

Brief Summary of

7 Rules for Positive, Productive Change, Micro shifts, Macro Results

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Chapter 1 – Change by Attraction

- “People don’t resist change, they resist being changed” - Peter Senge
- Change can be taken positively or in a negative manner. Taken positively, people felt empowered to achieve outcomes within explicit constraints, knew about what the change was all about, and were engaged and creative. For those who took change in a negative manner, it was about change being highly directive, not knowing the reasons for change or about unawareness of implementation at a local level
- When we think of change, we often hear the terms – driving change, installing change or evangelizing change. These metaphors don’t help in complex change because they limit our thinking and mask the work required to change systems.
- Mechanistic thinking, a desire for certainty and metaphors that hide complexity make it more difficult to live with the issues involved in complex change
- Factors which are involved in change include learning, unlearning, discovering problems, understanding problems, examining assumptions, discovering potential solutions, designing new guidelines, discovering better ways to work, collaborating, trying and failing and finally, the unknown!
- Changing an organization is not like retooling a machine. It is not possible to image every variation at the start and predict the results precisely. What is possible is to explore context and different outcomes and set boundaries.
- Use of “Power” (especially use of authority/coercion) for change may not be always successful.
- “Change by attraction” is more effective – because people who see the need for change want to experiment, problem solve, identify organizational impediments and adapt to the changes being effected.
- The 7 rules of Change assume that
 - There is no one right way
 - It is beneficial for a group to arrive at their own solution
 - New solutions often need to be discovered
 - Learning and experimentation are more likely to lead to engagement
 - Possibilities exist that are not foreseeable from the here and now.
- The 7 Rules of change are helpful in any complex change effort and they offer reminders to approach change as an exercise in attraction
- Rule 1 – Strive for Congruence
 - Congruence is the foundation of integrity and open communication in times of change
 - Congruence involves balancing the concerns of people initiating a change with those asked to change, as well as considering the context that requires the change
 - Empathy is key here – in understanding other people’s context
 - Congruence enables communication, problem solving and creativity
- Rule 2 – Honour the past, Present and people

- Honouring the past helps people let go of it
- Organizational change assumes that what is being offered is better than what is – or at least is necessary to avert some undesirable event.
- Helping people see the context behind the change effort demonstrates basic respect for their adulthood and intelligence
- Acknowledging what still works and is worth saving is as important as knowing what to change
- Rule 3 – Assess what is
 - People think change starts with a vision – it really starts from where you are now
 - Assessing what is increases the change that an intervention will fit the context and will fix or at least will improve the problem
- Rule 4 – Attend to networks
 - Work and change happens through a web of relationships
 - When you can enlist people who are trusted and respected, other people in their networks will be more open to new idea or practice.
- Rule 5 – Experiment
 - Little changes limit disruption and allow people to learn
 - Little changes involve the people tasked with shaping and owning change
 - Experiments enable people to use their own power to think and learn and they make people agents of change
- Rule 6 – Guide and allow for variation
 - Empower reasonable deviation and new possibilities
 - Reducing variation is the goal when work is standard – for knowledge work it is different – it is not possible to anticipate all the variations
 - A good strategy is to let local groups figure out how to respond to their situations – this allows for the possibility of creative new solutions.
- Rules 7 – Use your self
 - You are the most important tool for change
 - Change is social and relationships matter
 - Creativity, problem solving, empathy, curiosity all are both individual and social and are critical for solving problems that emerge during complex change

Chapter 2 – Strive for Congruence

- Congruence is the foundation of integrity and open communication in times of change
- Congruence is an alignment between a person’s interior and exterior worlds, balancing the needs and capabilities of self, others and context
 - Self – One’s own needs, capabilities and concerns
 - Other – the needs, capabilities and concerns of anyone else involved
 - Context – the roles, relationships, projects, priorities, company, market, culture etc
- Incongruence is a stress state – it is a response to feeling vulnerable or threatened. Stress leads to irritability, apathy and a sense of being overwhelmed.
- According to Jean McLendon and Jerry Weinberg, “Without integrity, we cannot build trust, without trust, we don’t feel safe, without safety we have a hard time being congruent”. Thus congruence reinforces congruence in a powerful loop.

- Congruence is an individual matter, but it contributes to psychological safety which is a group level phenomenon and is tied to group learning
- At a group level, psychological safety encourages people to take risks and admit when they don't know something.
- Congruence is the start of a virtuous cycle that supports the free flow of information, contributes to trust, and builds the foundation for safety, learning and problem solving
- Congruence is the precursor to empathy. In times of change, emotions run high and any attempt to suppress or devalue people's response to change may amplify negative emotions
- Empathy is the ability to recognize and vicariously identify someone else's experience and emotions. Empathy enables you to understand someone else's point of view, what they value, the challenges posed by change and what they stand to lose by changing
- Demonstrating empathy means you listen, acknowledge and accept feelings and points of view as legitimate. Empathy is fundamentally about respect.
- Three types of empathy
 - Emotional empathy – understanding another person's emotions and feelings
 - Cognitive empathy – understanding someone else's patterns of thought and how they make sense of events and their world
 - Point of view empathy – combines both cognitive and emotional and allows you to genuinely say – "I can see how it looks that way to you"
- Working from congruence is essential for making and sustaining long term change in any organization.

Chapter 3 - Honour the past, present and the people

- Honouring the past is about respect for some basic fundamentals
 - People's experiences and challenges they face
 - The knowledge people have in general about their own specific context
 - The fact that people are giving their best, given the circumstances
 - Existing belief systems
 - The fact that change will bring disruptions
- Each interaction, each meeting is an opportunity to honour what has been, show empathy, foster trust and build engagement in a change
- The "Rule of Seven" formulated by marketing expert, Jeffrey Lant, says that making a sale requires seven "touches" with a prospect over a period of time. This applies to change as well – touching people seven times, builds relationships and trust.
- People aren't likely to change just because someone shows up with a good idea or a great presentation. It comes down to making a *human connection* – understanding where people are coming from and what their challenges and aspirations are
- When talking to people, choose a language that doesn't denigrate past processes and beliefs – "This way of working got us this far, now we are facing different challenges"
- Consider asking for permission when you want to ask questions – particularly when you change the subject or want to go into more detail
- Understanding the context is key – there is always something worth saving that can be built upon
- Some of the questions which can help identify what is the negative space are
 - What do people have to lose – routines, relationships, comfort, competence

- What are temporary inconveniences
- What might people fear?
- What is the learning curve
- What other challenges are people facing
- What are legitimate reasons why people might not welcome this change or for people to retain their current state
- When people hold on tightly to the past, it is because there is something that they value and they have no idea as to what might replace that in future.
- It is important to learn the reasons behind why people resist change and use that information to adapt the change, provide training or review potential roadblocks.
- Demonstrate that you are willing to listen, engage and understand other's point of view.
- In every organization there are things that work well, good ideas that need a nudge, and people who understand the problem at hand. It is important to learn from them and see where the principles and practices that make them great might apply elsewhere.

Chapter 4 – Assess what is

- Whether you are trying to invent a unique solution or apply one that has worked somewhere else, the place to start is with **what is**.
- Understand how the existing conditions produce the current patterns and results. Look beyond the top level problem that you want to solve and look beneath the surface and develop hypothesis about possible influencing factors – looks beyond symptoms and find influencing factors.
- Containers, Differences and Exchanges (CDE), a model developed by Glenda Eoyang, describes the three conditions that determine the speed, direction and path of a system as it self organizes.
 - Containers focus a group and make it more likely that any two or more people in the system will form a relationship
 - Differences are meaningful distinctions among group members and between the group and other parts of the organization
 - Exchanges describe the flow of information and value among group members and with other parts of the system
- Understanding CDE helps generate patterns of interaction in the organization and ideas for action.
- Some of the questions that helps us provide insights are
 - What holds focus? What are the boundaries?
 - Are there too many voices or too few? Too many decisions or too few?
 - What are the relevant differences within and among groups and with other parts of the organization?
 - Are there too many divergent points of view or too few?
 - How do differences affect patterns of interaction?
 - What information is there within and among groups with other parts of the organization?
- Every organization shares a basic set of concerns
 - How do we achieve clarity so that people know what to do?
 - What conditions are necessary for people to do good work?

- What productive constraints will streamline decision making and serve as guardrails to guide actions and interactions?
- SEEM model (Steering, Enabling and Enhancing and Making)
 - Steering domain is about directional decisions that affect an entire organization. Conditions in the Steering domain relate to the overall organizational structure, financial management and compensation policies etc. Lack of clarity are indications of conflicts, disengagement and passivity
 - Enabling and Enhancing domain is about funding and prioritizing work so that it flows smoothly into teams, making sure that teams have what they need to do their work and are actually functioning effectively. Needs to be a balance between establishing decision boundaries so that teams know what they can decide versus what decisions require management input
 - Making domain – conditions and constraints established in the Steering and Enabling and Enhancing domains determine how effectively the people can performing their work. Clarity, conditions and constraints are key aspects to look at in this domain.
- Circle of Influence is a method for gaining insight into how factors interact. One can start by arranging the main factors in a circle and make an informed conjecture as to whether this factor influences other factors indicated through arrows. Factors that influence several others may be good candidates for experiments.

Chapter 5 – Attend to Networks

- The web of relationships that don't show on the org chart are just as important as highly visible, structure and rightly controlled formal processes – perhaps even more so.
- If the formal organization is the *skeleton*, the informal organization is the *central nervous system*
- Social networks form in organizations in a number of ways. Some may be based on affiliation not directly related to work – sports leagues, service organizations, even smokers could form a great network.
- Using informal networks allows you to tap into power that results in buy in and engagement. There is substantial research establishing that social networks of all sorts shape behaviour in profound ways.
- Many managers may be unaware of who within the organization holds influence.
- Networks do not rely on positional, reward or coercive power but on relationship, trust and expertise.
- In any new change initiative, it is good to know whose opinions are trusted and respected and whom people go to for advice. These are the people who will be most influential in disseminating new ideas, modelling new behaviours and supporting people in problem solving
- People weave networks naturally – they meet people, discover common interests, figure out whom they need to know to grease the skids and get work done. Insights from network science can inform purposeful network weaving to support a change.
- Networks also carry emotions and rumours and in times of uncertainty and change – there is a lot of negativity bias - these could have potentially a huge impact on the members of the organization.

- A *Rumour Control Board* can be used to counter negativity bias in times of organizational disruption. It can be effective in stalling the feeling of fear, anxiety and distress that passes through the network.
- To generate interest in change, the *attraction principle* and the *scarcity principle* work together and build on human desires to create something better to have and what others have.
 - Attraction principle is finding people who share an interest in the sort of change you are working and engaging them as allies and co-evolvers
 - The scarcity principle reflects the human tendency to value what is rare over what is abundant. It also recognizes that people often realise that they want something when they see that others have it.

Chapter 6 – Experiment

- Big changes are often perceived as big threats. Big changes are also big bets.
- “No matter how detailed the plan, it cannot make the uncertain certain”
- Experiments are tiny interventions intended to learn about how a system responds, to nudge things in a better direction and to suggest what to experiment with next.
- These experiments are fine grained, they provide fast feedback, are inexpensive, require no permission and are easy.
- Experiments instil ownership by involving the people affected by the change. Experiments make it more likely that a change will fit the context.
- With an eye on the end goal, it is good to keep experiments small. Having a next step (landing zone) or a near neighbour condition would make effecting small changes easy.
- Some of the questions which help in learning and making small changes are
 - What factors may contribute to the current problem or situation
 - Which factors can you control or influence
 - What is your rationale for choosing this experiment
 - What questions are you trying to answer
 - What can you observe about the situation as it is now
 - How might you detect the experiment is moving in the desired direction / undesirable direction
 - If things get worse, how will you recover the situation
 - If things improve, how will you amplify the experiment
- Experiments do not come with a guarantee of success, unless learning is the goal. Learning and innovation both require stepping into the unknown
- Pay close attention to how managers respond to failed experiments and then design experiments to shift responses towards a learning orientation.
- Single loop learning asks – “How can we do what are we doing better?” Double loop learning asks “Are we doing the right thing?” and involves scrutinizing, thinking and assumptions.
- Transformational improvement and significant learning comes from making beliefs, assumptions, and thinking explicit, and then testing them and experimenting.
- Some of the questions that help test assumptions and look at things differently are
 - What would have to be true for ----- to work
 - What do we know to be true? How do we know that?

- What do we assume to be true? Can we confirm that?
- If an outsider watched us, what would they say we are trying to do
- How can we make things worse?

Chapter 7 – Guide and Allow for variation

- Standardized processes make sense when low variation is desirable and possible, given the nature of demand
- Standardize for simple problems when best practices apply, simplify and call on experts for complicated ones, and allow for local variation and emergence when problems are complex.
- Checkbox behaviour happens when people complete a mandated activity or follow practices without understanding the value behind it (or achieving the desired outcome). Checkbox behaviour is compliance at best.
- Boundary stories give people concrete examples of desirable and undesirable outcomes without over specifying the means. Targets lead to gaming and checklists can lead to rote behaviour and surface compliance.
- Choosing what must be managed closely and what can evolve is not an exact science. It requires scanning, looking for appropriate adaptation and allowing people to use their heads and creativity.
- Many change plans focus on activities – defining new processes, developing communication plans or scheduling training etc. In complex systems, change happens and new patterns emerge through evolutionary steps.
- A Horizon map is a thinking tool that helps people determine the conditions that must exist for a new pattern. Think right to left, then work left to right. Some questions which could help in this context are
 - What conditions must exist, for the change to happen
 - What constraints might be at play
 - What must people know how to do
 - What must people learn
- Change involves modifying conditions and adjusting constraints, structures and policies. It also involves altering habits of thought and cognitive frameworks
- Large group methodologies such as Open Space or World Café support people to engage in an issue and generate new ways of thinking and talking about it.
- It is about creating new options, a new way of thinking, creating new experiments which could contribute to the next evolutionary step

Chapter 8 – Use your Self

- Use of Self is a concept from social work and organizational psychology. People bring in a wide range of professional skills to work – they also bring their personalities, characteristics, belief systems and life experiences – and this could affect outcomes.
- Your personality, experiences, world view, style and skills (empathy, curiosity, patience and the ability to observe) – all influence how you interact and employ your skills and knowledge
- *Empathy*
 - Some of the questions that help prompt empathy are
 - What is going on for the other person

- What emotions they might be feeling
- How might this look from their point of view?
- How might they be experiencing the situation
- What challenges are they facing
- *Curiosity*
 - Can start with two questions
 - How did things get this way
 - Why might reasonable intelligent people act this way
 - Curiosity seeks out facts that contribute to a situation so that they can be mitigated or ameliorated. It looks at influences in the environment, patterns and the broader context.
 - We also need to see how the parts and the whole interact and the effects of delay
 - Hone your question asking skills with who, what, when where and how to learn more about the environment. Uncovering the *what* and the *how* are more likely to lead to helpful interventions and experiments
- *Patience*
 - Patience lays out two qualities – the ability to bear delay, annoyance and pain without anger and complaint, and quiet steady perseverance. Patience has an element of empathy and curiosity, of being able to “walk a mile in their shoes”
- *Observation*
 - Without the ability to observe what is happening, any attempt to improve a situation in an organization would have a remote chance of success
 - Observing sounds simple – almost like doing nothing but looking around. Active observing is hard work and requires practice and skill. It is important to practice observing and notice one’s filters. “The mind can only see what it is prepared to see” – Edward de Bono.
- One needs to empathize, be curious, activate patience and observe to enable informed experiments
- Testing observations against explicit models prevents falling into habitual thinking. Testing against more than one model can reduce confirmation bias. Some of the models include research by Amy Edmondson, Richard Hackman, Barry Oshry, Edgar Schein and others.

Conclusion

- When you start any change, remember *Rule 1 – Strive for Congruence*. Congruence enables connection, communication, problem solving and creativity
- When confronted with the history and mystery of the organization, remember *Rule 2 – Honour the past, present and people*. The practices and patterns you observe may not make sense to you, they did at some point in time. Look for what works, what is valuable and build on them and carry it forward
- When striving for clarity amidst visible and invisible structures, look for *Rule 3 – Assess what is*. Assessing what is increases the chance that an intervention will fit the context and will fix or improve the situation. Adding something new without considering the current environment will not yield desired results.
- When you want to spread an idea through an organization, remember *Rule 4 – Attend to networks*. There are people in an organization who don’t show up in top levels in the org

