral zone by clearly defining the new normal and promoting creative solutions to problems arising from the change effort.

Bridges' third phase is *The New Beginning*.¹⁵⁵ This phase occurs concurrently with the previous two phases, but should increase in emphasis over time. Bridges emphasizes that fearing the new is separate and distinct from letting go of the old. Individuals may have little difficulty with getting rid of a process that does not work, but can still be anxious over the new, unproven system. Others might not have sufficiently let go of the old, and thereby overreact to minor problems or inconveniences encountered when exercising the new system.

The framework presents how organizations *cope* with change, and not always beneficially. Given that the many large-scale change efforts in the U.S. military are complex and involve units

¹⁵⁴ Bridges, *Managing Transitions*, 1st ed., 37.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 50-54.

and organizations distributed globally, coping activities may be invisible to the proponent (or worse, ignored). Improper attention to coping can derail a change effort, especially when the organization ultimately refuses to let go of the old ways of doing business despite the admonitions of senior leaders.

Example II - Seven levels of buy-in, Clawson (2012)

How might such coping strategies influence how individuals welcome or resist change when confronted by the leader? Leaders in military organizations often require that change efforts are *socialized*¹⁵⁶ to some degree. This is a natural outgrowth of the hierarchical nature of such organizations and their cultural desire for unity of effort. So, change agents must inform all affected divisions or groups, encouraging their feedback and support. Those who are not informed in advance may resist change solely because they were left out. Commanders interested in maintaining a team-oriented climate are more likely to side with the uninformed party and direct the change agent to double the communication effort.

But socialization does not imply acceptance, which leaders may presume means acceptance and willingness to support. Challenging this notion, John Clawson (2012) identifies seven different levels of *buy-in* described along a spectrum of responses to change. From most positive to most negative, these are: (1) passion, (2) engagement, (3) agreement, (4) compliance, (5) apathy, (6) passive resistance, and (7) active resistance.¹⁵⁷ Note that Clawson's use of *buy-in* is different than common use, and he addresses this directly, "Many seem to assume...that *buy-in* is a binary thing, something you either have or you don't."¹⁵⁸ Rather, the contrast is in whether or not the members have been informed. Members *buying-in* with active resistance, therefore,

¹⁵⁶ Military organizations in the U.S. use the term *socialization* to represent informational and invitational forms of communication with purpose of disseminating leader intent and allowing feedback and input before a decision is made. This is different than socialization in the organizational literature which describes how members are on-boarded and inculcated into the organizational culture, such as described in the work of John Van Maanen.

¹⁵⁷ James G. Clawson, *Level Three Leadership*, 5th ed. (London: Prentice-Hall, 2012), 200-202.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 200.

means that they respond to the effort actively seeking to stop it and oppose the leader's wishes.

The goal for change agents is therefore not just to socialize but to do so in a way that encourages members toward the positive side of the spectrum. Passion is certainly desirable, but compliance and apathy are ok. Meanwhile, socializing should expose potential sources of passive and active resistance, providing them with opportunities to air their concerns and generate feedback for the leader's consideration.

WHAT FORMS OF RESISTANCE MIGHT CHANGE AGENTS ENCOUNTER?

Example: Piderit's (2000) resistant and ambivalent reactions to change

So now let us stay in the more negative side of Clawson's spectrum, from apathy through active resistance. What kinds of behaviors and attitudes may result? In her review of studies of resistance to change, Sandi Piderit (2000) found three different areas of emphasis. The most obvious is *behavioral*. Members or stakeholders take deliberate action (or inaction) to defy the change, or put forth reduced effort. These responses are relatively easy to observe, and change agents or senior leaders must address such behaviors. *Emotional* responses are also often observable, in the form of complaints or heightened anxiety associated with a change. In some cases, individuals may want to support the change effort, but cannot handle the thought of it. Scholars such as Argyris (1993) viewed these responses as the result of an individual's natural defensive routines, and offered remedies such as coaching to help overcome them.¹⁵⁹ *Cognitive* responses are harder to discern and can be characterized as reluctance, a state of not being ready to change.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Chris Argyris, "How We Deal with Difficult Situations," in *Organizational Traps: Leadership, Cultural, Organizational Design* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 11-24.

¹⁶⁰ Tony J. Watson, "Group Ideologies and Organizational Change," *Journal of Management Studies* 19, no. 3 (1982): 259-275.

Ambivalence is a state of internal conflict, of competing desires or attitudes toward something.¹⁶¹ Sometimes ambivalent conflicts pit one type of response against another. An individual may rationally support the aims of the change effort and want to help (cognitive), but feel negatively about the disruption it may cause (emotion). One can imagine how the promise of a new brigade combat team facility, complete with modern maintenance bays and other state-of-the-art upgrades, would garner favorable cognitive reactions -- until the Soldiers realize that for two years they may be working in temporary office trailers and maintain their vehicles in a muddy field at the far end of post. Another example is when the members do not agree with the change (cognitive) but also do not want to offend a leader they like (behavioral or emotional). They may follow the plan but do so unenthusiastically, or resort to indirect means (e.g., suggestion boxes or sensing sessions) to voice their lack of support.

Ambivalence also occurs within a category of responses. For example, cognitive responses can conflict with each other. "Good idea, but ____." The "but" in this case can relate to practical issues in pursuing the idea such as timing (why *now?*), location (why *here?*), or strategy (why *this way?*), among others. These views can be quite constructive and lead to dialogue that addresses legitimate concerns about the change effort, hopefully improving its chance of success. Emotional ambivalence, on the other hand, can be much more complicated. Repatriation of an overseas unit to the continental U.S. can simultaneously produce relief ("going home") and sadness ("breaking relationship with the host town or country"). These competing emotions may be difficult for individuals to express.

Treating ambivalence and resistance the same, as obstacles to overcome, can have negative effects. Piderit warned that, "Moving too quickly toward congruent positive attitudes toward a proposed change might cut off the discussion and improvisation that may be necessary..."¹⁶² Rather, she viewed ambivalence as a potential source of energy, as a way of allowing change agents to

¹⁶¹ Merriam-Webster, s.v. "Ambivalence," <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ambivalence> (accessed 10 July 2015).

¹⁶² Piderit, 790.

engage with and listen to members in the course of planning and implementing change. This is extremely important when considering change efforts in a very large organization with its many competing perspectives and potential interpretations of the impetus and strategy behind a change effort.

HOW DO *ORGANIZATIONS* RESIST CHANGE?

Example: Gilley et al.'s organizational "immune system" (2009)

It would be much simpler if resistance and ambivalence were confined to individuals. Then, leaders and change agents can communicate with them one at a time to change their minds, or at least stay out of the way of progress. However, individual resisters often band together because they share similar concerns about the change. As the network of resistance grows, the opposition develops structure and organizes its dissent. Using the human immune system as a metaphor, Gilley, Godek, and Gilley (2009) described how responses to change can grow from a cacophony of individual concerns to a consolidated, and possibly formidable, opposition. This occurs even if the potential change intervention is clearly beneficial.

An organizational immune system "protects against change ...by erecting a powerful barrier in the form of people, policies, procedures, and the culture it creates to prevent change, regardless of the consequences."¹⁶³ Like receptor cells in the body that detect pathogens, people recognize the onset of a change effort and begin asking questions.¹⁶⁴ Rumors or gossip follows and resistance becomes mobilized as fear, and misperceptions spread. Avoidance or rejection of the change, even sabotage, then

¹⁶³ Ann Gilley, Marisha Godek, and Jerry W. Gilley, "Change, Resistance, and the Organizational Immune System," *SAM Advanced Management Journal* 74, no. 4 (October 2009): 6.

¹⁶⁴ PubMedHealth, "How does the immune system work?" September 21, 2016, *National Institute of Health website*, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0072548/> (accessed November 21, 2017).

follows in hopes of isolating the effort and eventually stopping it.¹⁶⁵

Very large organizations have a robust and powerful immune system due to distance and diffusion. Much of the organization learns of the change effort indirectly, through second and third-hand sources rather than first-hand from the senior leader. Resistance can mobilize quickly when the change agent is driving the change without clearly conferred legitimacy coming from the senior leadership. Resisters may be competitors of the change agent (or wish to appear so), and the change effort can suffer simply because of who originated the idea.¹⁶⁶

IF THERE IS NO RESISTANCE, IS SUCCESS ASSURED?

Example: Oreg, et al. (2018) predictors of member responses to organizational change events

Returning to the introduction of this chapter, the traditional approach to change management was to treat resistance as a barrier to overcome. The underlying assumption was that resistance always presents itself early on as direct reactions against the change or some form of passive resistance or avoidance. But what if the reactions from members are *positive* toward the change and yet the change fails as implementation proceeds because of unforeseen challenges and frustration?

Consider this brief story of an information technology project in a company. Members universally supported the project. But during implementation, problems ensued that weakened this support. Ambivalence toward the effort grew to the point that the project failed.¹⁶⁷ Can this happen in military organizations? Absolutely. Considering that many military change efforts depend on the stable provision of resources, delays in planning and implementation are not uncommon. This can lead to impatience and frustration. The dynamics of the environment

¹⁶⁵ Gilley, Godek, and Gilley, "Change, Resistance," 6.

¹⁶⁶ Personal experience of the author.

¹⁶⁷ Shaul Oreg et al., "An Affect-Based Model of Recipients' Responses to Organizational Change Efforts," *Academy of Management Review* 43, no. 1 (January 2018): 65-86.

might also have caused the problem to shift, meaning that a delayed implementation is no longer a relevant solution. The perception? A waste of time and taxpayer resources.

The lesson is that resistance and ambivalence are not static entities to be addressed during the pre-launch phase alone. The literature discussed thus far in this chapter represent responses and behaviors that leaders and change agents must contend with all the way through the change effort's termination. Fortunately, there are factors that one can use to predict changes in responses to an effort during launch and throughout post-launch. Oreg et al. (2018) identified three forms of "predictor criteria," one of which will likely cause members to view a change effort as *good* or *bad* (i.e., "valence"), and the other two influence whether members will *act* on their responses or *disengage* (i.e., "activation").¹⁶⁸

The first category of predictors involves factors that influence the extent that members see the change effort "as being aligned with their own interests."¹⁶⁹ During pre-launch planning, change agents are more likely to appraise these interests in a snapshot of time, for the purposes of achieving buy-in leading to the decision to launch. During implementation, as members learn more about how the change effort is progressing and how it actually affects them in practice, they may re-appraise how well their interests (personal or organizational) are served. Thus, what was once wholehearted support could wane.

The second category involves factors that influence member commitment to the organization and how concrete the change effort is from the members' perspectives.¹⁷⁰ As the authors point out, members who are highly committed to the organization are more likely to view change efforts favorably. Just as important is a sense that the change is tangible. If an event (e.g., fielding of equipment, activation ceremony, experiment, permanent changes of station related to the change effort) are forthcoming, the members participating or witnessing are more likely to view the

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 75-79.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 76.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 77 and 79. Oreg et al. uses the term *psychological distance* to encompass these and other related factors.

change effort as relevant, and therefore will engage (e.g., actively participate or tacitly support). If the change effort is too distant or intangible—major events are slated in the distance future or involve units on other posts—members may view the change effort as less relevant, and therefore are more likely to disengage.

The final category involves *perceptions of support and control* and the availability of resources for members to cope with the change.¹⁷¹ Do members have available social support that allows them to band together and muddle through the difficulties of change, or are members left to feel abandoned? Do members have some degree of autonomy to re-shape their roles in the organization or do they feel forced into roles and behaviors that they are less comfortable with?

IMPLICATIONS

Communication is therefore critical at each step of the change effort. Senior leaders should personally state and embody—setting the example as appropriate—the purpose and aims of the change. This encourages open dialogue and fostering a climate favorable to change.¹⁷² Resistance should not be considered a universal negative to be squashed but an important indicator that additional information is required. What is not being considered? Whose perspectives are being overlooked?

It is important to distinguish, however, the approaches taken by the senior leader to effect change from aspects of the change effort aimed to mitigate possible resistance. It would be incorrect to presume that mitigating resistance requires a participative rather than a directive approach to engagement. If, for example, the organization is suffering from poor performance or a crisis borne of misconduct, senior leaders should exercise a strong top-down approach to change. Making clear *how* and *why* the change is being directed prevents rumors and gossip regarding motivations of the leadership (for example, covering one's behind). In very large organizations, clarity of purpose and common sense of direction must never be assumed. For example,

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 78.

¹⁷² Gilley, Godek, and Gilley, "Change, Resistance," 8-11.

when military scholars Peter Eide and Chuck Allen reviewed a half-century of unsuccessful attempts at acquisition reform noted that there was always a “nexus of agreement” to “execute weapons procurement more efficiently,” but the official vision statement of “Acquisition excellence through leadership with integrity” offered no sense of what the reforms would look like.¹⁷³

Purposeful two-way engagement, leveraging ambivalence as a tool, is a beneficial way to use such situations to strengthen the change effort.¹⁷⁴ Key are *listening* and *sustaining dialogue*, in forums as large as world-wide teleconference to those as intimate as one-on-one follow-up sessions. Acknowledging and empathizing with other perspectives helps marginalize the negative effects of ambivalence, and improves the chances of a wide and varied audience, such as the collective body of service members, accepting a change effort. These valuable tools also allow leaders to synthesize implementation plans acceptable to a greater part of the joint force. Too much top-down communication, particularly in a teleconference setting, can be off-putting and stifle dialogue, fostering a lack of interest or outright resistance to the effort.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Peter K. Eide and Charles D. Allen, “The More Things Change, Acquisition Reform Remains the Same,” *Defense AR Journal* 19, no. 1 (January 2012): 99-120.

¹⁷⁴ I prefer this term to ‘socialization’ which is common in the U.S. Army. Socialization seems to imply more push than pull, in that the purpose is to inform others of a *fait accompli* solution rather than construct a mutually-agreeable one.

¹⁷⁵ One of the authors can count on both hands the number of times that, during a teleconference, the proponent of a local change effort declared that it was to become a *de facto* Army standard because a general said so (the term ‘best practice’ is often invoked). Invariably, the teleconference responds very negatively. Conversely, when the proponent offers successes for wider application (e.g., Kotter’s “short-term win”) and shows a willingness to listen to feedback, the council or working group tends to be more receptive.

CHAPTER 9. INHERITING, SUSTAINING, TERMINATING CHANGE

In the U.S. military, the majority of change efforts senior leaders encounter are already underway. Weapons systems programs, for example, last years or even decades from conception to final fielding, and stewardship of those programs may change hands every other year. Moreover, there are hundreds of such programs on-going at any time, many of which are interdependent of each other. New programs are not the only changes on-going, either. Consider the many other forces that drive change within the U.S. military--base realignments and closures, military construction, research and publication of new doctrine, new training and education requirements, host nation support agreements, contingency operations (both combat and non-combat), diplomatic relations and military-to-military contacts (including foreign military sales and acquisition cross-service agreements). Although senior military leaders strive hard to harmonize all these efforts, it is not always possible.

HOW DOES ONE EVALUATE A CHANGE EFFORT ALREADY UNDERWAY?

Senior leaders inheriting a change effort should ask whether the effort needs to continue and why. There are essentially five options: (1) continue as is, (2) continue with modifications, (3) re-design the effort, (4) stop the effort, or (5) completely undo the effort, reverting back to the *status quo ante*. The latter two are not the same – “stopping” calls for simply ceasing the expenditure of organizational energy and accepting new state of the organization, while “undoing” means undertaking a second change effort to restore the original state.

Regardless of the decision, the leader has much more to communicate than just the decision. Leaders must assume that opponents of the change effort will use the transition as an opportunity to undermine the effort. Therefore, the leader must deliver timely messages to the organization indicating that the effort is under review and that the organization must remain committed to it until told otherwise. If the leader perceives that

the effort is flagging and believes the likelihood of its cancellation is high, the leader must express those concerns to the organization and give guidance regarding immediate adjustments to the effort while the review is underway. While minimizing disruption is admirable, the real focus should be on minimizing mystery and preventing the organization's immune system from taking advantage of information voids.

Although the leaders' assessment might not be feasible (e.g., powerful external stakeholders wanting to continue a change effort that the leader believes must be stopped), doing a proper assessment helps arm the leader with negotiating leverage to help bring a flagging effort back on track. This paper presents several key questions below for leaders to consider, along with generalized analytical concepts associated with each. None of these questions are easily answered. All are context-specific.

Has the Situation Changed?

The initial urgency that spurred the change effort may no longer hold, and the previous leaders may have invested so much into the effort they failed to recognize the situation has changed. Rarely is this easily discerned. If a program's primary purpose is to defeat a threat and the threat no longer exists, it does not automatically negate the program. The capability may still be required to defeat or deter other like threats. For leaders assessing the effort, the essential question is one of alignment. Is the change effort sufficiently aligned with the new situation such that the original urgency still holds? Or has it changed so much the effort will potentially produce ineffective or inefficient results?

Leaders must avoid the pitfall of harboring a preconceived notion that the effort is off-track prior to doing the analysis. A leader may not have agreed with the original sense of urgency or may be aware of changes in the environment leading to doubts about the effort's purpose or progress. It is important to consider the effort from the perspective of the previous steward. Other factors, such as those below, may have contributed to the current state of the effort.

What is the relationship between this effort and others?

The hundreds of change efforts on-going at any given time within the U.S. military are interdependent to varying degrees. Leaders must consider those interdependencies, which may appear as assumptions governing the implementation plan. The fielding of a new weapons system may depend on facility and installation decisions or technological readiness levels. The establishment of a new organization may depend on available military construction dollars or base realignment decisions. Human resource management policies often come into play, as change efforts involving people may run afoul of manpower decisions.

Any action to alter a change effort risks delaying it, which may affect other on-going change efforts. Of course, such interdependencies should not excuse the leader from making the hard decision to cancel an effort that is failing. However, understanding them allows the leader to make a better informed decision, as well as alert the stakeholders (internal or external) of the other change effort so they can plan/adjust accordingly.

What are the obstacles, and which are most critical?

There are numerous potential obstacles to progress, the question is which are deemed critical--meaning sufficiently strong to prevent achievement of the effort's goals. This subsection presents a menu of areas to expect obstacles to appear. For most change efforts, there will be a few obstacles that, if left unaddressed, would bring about failure, whereas other obstacles might cause only delays or disruption. The criticality of an obstacle depends on the situation, but some of the common obstacles listed below might present strong candidates in a general case.

Large-scale change efforts rarely go as originally planned, particularly those that depend on *key external stakeholders*, *require technological advances*, or *face unstable environments*; changes in the U.S. military often face all three. Most change efforts in the U.S. military, involve Congressional funding, inviting questions

surrounding the efficacy or progress of a change effort that may present obstacles to its completion. As the U.S. military strives to maintain its technological edge, lack of technological readiness, itself a subjective measure, can quickly bring programs to a halt. As with changes in the situation, the natural flux in the strategic environment can question the relevance, urgency, or priority of a change effort.

Clearly, *resistance and ambivalence* constitute potential obstacles, but leaders must avoid making too hasty a judgment as to how important these obstacles are. At one extreme, ambivalence can appear as “having waited-out the previous leader,” whereby members avoid discussion about it or quietly discourage the leader from pursuing it. The predecessor may have had the effort at highest priority but failed to convince the organization of its merits, and the organization simply chose silence in the hope the incoming leader would allow the effort to perish.

On the other extreme, the incoming leader may receive strongly emotional and vocal opposition to the change effort and calls for its immediate termination. The clamor may be a pre-emptive strike to inhibit the incoming leader from conducting a proper review. Such might occur with change efforts that adversely affect benefits or services for service members, families, and civilians. In such cases, leaders might accommodate some concerns (particular in areas of safety or security) but should still hold out any major decisions until they performed the review.

In general, readers must avoid determining the criticality of resistance and ambivalence based solely on the emotions involved. It is more important to investigate the basis for resistance and ambivalence that represents the true obstacle at work. Is it misunderstanding or misperception? Are there factors the previous leader was ignoring, or areas of risk the leader was accepting? Was the previous leader under a mandate from external stakeholders (e.g., budget constraints or higher level guidance/directives)? What were the assumptions underlying the effort regarding the impact on organizational members and do they still hold?

The governance mechanism, including pacing of the change effort, is another common source area for obstacles. Appropriate governance can enable the change effort, while ineffective governance will create obstacles to it. Organizations may react unfavorably to what it perceives as “artificial” deadlines, including those set by leaders based solely on the expected duration of their tenures (which may bring about a desire to wait the leaders out). Leaders should ensure intermediate deadlines carry meaning or present possibilities for decision, and not constrain them to mundane data gathering and reporting. Leaders should also pay attention to how the communication campaign emphasizes the effort, as over-emphasis can create conditions of fatigue and ambivalence. Kotter would probably take issue with this point, as his observations are that change efforts tend to be under-communicated. Our view is that leaders must vary their communication emphasis after assessing whether the communications have achieved their purpose, or whether the organizational stakeholders have perceived them as random or disjointed with respect to the whole of the organization’s activities.

A corollary to the governance issue regards the quality and timing of key implementing directives. One of the authors had a personal experience whereby a chief of staff signed the command’s strategic plan as his last act prior to transferring authority. The incoming chief of staff immediately paid it no credence and starting the planning effort anew.

Is the strategy right?

This is challenging consideration because it is subjective. From a technical standpoint, any of Van de Ven’s & Poole’s motors or Chin & Benne’s strategies can apply to any change effort. But change efforts involve people and preferences. Sometimes the leader’s preferred architecture and approaches are misaligned with the culture, and therefore changes in the strategy are needed.

For example, if the change effort is spurred by an internal crisis, one should expect the top leaders to include some power-

coercive strategies to communicate and drive the needed changes. Is it working, or merely engendering resistance? Changes related to weapons systems or organizational structures tend to rely heavily on data analysis, leading to rational-empirical approaches. Is the analysis convincing or is it contradicting experiences and lessons learned? If normative (therapeutic) or reeducative (training) approaches are in use to change organizational behavior or culture, is it effective? Moreover, should leaders replace one strategy with another? If normative actions are not having the desired effect fast enough, should the leader put his/her foot down (power-coercive)?

ONCE THE FATE IS DETERMINED, HOW TO COMMUNICATE THE CHANGE?

Regardless of the outcome, the senior leader must first establish legitimacy of both the effort and its fate. If the effort is to continue, changed or not, the senior leader must demonstrate acceptance and ownership of the change effort. This severs the change efforts ties to the predecessor and re-establishes legitimacy in the minds of members and stakeholders. New boss, renewed change effort. Otherwise, failure to establish legitimacy could allow the organization's immune system to kick in (Chapter 7) and undermine the effort. Resistance may come in the form of overstated failure, or blaming any shortcoming and unrealized goals on a poor strategy or plan. It may also come in the form of repudiating the predecessor (e.g., the old boss was an out-of-touch leader who came up with a bad idea...).

No matter the ultimate decision, there is still much to communicate. If the effort continues as is, with or without modifications, leader communications should demonstrate empathy for both supporters and opponents when explaining how the change effort proceeds. Leaders should be very clear about what stays the same and what is modified to reduce confusion. Especially important in very large organizations is that leader aims an appropriate part of the message directly to the front lines – individual service members and civilians potentially affected – to set their expectations as the chain of command and other formal and informal channels enact the leader's intentions.

If the decision is to stop or undo the change effort, leaders must still establish legitimacy that the decision is the leaders' own and they arrived at it objectively and rationally. This is because supporters of the effort may feel disappointed or even betrayed. If the decision is to stop, leaders must communicate a strategy for reaping the benefits of the effort while clarifying which goals will be abandoned or pursued another way. Leaders must also present a cessation strategy about how the organization will withdraw its effort without leaving a mess of half-finished actions, half-formed structures and processes, and half-implemented ideas. For these reasons, it is important that opponents are not given free rein to cease all effort (e.g., because the boss says so) unless it is expressly within the leaders' termination strategy.

If the decision is to undo the change effort, this constitutes the initiation of a second change effort! This was the main finding of a study into a strategic change effort that was reversed. The *status quo ante* was desired but not achieved because the organization was changed by the failed effort, leaving indelible memories and artifacts behind.¹⁷⁶ The change reversal effort should strive for the *status quo ante* as much as possible, but leaders should forecast which aspects may be most difficult to restore and set expectations that the problem originally to be resolved will be addressed at a future time.

A useful military example comes from civilian human resource management: the short-lived replacement of the venerable General Schedule (GS) longevity-based management and pay system by the pay-for-performance based National Security Personnel System (NSPS) in the late 2000s. Within a few years and after many problems with NSPS, the GS system was restored. Pay-for-performance was supposed to provide workers with incentives to work harder and increase performance while also encouraging innovation. This contrasted with the GS system that incentivized length of service instead, which NSPS' proponents viewed as rewarding mediocrity. But, NSPS' implementation was problematic because of subsequent pay inequities, employee uncertainty and dissatisfaction, and

¹⁷⁶ Mantere, Schildt, and Sillence, "Reversal of Strategic Change."

excessive administrative burdens. NSPS was soon abolished, requiring all employees to revert to the GS system. But because of the increased variance of pay and incompatibility of the rank structures, undoing NSPS required a strategy to prevent members from unduly forfeiting pay or status they earned. Culturally, the workforce demonized the concept of pay-for-performance as being inherently unfair, complicating efforts to explore other options for addressing the shortfalls in the GS system that implementing NSPS was intended to address.¹⁷⁷

WHAT IS “SUCCESS” OR “FAILURE” AND HOW DOES ONE DECLARE IT?

As previously stated in this Primer, causation in dynamic and complex environments is very hard to pin down. Supporters of a change effort may prematurely declare success using evidence from short-term wins. They may also claim success due to a lack of obvious failures, or if things do go wrong they will look to pass the blame to outsiders. Opponents can use anything short of absolute attainment of the espoused long-term goals as evidence of failure. They may also qualify or caveat claimed successes as luck or exceptions. It is unfortunately very subjective.

Leaders have to be careful to avoid being perceived as a cheerleader for change efforts they own, especially those they initiated. Change efforts are not successful based on the leader saying so. Rather, they are shown to be successful based on evidence of positive effects in the organization in which the change effort is the best possible explanation (using the same thought process as organizational diagnostics in Chapter 4). Below are three questions that comprise a *plausibility test* that one can use to derive success or failure of a change effort and help communicate such a finding to others.

1. What evidence suggests linkages between the change effort and the observed positive or negative effects?

¹⁷⁷ An excellent review of NSPS' development, implementation, and cancellation is Gene A. Brewer (ed.), Douglas A. Brook, and Cynthia L. King, "Enactment and Implementation of the National Security Personnel System: Policy Made and Policy Unmade," *Public Administration Review* 71, no. 6 (November & December 2011): 900-908.

2. What evidence suggests that the effects would likely not have come about in the absence of the change effort?
3. What evidence suggests that there is no other more-plausible explanation for the effects observed?

While not necessarily reducing subjectivity, answers to these questions can aid leaders in providing rational justification for their value judgments of change efforts. Additionally, leaders can redirect attention away from the value judgments themselves and emphasize the effects and lessons associated with the effort. The striving to improve is itself a worthy theme to appropriately weave in. The more tangibly that leaders can present these messages, using hard evidence and hailing the work of organizational members, the more likely that members and stakeholders will accept (or at least not repudiate) the leaders' perspectives.

CONCLUSION

Primers such as this serve two important purposes. One is educational, to help guide students and learners understand complex processes or concepts in a systematic way. The other is practical. Given a challenging situation requiring judgment, how does one begin to understand the situation so to provide a useful way ahead? Answering both purposes in thirty thousand words or fewer is challenging given the enormous breadth of literature and practical experience from the thousands of scholars who have studied change and the hundreds of consultants and consulting firms attempting to guide organizations through change.

Although the Primer presented a number of seminal theories and concepts, it placed greater emphasis on the sequences of questions that leaders and change agents should consider. No theory is perfect, nor is any change model complete. Even popular process models like those found in commercial business literature must be modified, updated, or contextualized to be wholly useful in any given situation. Pettigrew's triangle and his discussion of it show this point plainly.

The key takeaway is that in very large organizations like the U.S. military, dismissing change as "too hard" is unhelpful. There are ways to approach it, but it requires patience and collaboration. Transformational change, in particular, is too dynamic and complex for leaders to develop the perfect plan that stays intact over the course of years. That the plan proves inexecutable is not a reason to declare failure, but a recognition that the organization is learning from implementation. Failure is when the organization ceases to pursue improvements and succumbs to complacency or apathy. It is not necessarily a true failure when opponents of the change cheerfully declare an effort as having failed.

Addressing a dynamic global security environment requires military organizations to balance meeting today's needs with tomorrow's challenges. The need for change is continuous, and serving as senior leaders implies a willingness to embrace, and even facilitate, change. But, in organizations with hundreds of major change efforts happening at once, it is often difficult to sort

out which efforts are progressing, which are flagging, and which require modification or new change efforts entirely. This Primer should help leaders navigate this challenging environment and make better decisions about organizational change.

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