

LEADERSHIP AND TEAM DYNAMICS WORKSHOPS

O.E. Strategies conducted a custom two-day Leading and Developing High Performance Teams training course for supervisors, managers, and directors in a technology-based government agency. In this research-driven, interactive course, leaders learned ways to build strengths in three areas:

Relationships: Knowing Yourself and Your Teams

Participants learned about common team roles, social styles, and relationship tension. Through activities and resources, they linked these topics directly to their existing teams and identified action steps to create stronger relationships.

Leadership: Vision and Trust

Participants discussed vision and mission statements and how to apply these at the team level. Frameworks for building team trust were presented and discussed in the context of managing inherited teams.

Collaboration Tools

Trainers provided additional resources that leaders can use to leverage team strengths and manage burnout, such as instructing on the wisdom of polarities, using stress management techniques, and celebrating successes with their teams.

The course closed with a group integrative project where teams worked together to apply all of the concepts learned in the course and present their results back to the group.

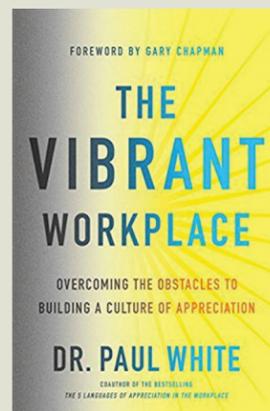
Those interested in holding a similar workshop can contact Cheryl Fule at cheryl@oestrategies.com.

BOOK REVIEW

The Vibrant Workplace: Overcoming the Obstacles to Building a Culture of Appreciation

Author: Dr. Paul White • Foreword by Gary Chapman, 2017

One third of our waking adult life is spent at work, and people want that time to feel as meaningful as possible. However, many work environments are described as negative, energy-sapping, and toxic to growth.



Most leaders desire to cultivate a vibrant workplace as much as their employees and often take steps to make this happen. They might read a book or go to a conference to learn great new ideas for their organization. But when they try to implement changes, there is passive, or even active, resistance. Why is it so difficult to change?

Dr. Paul White wrote *The Vibrant Workplace* to give workplace leaders a thorough understanding of the most common obstacles to building a positive workplace. Pairing real-life examples with professional advice and research, this offers a guide to uprooting negativity and cultivating authentic appreciation and resiliency in the workplace.

Readers will learn how to:

- Assess what negativity is costing their company
- Address the deeper issues under unhealthy dynamics
- Make authentic appreciation the cornerstone of work culture
- Apply the five languages of appreciation strategically
- Bring out the best in their employees and teams *and more*

Any workplace has the capacity to be healthy. It just takes knowledge of the barriers and having the skills to navigate them, which is exactly what this book provides.

Strategies:SHOP TALK

Newsletter of Organizational Effectiveness Strategies

Fall 2018



Organizational Effectiveness
STRATEGIES
Work Better.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE

Suzanne Miklos, Ph.D.

Imagine you are an executive at an insurance company and the need for auto insurance is reduced by 50%. How do you pivot core capabilities into new products and services? Imagine that you are a healthcare executive and Walmart becomes the nation's largest primary care provider reducing demand for your practices' services. Advances in technology, service models and disruptive new products are continuing to drive change in many industries. Resilience helps people and organizations to recover rapidly in times of change and is even more critical when managing several changes simultaneously.

At an individual level, any change—positive or negative—can create discomfort or anxiety, but this does not need to be the case. A person can experience a roller coaster ride as either terrifying or thrilling. The ride and physical experience are the same; it is the interpretation of the stimulation and the response that varies. One person is enthusiastic and energized, the other is traumatized. Resilience at an individual level is the ability to quickly recover from a stressor.

As part of successful change management, building resilience can make change readiness a core part of the culture. This can be done by being intentional about developing a resilient mindset. Balancing two complementary approaches to change leads to a healthy mindset. Mechanistic approaches to change focus on the tangible and concrete levers such as structure, systems, and rewards. Focusing on logic and project management, detailed plans, and top down decision making characterizes this approach. More humanistic approaches focus on building organizational capacity by emphasis on attitudes, behaviors, culture, and encouragement of bottom-up participation. Training, focus groups, and culture interventions characterize this approach.

Although most organizations favor either a mechanistic or humanistic approach, intentionally blending these to get the best of both worlds will build resilience. For example, a mechanistic

approach can help employees know that the change is rational, rewards are aligned and expectations about what is happening next are clear. The roller coaster is well planned; it won't fail and riders won't end up flung into space. Humanistic approaches encourage inclusion, personalized understanding of the why of change and a sense of participation in a community of others who are having the same experience. We scream and laugh together! All coasters provide seating in pairs or groups. This creates a sense of personal control and a sense of belonging.



Consider the contributions that are being made to resilience by focusing on getting the best out of these elements. The mechanistic levers provide safety and achievement through clear expectations, processes and goals. The mechanistic side, if overdone, can result in people feeling victimized and pressured. The humanistic levers provide affiliation and a sense of control. However, if they are overdone, the fear and anxiety of the unknown can freeze people and feed resistance. Balance is key for building and maintaining a resilient organization that can handle and thrive in an environment of positive, transformative change.

SUPERVISOR'S CORNER

CHANGE AND STABILITY: BALANCE THE POLARITY

Chris Bamford, M.A.

“For every complex problem there is a simple solution. And it’s wrong. – Anonymous”
– **Barry Johnson, Polarity Management: Identifying and Managing Unsolvable Problems**

There Is No Day Without Night

Managing change is one the biggest challenges managers face today. We all have heard time and time again about how things are changing faster and faster. From the newest smart phone to the world’s geo-political landscape, change is everywhere. I remember reading the book *Future Shock* by Alvin Toffler in the late 70’s which predicted much of what has occurred over the past decades. Why do we still find some people who resist change while others embrace it?

Death, Taxes, and Change. Life’s True Certainties

I have heard that people don’t resist change, but they do resist being changed. When organizations start a change initiative, no matter how small or how broad, generally most people respond with a question: How will this affect me? What will I gain? What will I lose?

Either/Or and Both/And

We have been taught to be problem solvers. We learn that problems have one right answer. We know $2+2 = 4$, not 5. This Either/Or thinking is a critical skill to master. Polarity thinking (Both/And) is another thinking style proven to be critical for leaders to master. Should we centralize or decentralize Human Resources? The answer to this common polarity is “Yes, we need to do both.” As the complexity of the problem increases, Both/And thinking has its proven advantages.

Breathing: Inhale and Exhale

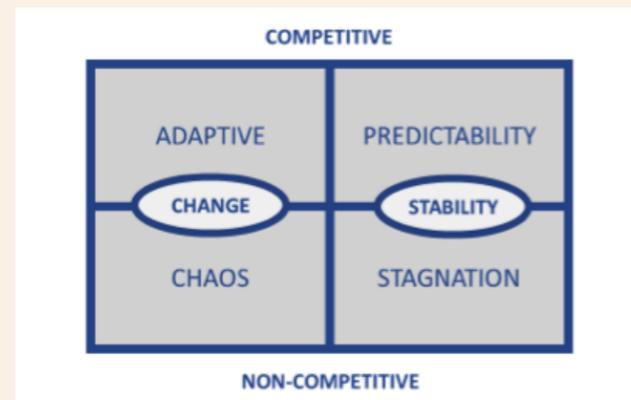
Polarity thinking is often introduced by using the metaphor of breathing. Inhaling provides our bodies with oxygen which is essential for life. Exhaling expels carbon dioxide, which is also critical to survive. We need to do both. Inhaling and exhaling are two actions that are defined as a *naturally occurring pair*. They do not exist in isolation if one wishes to continue living. Breathing is *both* inhaling *and* exhaling.

Change and Stability

The upside of change is that when done correctly organizations (and individuals) adapt to changing circumstances. The downside of too much change (without stability) is chaos and confusion. The value of stability is we need some predictability in our world to function with effectiveness. The downside of stability (without change) is stagnation and a failure to adapt. Change and stability are two sides of a naturally occurring pair. Over emphasize one side of a polarity at the neglect of the other, and you will get the down side of the favored pole each and every time.

Communicate Change and Stability

After the plan for the change has been worked out, the next task is to develop a solid communication plan. We need to sell the benefits of the “new.” What can often be neglected in the communication strategy is to explain what of value will not change. What will remain the same? While changing certain aspects of an organization is needed to evolve and adapt to constantly changing internal and external environments, change without the support of some stability generally leads to chaos and uncertainty.



The next time you are embarking on a change initiative, develop action plans that create the benefits of the change and develop specific plans to support what will not change. Balance change and stability.

- What are the benefits we expect to gain from the change?
- What will remain the same, and do we have specific plans to support this stability?
- If we are driving change too much, (at the neglect of stability) how will we know?
- What wisdom do those who resist change have that we should explore?
- What might be some unintended consequences of change? Plan for them.
- What other problems are you trying to solve (Either/Or) that might actually be polarities to manage (Both/And)?

Example of common polarities: Self and Others, Department and Organization, Customer Satisfaction and Employee Satisfaction, Doing and Thinking, Strategies and Tactics.

Johnson, Barry (1998). *Polarity Management: A Summary Introduction*. Polarity Management Associates.

RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE HUMAN SIDE OF CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Michael Sliter, Ph.D.

Change management can be a stressful affair for employees affected by the organizational change efforts, with research showing that employees experience job dissatisfaction, feelings of job insecurity, increased intentions to leave the organization, and even insomnia (Rafferty & Griffin, 2006). While some stress is unavoidable, there are several factors that organizational leaders can consider when seeking to maximize employee well-being while still achieving their goal for change.

Frequency of Change

Organizations are living, breathing entities, and some level of change will always be at play. However, when change is frequent and never-ending, employees will feel as if the workplace is unpredictable, and they experience ‘change fatigue’ and anxiety as a result (Glick, Huber, Miller, Harold, & Sutcliffe, 1995; Rafferty & Griffin, 2006). This anxiety, in turn, is related to intentions to leave the organization. To avoid this ‘change fatigue,’ organizational leaders should limit the number of major change initiatives over the course of a year. Employees will experience less uncertainty when a change effort is scheduled and finite, having a clear beginning and end.

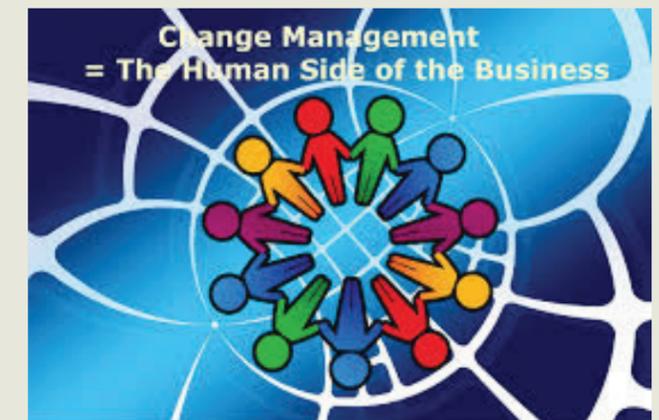
Planned Change

One major concern to employees is whether change efforts were properly planned and socialized before implementation. For instance, research in a utility company undergoing reengineering planning showed that employees who felt the change effort was well-planned out and fairly considered experienced enhanced trust and well-being (Korsgaard, Sapienza, & Schweiger, 2002). When planning—particularly planning that is public and participative—occurs before the change effort, it adds a sense of predictability and control. Organizational leaders should strive to publicly lay out change plans, including both the positive impacts and potential shortcomings, to lessen the impact of these events on employee well-being.

Impact of Change

When change is foreshadowed or afoot, employees are actively concerned with how that change will affect them, their job, their coworkers, and generally their future. Transformational change—changes that affect the core systems of an organization, such as the ways of working, values, structure and strategy—can cause employees a great deal of anxiety and act as a “shock” that can force employees to consider other employment options. Large-scale transformations are often unavoidable, such as updating an entire technology system. When something like this is on the horizon, leaders should take the following steps: socialize these systems early, build

trust through communication, allow for participation, and hold meetings to answer questions. Do not dismiss concerns. Basically, building feelings of justice and trust can help alleviate anxiety and help keep the workforce intact (Korsgaard et al., 2018).



Role of Leadership

Rafferty and Griffin (2006) considered frequency, planning, and impact of the change together, and found that one factor predicted employee well-being regardless of the change situation—supportive leadership. Leaders who listen to their employees, respect their employees, and create a welcoming environment can mitigate the impact of change. Particularly during periods of large-scale change, supportive local and company-level leadership is critical.

Ultimately, organizational change is unavoidable, but organizations can take steps to mitigate the effects of this change on their workforce. By reducing the frequency of large-scale change, publicly planning change and socializing the impact of the change, leaders can help ensure that their employees stay happy and healthy and that their workforce stays intact.

References

- Glick, W. G., Huber, G. P., Miller, C. C., Harold, D., & Sutcliffe, K. M. (1995). Studying changes in organizational design and effectiveness: Retrospective event histories and periodic assessments. In G. P. Huber & A. H. Van de Ven (Eds.), *Longitudinal field research methods: Studying processes of organizational change* (pp. 126–154). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Korsgaard, M. A., Sapienza, H. J., & Schweiger, D. M. (2002). *Beaten before begun: The role of procedural justice in planning change*. *Journal of Management*, 28, 497–516.
- Rafferty, A. E., & Griffin, M. A. (2006). Perceptions of organizational change: A stress and coping perspective. *Journal of applied psychology*, 91(5), 1154–1162.