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The image features a background of layered, wavy bands in various shades of yellow and grey, creating a sense of depth and movement. The text 'IT'S TIME FOR CHANGE' is centered in a bold, grey, sans-serif font with a slight drop shadow, making it stand out against the darker grey background behind it.

IT'S TIME
FOR
CHANGE

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In present times, change and managing change successfully has become a top priority for organizations, for reasons such that organizations today live in a state of accelerated development and high turnover. Moreover, change occurs today within organizations given the industrial climate at an increasing and complex rate. And it presents leadership as one of the biggest challenges facing their organizations. However, effective leadership strategy is coming to senses and it is continuously improving. And as we learn through our contributors - Luc Galoppin (1), Gilbert Kruidenier (2), Natalie Phillips-Mason (3), Jasmine Kernalleguen (4), Céline Schillinger (5), Ket Patel (6), Jason Little (7), Renee Blackman (8), Teresa Mitrovic (9), Dr Temre Green (10), Pauline Melnyk (11), Dr Jen Frahm (12), Jillian Reilly (13), Mun-Wai Chung (14), Linda Y. Brewer (15), Evan Leybourn (16), Pete Behrens (17) in this issue - organizations now are reducing their dependency on managers and insisting more on building leadership capabilities across their organizational system. And this is with good intentions to bring the level of workforce engagement towards the organization's vision and mission in order to make the right and effective change. The ability to deal with change requires a leadership behavior that coincides with the work of the organization and is very frequently termed as transformational leadership. The concept of transformational leadership has become a basic element within modern organizations today. In this issue, we pursue to highlight the level of adopting transformational leadership dimensions and its relationship with change management in organizations across the globe.

This issue provides insight into the significance of transformational leadership as a panacea to change management. This edition was carefully curated by our honorary guest editor Dr Jen Frahm based on our current need for organizations to introspect and learn about the role that transformational leadership plays within change management across organizations. All the articles in this edition touch upon different dimensions of transformational leadership - idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and empowerment. And they show the results of the positive relationship and their effects on change management. Happy reading and learning!



Manoj Khanna,
 Managing Editor & Publisher

Contributors

SAME OLD CHANGE?

Why many change initiatives actually perpetuate an organization's culture, and what to do about change asbestos

Céline Schillinger



The winds of change had begun to blow. A senior executive of note had just been appointed CEO, after a short year as head of the company's business operations. He seemed to be the right person for the job: in his early forties, a graduate of a prestigious school, multilingual and dynamic, and with a successful track record acquired elsewhere in the industry. This high-tech sector was undergoing profound change thanks to the consumers' center of gravity shifting to Asia, the emergence of new competitors, and changes in R&D models. The company had once been cutting-edge: born in Europe a hundred years earlier, it had grown to rely on over ten thousand employees and several industrial sites around the world. But that growth had dulled its edge, and it now lacked agility. The pace of internal change was slow, its production performance was mediocre at best, and its pipeline of new products rather dry. The ambitions of the long-tenured barons eyeing the top job had been dashed by the arrival of this young outsider. He was now in place and eager to change things.

The new CEO met with the main internal stakeholders during a tour where he made sure to present himself in the best light. After praising the ongoing change efforts, he reorganized the leadership team, getting down to business by instigating the creation of "key impulse initiatives" based upon a model used in his previous roles. Each initiative focused on a specific issue that he felt was a priority and was intended to solve problems while leading the company into broader change. A small group got to work on the overarching design: mainly the Head of HR and the CEO Office members—bright junior executives working long hours. The Communications department was enlisted. It turned out that there was about one initiative per major corporate function (R&D, production, sales, etc.), but that was perhaps a coincidence.

A few weeks later, everything was ready.

The Executive Committee was the first to receive the plan. Then the cascade began.

Key Impulse Initiatives (or KIIs as they would soon be referred to) appeared on the intranet, in corporate PowerPoint templates, and in team meeting rituals. People became familiar with their visual identity, their structure, and their prominence, before even understanding what they were really about. Executives from various departments, chosen by HR for their “high potential” status, had been selected to lead each of the initiatives. None had dared to say no. In a competitive workplace, an opportunity for visibility can only be turned down at one’s own peril. Functional senior leaders showed their allegiance by assuming sponsorship of the initiative related to their scope... and why wouldn’t they? It was a role that didn’t require much of them, other than freeing up time in their calendar to hear progress updates from KII leads and provide their opinions. The international working groups went to work, and were then only heard from occasionally. They reported updates to the higher-ups. They shared their progress more broadly upon the quarterly Town Halls. Some of their recommendations got adopted, others weren’t. When the work was completed, KII leaders rejoiced – they could now re-focus on the tasks directly related to their respective roles.

Believing they initiated change, the CEO and his close advisers were (like many others) merely replicating the most common and traditional ways of doing business in this company: from top to bottom, from a small group to the many, disconnected from most of the staff, using a rational approach focusing on analysis and structure. This approach rested on a number of misleading, yet still extremely common ideas. So common, in fact, that they are quasi-invisible, unnoticed as patterns, seemingly un-challengeable. Speaking about the inability of companies to retain and develop women as effectively as men, Avivah Wittenberg-Cox once came up with the concept of *gender asbestos*: “It’s hidden in the walls, cultures, and mindsets of many organizations”. Our CEO story exposes the *change asbestos* we face as well. What are the thought patterns we fail to see?



- **Pyramidal thinking.**

It had been assumed that the CEO, because of his overarching perspective, knew better than anyone else what was needed by the company – even though his was just one perspective among many. In addition, classical pyramidal thinking separates thinking at the top from execution at the bottom, disempowering most of the organization. Unfortunately, this disempowerment cannot be compensated for by delegating tasks to subordinates, nor by pushing for accountability. Delegation keeps the pyramidal structure in place, and with it, standard behaviors of obedience and compliance. “Accountability” is often perceived as threatening, especially in cultures where risk-taking is met with blame, or when people feel a double standard applies to the powerful versus the others.



- **Controlling thinking.**

It was a laudable intention to give diverse people in the organization – not just those sitting at headquarters – an opportunity to step outside their usual field of expertise, to get to know each other within project groups, and to gain experience and visibility. But the longstanding obsession with predictability and control nullified all of the intended benefits. The individuals selected by HR ended up being quite similar, at least in terms of “cultural fit”. The uniform and supervised mode of execution, under hierarchical supervision, which was also directly linked to career and compensation matters, prevented any disruptive innovation.

- **Mechanical thinking.**

The project team had believed that carefully crafted workgroups, direct oversight by the CEO, and promotional communication would create engagement, transformation, and agility across the organization. They clearly overlooked human psychology, engagement, and systems change (more on that later).

- **Silo thinking.**

At one point, the CEO’s office tried to emulate a pre-existing community initiative that had spread virally throughout the organization. However, instead of connecting the new effort to this organic community, the CEO and his entourage saw fit to spark a competing network dedicated to KIIs – dividing rather than uniting, and confusing both initiatives. Silos are not only an organizational phenomenon; they are an ingrained thought process for many executives.

- **Hierarchical distance-protection thinking.**

It had escaped no one’s notice that an active use of the corporate social network by employees of all levels played an important role in the engagement and expansion of the pre-existing organic community. However, the CEO was personally reluctant to use any social media. Regardless of his many calls (for

others) to dare to innovate, despite even telling a small group of employees that he would soon be seen on the digital network, he never got around to it. His entourage even took a dislike to the indelicacy of those who dared remind him of his commitment and supposed exemplarity. A lack of maturity in the exercise of power prevented him from stepping down from his pedestal, and influenced his advisors to double down on gatekeeping behaviors.

Okay, but who cares if these change initiatives produced results? After all, it’s the outcome that matters, isn’t it?

Well, that’s the problem. How these initiatives were conceived got in the way of the desired agility and transformation.

The KIIs’ effect on the original problems got nicely beautified by the Communication. But their effect on the company’s cultural transformation was nil. Absolutely no one changed their ways and became “more agile” as a result of the KIIs. People soon realized that nothing of the sort was expected of them, and returned to their routines with relief. Compared to the outlay of talent and resources spent on this project, it was deeply disappointing – but honest returns on investment analyses are rarely conducted in the aftermath of this kind of project, for fear of attracting blame.

An entire team of bright people, eager for change, and sincerely believing they could make it happen, unwittingly found themselves caught up in the culture of the organization. A top-down, siloed, traditionalist culture breeding sycophants and lackeys, where people tend to throw the effort of change on “the others”, had trumped the best of intentions. What followed was inglorious. After stifling organic change possibilities and failing to meet expectations (in the early days of the pandemic, the company found itself unable to deliver one of its flagship products despite high demand), the CEO left the company. Don’t waste any time worrying about his career, of course: he was soon appointed CEO at another company. Unless he has reflected on the journey described above, he has probably launched a new set of the “same old change” initiatives there.

SYSTEMIC CHANGE THROUGH RELATIONAL CHANGE

Beyond the obsolete thought patterns that set up these change initiatives for failure, one of the largest obstacles encountered by the aforementioned teams (and teams like them) is a blindness to systems.

Barry Oshry, a groundbreaking thinker of power in human systems, suggested we move from “systems blindness” to “systems sight”. To him, it is the key to (self) empowerment. This involves asking the following questions: What relationship are we in? Where is the responsibility? What are the “reflexive” relationships we have with each other – for example, who “naturally” feels responsible for others, and who “naturally” expects others to decide? What are the consequences of these interactions? Changing interactions, or leaving them as is, is then a matter of choice. If we decide to change interactions, we should expect resistance and devise a plan to overcome it.

“A system reacts to change through its identity,” Myron Rogers explains. Rogers is a long-time thinker of living organizations and has co-authored *A Simpler Way* with Meg Wheatley. Humans perceive the world, and absorb or reject novelty, through who they are. An organization’s identity is basically how it sees itself. It shapes the organization’s culture: everything it does and how it does it, what it reacts to and how it reacts to it. An organization’s culture is made up of a multitude of conversations over time. After a while, culture becomes independent of the individuals who make up an organization. Simply replacing individuals, even the CEO, does not change organizational culture, and therefore does not change what the organization absorbs, transforms, and rejects.


This is why it is useless to address change through change initiatives such as the KIIs, even if they are very well thought out, well communicated, and populated with the most brilliant individuals.

What is needed instead is deep work on the organization’s identity: by evolving it, one makes the organization receptive to more radical changes. To do so, John Atkinson explains, we “must build the capacity to change the internal dialogue”.

A qualitative change in the internal dialogue does not happen overnight, but it can start with a change in modalities of interaction (how we connect), in topics of conversation (what we connect about), and the people involved (who connects with whom). In the post-knowledge economy, work has primarily become a relationship. It is high time to adjust and focus change efforts on the relational dimension of both organizations and leadership. The search for organizational agility basically entails transforming an entire system of interactions, and this cannot happen if leadership remains unchanged.

Change goes beyond new conversations. Co-creation must be considered much more broadly than it is today, and above all, much earlier in projects than what is conventional. We need to replace solutioneering with capacity building, involving many more people in the action. Instead of “push communication” to generate adoption, we can mobilize communities involving a broad diversity of perspectives, allowing everyone to benefit from this rich vein of shared knowledge. We need to reconcile thinking and doing, at all levels of an organization working together in real time, rather than in sequential layers. →



Is that realistic? Absolutely. Over the last decade, I have been personally involved in multiple transformative changes in conservative or highly regulated business environments. Among the main factors that enabled these changes were an attention to the evolution of relationships and collective identity, the mobilization of activist communities, the use of digital networks, and the practice of new forms of power. There was also a collective recognition that even though the cost of removing change asbestos was high, very high, deep work on identity and change through new conversations and the mobilization of communities was essential. Not just for the sake of organizational health, but also for the health of the system, the health of the relationships, and system sight. Thinking about the system you work with-in, can you afford not to remove the change asbestos? 



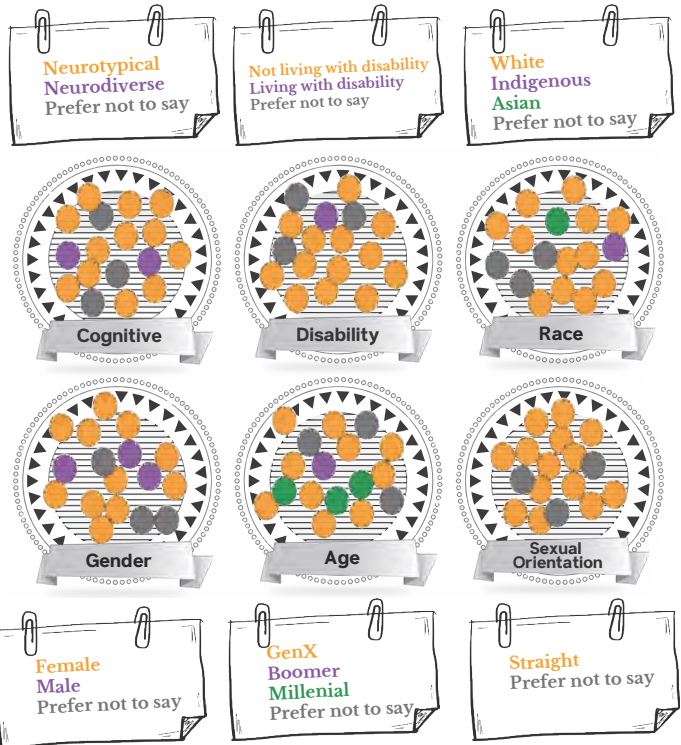
Céline Schillinger

A pioneering voice in Engagement Leadership, Céline has 30 years of field experience in the corporate world, in small and large organizations, over three continents. Several of her large-scale innovative engagement initiatives have been recognized multiple times, and inform Céline's consulting practice. Céline now works as an Engagement Leadership advisor, helping organizations with new leadership strategies that mobilize communities, leverage networks, solve problems and create capacity for change. Her book 'Dare to Un-Lead: The Art of Relational Leadership in a Fragmented World' will be released in April 2022.

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