LEADING CHANGE
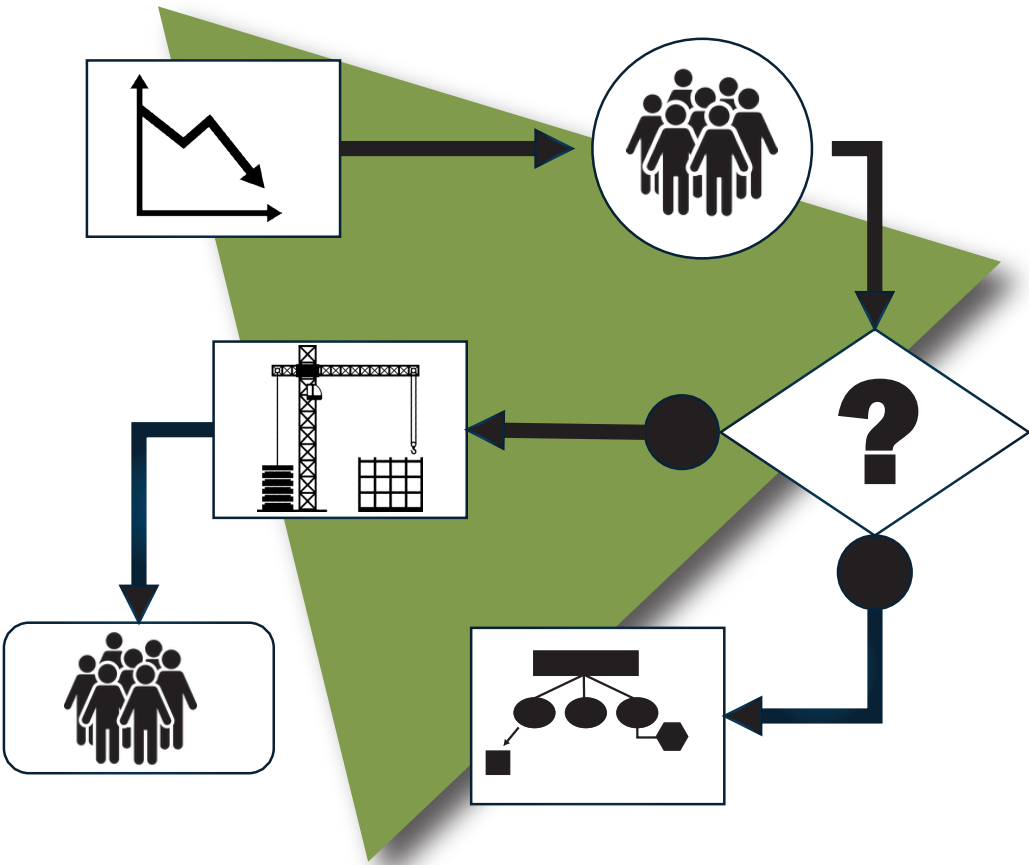## IN MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS

2ND EDITION
DEPARTMENT OF COMMAND, LEADERSHIP, AND MANAGEMENT

UNITED STATES ARMY WAR COLLEGE

Leading Change
in Military Organizations

Primer for Senior Leaders
2nd Edition (2023)

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Preface

When I assumed responsibility for the U.S. Army War College's resident Leading Change elective in 2014, the content was little more than a literature review of articles from business school magazines and popular authors from the private sector. In the three years following, it became apparent to me that what my students wanted was something 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, they wanted to practice writing them. There were surprisingly few exercises that I could find, so I had to develop some myself. The same was true with other aspects of change efforts like defining the program or constructing a feasible and suitable change plan.

I used workshops rather than seminar discussion as the primary modality, believing that learning by doing is better than the traditional information transfer approach. I found this to be true in leading change. During my military experience, I supported multiple major change efforts – some succeeding while others failing. I had a sense in my own mind what factors in military organizations played roles in how things turned out, and one consistent reason was that too much focus was on the messaging and not enough on the hard, detailed work needed to pull a change effort off. Moreover, the work was needed up front, clearly defining the problem to be solved – too often, leaders wanted action immediately but had not taken the time to understand what it was they wanted to change. Miscommunication was a common problem.

Over time, I realized that what students wanted the most was a takeaway product. They wanted a printed copy that they could take notes on and tag ("dog ear" was their term) all over the place. So as the course evolved over the subsequent four years, along with the many experiences I gained when consulting with defense and non-defense agencies, I developed the first edition of this Primer and printed out hundreds of copies to distribute to War College students and faculty.

They also wanted the exercises for use in their future assignments. In 2020, I published the *Leading Change in Military Organizations: Experiential Activity Book* and used it with both resident and distance students. There was only one problem -- I had not synchronized the two products. The structure of the Activity Book diverged from the Primer based on the continued evolution of the course.

Thus, it was necessary to get the two books better aligned. Their purposes are unchanged. This 2nd edition of the Primer serves as a textbook that presents concepts about leading change from management literature, my experience in military organizations, and feedback from faculty, students, and practitioners. It also now follows the same structure as the *Experiential Activity Book* – the six-phase framework that now appears in this Primer as Part II.

I have many to thank for their support and feedback. For this 2nd edition, I sought out external reviewers from other War College and professional military education institutions and was overwhelmed by the response. I thank Dr. Allison Abbe (Army War College), Col. Ken Sandler and Dr. Richard Norton (Naval War College), Col. Tim Goodroe (Air War College), Dr. Lissa Young (U.S. Military Academy), and COL Jeff Baker (Army Artificial Intelligence Integration Center and formerly Army War College) for their time and detailed feedback that greatly improved earlier drafts. I also acknowledge the vital contributions of those who helped me with the 1st edition – Col. Lance Clark, Prof. Chuck Allen, Dr. Kristin Behfar, LTC Kelly Lelito, and the many resident and distance students I taught over the years.

Finally, I thank my Department Chairs through the years who supported the project and helped me see it to fruition, and the educational technicians who assisted with copy-editing and publication.

Foreword

Charles D. Allen

If you dislike change, you are going to dislike irrelevance even more.

Gen. Eric Shinseki, 34th Army Chief of Staff[1]

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 must only 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. 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

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

force 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 to adjust, realign, or create. More importantly, leaders must establish the compelling case for internal change. This engenders commitment from organizational members who would implement it and stakeholders who would 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 (and whom) to apply them. 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.

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Part One. Senior Leaders' Roles in Leading Change

1. Challenges of "Leading Change" in Militaries

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.[2] Sensing opportunities, 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 serve 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 but was once also referenced within Army leadership doctrine as *the* model for change. Books such as these from popular business literature are typically easy to digest, non-controversial in the sense that there is little in the logic open to obvious dispute and come across as immediately practical. But there is a problem. They normally only address the processes of managing change, devoting little or no attention to identifying

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[2] W. Warner Burke, "A perspective on the field of organization development and change: The Zeigarnik effect," *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 47, no. 2 (2011): 143-167. Burke famously pegged the failure rate of 70% based on his firsthand experiences as consultant.

either the problem or solution. Such models require that the leader already knows what to change and why.

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 components of the situation.[3] First are the *contexts*, internal and external, that the organization is in. Second is the *content* of the change effort. This is how the organization understands and explains the problem it must solve, the impetus for change, and the path to success. Each of these components evolve over *time*, leaving historical imprints on the organization. The article begat what became known as Pettigrew's Triangle, shown in Figure 1.
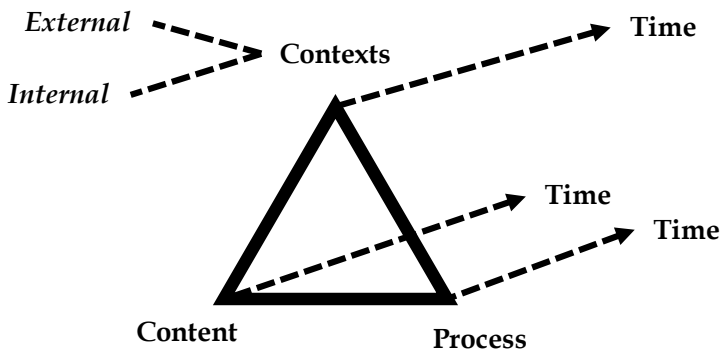
Figure 1. Pettigrew's triangle[4]

Looking at military change efforts through Pettigrew's lens, there are three systemic problems that emerge with using traditional process-oriented models alone. First, these models concentrate primarily on *transformational* change--the well-

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[3] Andrew M. Pettigrew, "Context and Action in the Transformation of the Firm," *Journal of Management Studies* 24, no. 6 (1987): 649-670.

[4] Adapted from presentation slides provided by Andrew Pettigrew. Also 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.

defined, well-bounded effort in which a leader or proponent[5] 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.[6]

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.[7]

Second, process models, along with much of the early change literature, treat resistance as an obstacle that leaders must overcome or suppress.[8] 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 takes 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

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[5] This book uses the term *proponent* to describe leaders and organizations leading or promoting a change effort, 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.*

[6] Pettigrew, "Context and Action."

[7] 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.

[8] 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 on identifying and overcoming "troublesome supervisors" who impede progress for self-serving reasons.

level, leading to confusion or 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. Each new weapon system program, organizational realignment, headquarters consolidation, gain or drop in end strength, and initiative by the defense enterprise constitutes 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 (e.g., expressed in strategy documents or service concepts), these multiple change efforts all compete for finite resources and attention. The evolutionary nature of each change effort compounds these challenges.

Therefore, U.S. military change efforts face challenges that go beyond what general-purpose process models can fix. From this 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 initially there was no highway, 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. Because of their complexity, such projects often involve multiple phases of construction activity spread out over years.

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.[9] Organizations must continuously improve while still competing in their chosen

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

markets. Militaries are no exception; after all, they provide for their nations' security, a vital professional service. This allows little room for error and constrains the appetite for introducing new capabilities if doing so reduces readiness or incurs risk.

As government organizations, militaries have the additional responsibilities to act as good stewards of public resources. 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 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 naturally presume very large organizations are inherently too large, giving rise to debates like: What is the difference between an organization with 2,000,000 people and one with 1,900,000? 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 personnel.

However, the local effects of the consolidation may include reduced productivity. Users may be reluctant or discouraged from using the remote help desk and instead try in vain to fix problems themselves. Users may feel frustrated when their problem must be "elevated" (with associated time lags) to higher-level service professionals. Such costs are often invisible to 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 cynicism among mid-level leaders within the organization who perceive consolidation as neither efficient nor effective, even when all the statistics point to consolidation as being more sustainable over time.[10]

Moreover, in military organizations the mere mention of efficiency risks engendering defensive responses. As professional organizations, militaries consider effectiveness to be paramount with efficiency serving as a lesser concern (while still valuing the importance of stewardship and minimizing waste).[11] 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 difficult to estimate, let alone quantify in detail.

Programmed change overwhelming innovation

The U.S. military manages its resources and organizational energy through *programs*, the combination of appropriated resources and associated authorities to expend them.[12] The programming process introduces two challenges to innovation. The first is that programs often involve external stakeholder

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[10] 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.

[11] 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; Richard A. Lacquement and Thomas P. Galvin, *Framing the Future of the U.S. Military Profession* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2022).

[12] Defense Acquisition University, s.v. "Program of Record," https://www.dau.edu/glossary/Pages/GlossaryContent.aspx?itemid=28274

interests which constrain organizational flexibility. Enterprise leaders can too easily dismiss efforts that potentially compete against established programs, even when the proposed effort is clearly superior. The second challenge surrounds the access to resources. Rigorous budgetary processes and the overall high demand for resources across all enterprise activities can cause militaries to allocate most resources in their budgets, leaving fewer resources for more discretionary, experimental purposes.[13]

A similar problem surrounds another commonly used tool, the so-called *best practice* that displays an effective or efficient way of doing a task.[14] Best practices can emerge bottom-up, pioneered by a subunit or individual staff member. However, once a best practice becomes legitimized by leaders and declared the preferred way, it may evolve into a bureaucratic activity and lose its innovative character. If legitimized while still immature and not tested for more widespread use, the best practice may fail to generate the desired effects. Such occurrences may add to cynicism about change among the organizations' members.

Mandated change as micromanagement

There is little getting around the fact that stakeholders will sometimes impose changes on militaries.[15] Congress is an example of such a stakeholder who might respond to something the military did or failed to do by forcibly bringing about change, such as: (1) funding or not funding something the military requested, (2) legislating requirements for additional reporting or other intrusive or punitive administrative actions, (3) expressing grievances publicly through media or other outlets, and (4) holding up unrelated administrative actions requested from military leaders.

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[13] 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). An external reviewer also remarked how this can lead to "winners and losers" where changes that are good for the service overall may not be good for some of its smaller organizations performing vital, yet niche, work.

[14] Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, s.v. "Best Practice," https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/best%20practice

[15] 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.

Another key stakeholder is the public and trust between the military and the public it serves is vital. The U.S. Army described this relationship well in its 2012 version of Army Doctrinal Publication 1, *The Army*, "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."[16] One way that militaries sustain trust is through harmonization with societal norms. When military norms differ, the potential for society to lose trust in the military increases. For example, consider how changes in societal attitudes toward homosexuality pushed the military towards integration of gays and lesbians into the service.[17]

Organizational change in response to external stakeholders may face resistance from service members who see leaders as kowtowing to pressure. When leaders legitimize the change effort and take ownership, it helps reduce the appearance of stakeholders imposing change so that service members and civilians are more likely to support it. However, this does not guarantee acceptance as the origins of such change efforts may be known and therefore members may resist or feel ambivalent about it. Chapter 11 will cover this in more detail.

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 punishing or removing certain officials, imposing new procedures and reporting requirements, and making public statements.

Resistance or ambivalence toward such externally driven changes is a challenge for leaders. Leader reluctance to change is hard to hide.[18] Remote subunits will have difficulty understanding the impetus if the impact of the external event only

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

[17] Charles D. Allen and William G. Braun, "TRUST: Implications for the Army Profession," *Military Review* 93, No. 5 (September/October 2013): 73-85.

[18] Piderit, "Rethinking Resistance," 787-788.

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 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.[19] 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. Joint professional military education doctrine does not require imparting active change leadership skills among officers. Instead, it is sufficient to recognize the changes present in the environment and navigate their organizations through them.[20]

Organization of this primer

The Primer is divided into three parts. Part One (Chapters 1-3) follows the roles of senior leaders as *change agents*, oriented toward the effective and efficient application of change-related concepts that align with the organization's situation and goals. Chapter 1 focused on the problems of implementing change effectively in military organizations. Chapter 2 describes two forms of change – the change that naturally occurs in the environment and deliberate or planned change. While the

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[19] Ostroff, "Change Management in Government," 142.

[20] 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 1800.01 (Washington, DC: Joint Staff J-7), both the E edition of 2015 and the F edition of 2020 expressed "recognizing change" and "leading transitions" as important outcomes. However, this expresses a passive view of change whereby leaders are responding to stimuli rather than driving them. There is and has been no mention of initiating, leading, or sustaining change as an outcome.

remainder of the book is written about planned change, understanding both forms is essential toward deciding how to solve organizational problems. Chapter 3 presents the challenges often facing those who wish to implement change and how leaders can overcome them. I based much of this chapter on personal experiences and literature on *internal consultants* who work to improve organizations from within as opposed to external consultants hired from the outside who impose change on behalf of a senior leader (e.g., commander, director).

Part Two (Chapters 4-10) presents a six-phase framework for implementing change efforts from an insider's perspective. Following a brief introduction to the framework in Chapter 4, six chapters will mirror the six Activities in the companion *Leading Change in Military Organizations – Experiential Activity Book.* These are Defining the Problem (Chapter 5), Diagnosing the Program (Chapter 6), Developing the Change Vision (Chapter 7), Developing the Concept (Chapter 8), Developing the Plan (Chapter 9), and Launching the Effort (Chapter 10). Each chapter is written in two parts. The first part introduces concepts from organization theory or management science related to the phase followed by some general ideas about implementing that phase.

Part Three (Chapters 11-12) focuses on special topics that do not fit in any one phase of the framework but deserve attention. Chapter 11 covers resistance, ambivalence, and other barriers to initiating and implementing planned change efforts. Chapter 12 discusses problems common to military change efforts. One is a problem of inheriting change, where due to normal rotation of leaders it becomes necessary to take over responsibilities for keeping a change effort going. Another is the long-term sustainment of change efforts where the initial rush of interest and energy has subsided, but the goals are not yet achieved. How do leaders keep the effort on track? Finally, there is the matter of terminating a change effort. If an effort is no longer worth continuing, what does one do?

2. The Two Forms of "Change"

Prominent organizational scholar David Schwandt wrote that change is both a verb and a noun. This reflects two ways that people might refer to change in the environment. One might say that "we need to change," which conveys a sense of action or intervention – what Schwandt called *change as a verb*. Or one might comment that "change is everywhere" and therefore is difficult to stop or control. Here, the word change refers to a normal condition of the environment – in Schwandt's terms, *change as a noun*. In arguing that change is inherently both, Schwandt describes change as the act of making something different and signifying the difference itself.[21]

Leaders are more apt to think of change as a verb, intervening purposefully to achieve some goal. Indeed, the title of this Primer, *Leading Change …* means that planning deliberate change will dominate these pages. However, it is important to appreciate change as it ordinarily occurs in the environment. In complex human systems, change is constantly happening whether recognized or not. Therefore, this chapter will mostly discuss change as a noun – the form of change that constantly occurs in the environment without anyone's intentional action or involvement. It is also the form of change that can present barriers to planned change that will be covered in Parts II and III.

This chapter does not attempt to recreate or summarize the entirety of social or human systems change theories. Whole volumes could not cover the subject. 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 *To Learn More* section of this Primer provides some additional resources and competing theories for a more complete picture.

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[21] Syllabus for "Human Systems Change," HOL 8703, The George Washington University, 2013.

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.[22] *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.[23] It is then said that the adaptations cause the *emergence* of new systems behavior.[24]

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 the closed systems approaches at the time that examined organizations in isolation. Open systems theory describes complex adaptive behaviors in simple language and shows how societies and organizations change behaviors through natural interactions 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.[25] The response comes in the forms of actions and attitudes that spur the emergence of new behavior within the system. One form of input

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[22] 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.

[23] 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/EPCSST.pdf

[24] Eric Bonabeau, "Predicting the Unpredictable." *Harvard Business Review* 80, no. 3 (2002): 109-116.

[25] 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.

is *negative feedback* from the environment, providing cues as to the alignment of the system with the outside world.[26]

Systems strive toward a state of equilibrium, whereby the system governs the 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).[27] 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 constitutes change. To outside observers, system behaviors may not appear to change much, but individuals within the system may sense the activity all around them. They may 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 entire system. Hence, they may view all this activity as churn and not necessarily oriented toward some desired state.

Another important characteristic of an open system is *equifinality*, that a system can reach the same state through many ways.[28] So, determining causes of phenomena in a system is challenging. This becomes extremely important when developing the concept and plan for the change effort (Chapter 8).

How does change become habits and practices?

Example: Strong structuration theory, Stones (2005)

To separate change from chaos, one needs a mechanism to coalesce the micro-level changes in the environment into something useful. The central idea is that one sees something good or desirable and repeats it. This repetition may become a habit shared among individuals. The habit spreads more widely.

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[26] Katz and Kahn, *Social Psychology of Organizations*, 26.
[27] Katz and Kahn, *Social Psychology of Organizations*, 27.
[28] Katz and Kahn, *Social Psychology of Organizations*, 30.

More people adopt it and share it until it no longer works – and the cycle starts all over again with a new, better habit.

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. Structuration 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).[29] The lesson learned or the changes in individuals performing the action (increased experience, mistakes) then adjusted the structure and produced 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 without this "medium." Structures are also, however, the outcome of these practices of agents.[30]*

So how does this become purposeful? How might an individual choose how to interact with the system, steering it toward some preferred state? Rob Stones extended Giddens' theory to better explain the role of the individual as the interface between the structure and the action, adding a couple steps to the feedback loop.[31] See Figure 2.

As an example, consider the role of the military commander. Although commanders have many prescribed duties and authorities, they typically have flexibility in how they define and exercise their roles.[32] The *internal structures* are those that the individual brings to the role of commander, that he or she has

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

[30] 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.

[31] Rob Stones, *Structuration Theory* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).

[32] Thomas P. Galvin, *Responsible Command: Primer for Senior Leaders* (Carlisle, PA: Department of Command, Leadership, and Management, 2020), 87-94.

general dispositions for how to do things (e.g., habits or preferences), plus responses specific to the environment.

External Structures of the Environment	*What about the environment that drives the individual's action?*
Internal Structures of the Individual	*What are the rules or schema that individuals use: (a) at all times [general disposition], and (b) in response to the external structures?*
Individual's Agency & Practices	*How does the individual draw on the internal structures to take action, and what was the action? Also, how does the individual prioritize such action?*
Outcomes	*What were the intended and unintended consequences of the action? How do these influence the internal and external structures?*

Figure 2. Strong structuration theory[33]

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

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[33] Graphic prepared by author, adapted from Stones, *Structuration Theory*, 84-88.

meeting for later. The outcome of that action spurs a response from a stakeholder (e.g., civilian authority, senior military commander, such as surprise at a rapid contact or disappointment over delays. Knowledge of the stakeholder's reaction informs the commander's internal structures—ways to proceed in future, mistakes to avoid, and so on.[34]

This model can also explain the appearance of *churn*, which I describe as a high amount of organizational energy unnecessarily expended and wasted. When there is limited trust between the stakeholder and commander, members may feel vulnerable as possible victims of the poor relationship. Should the commander be punished or sanctioned in some way, members may be concerned about being punished or sanctioned in kind or feeling shame or dishonor for being in the organization. They may avoid or downplay ordinary contact with the higher headquarters, distance themselves from the commander, or act in ways that minimize risk to themselves. Each of these behaviors can lead to inefficiency, and the more the members sustain such behaviors, the more the behaviors can become embedded. This is the topic of the next subsection.

How do habits and practices become embedded?

Example: Institution theory, Scott (2013)

When one thinks of habits and practices, the term *culture* might come to mind. Organizational culture describes "how things are done around here,"[35] which may or may not be what the organization 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. He sorted them from the most tangible and easy to

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[34] This example is inspired by the analysis in structuration and social identity theories: Judith Broady-Preston, "Qualitative methodologies for determining skills and competencies for the information profession in the 21st century," *Performance Measurement and Metric* 10, no. 3 (2009): 172-179.

[35] John H. Woodyard, "The Anatomy of a Successful Organization," in Lloyd J. Matthews (ed.), *Building and Maintaining Healthy Organizations: The Key to Future Success* (Carlisle, PA: Department of Command, Leadership, and Management, 2000), 9.

change to the least tangible and most difficult. W. Richard Scott's formulation of institution theory adds granularity to culture by breaking out distinct 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."[36] Institutions represent ways of understanding activities and behaviors of collective bodies, and thinking about how they do and should function.[37] Although durable, institutions are dynamic and undergo a life cycle of being "created, maintained, changed, and [then they] decline."[38] 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 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.

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.[39] Consider the following example. Budget cuts at the national level force the services to seek efficiencies in their operations. The services have constructed several internal structures that guide their ordinary responses to such cuts—such as a taxonomy of rebuttals or approaches to negotiated solutions institutionalized into the service culture. What are the formal mechanisms for engaging in

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

[37] 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.

[38] 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.

[39] 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 matter? What words or data work best to convey the service's positions? What are the norms associated with their presentation, such as which legislative leaders to engage first and how to prepare and present the message? What is the shared understanding of the situation—is the military destined to win the arguments or lose them and face unacceptable risk?

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                           Institution

  ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
  │  Regulative  │  │  Normative   │  │  Cultural-   │
  │    Pillar    │  │    Pillar    │  │  Cognitive   │
  │              │  │              │  │    Pillar    │
  └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘
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Laws	Norms	Shared under-
Policies	Obligations	standings
Regulations	Expectations	Common beliefs
Org. Structures	Certifications	Shared logics of
Formal Rela-	Accreditations	action
tionships	Uses moral	Spread through
Uses Coercion	governance	mimicry
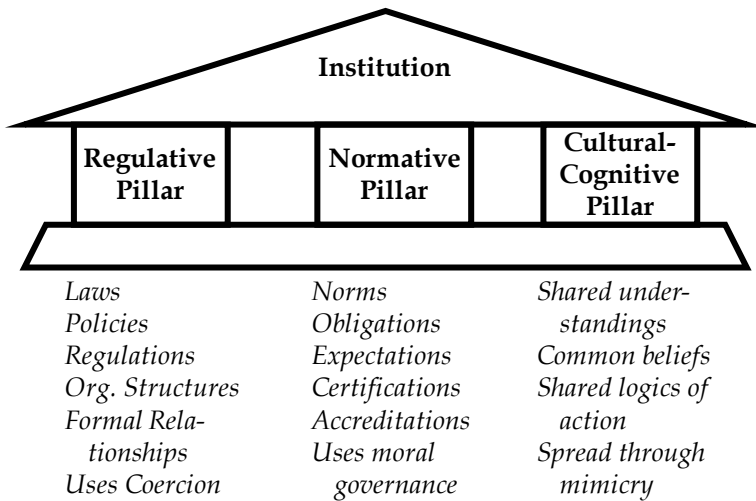
Figure 3. Scott's three pillars of institutions[40]

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 the desired (but false) answer 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.

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[40] Image prepared by author, adapted from Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 60.

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."[41] 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.[42]

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 continuity.[43] 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.[44] 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 the discontinuation of an institution.

Three types of pressures, shown on the left side of Figure 4, can cause institutions to weaken and disappear.[45] *Competitive pressures* cause the utility or legitimacy of an institution to be

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[41] Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 166.

[42] 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.

[43] Christine Oliver, "The Antecedents of Deinstitutionalization," *Organization Studies* 13, no. 4 (1992): 563-588, 567.

[44] Scott, *Institutions and Organizations,* 171.

[45] Oliver, "Antecedents."

called into question."[46] 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.[47] *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.[48]
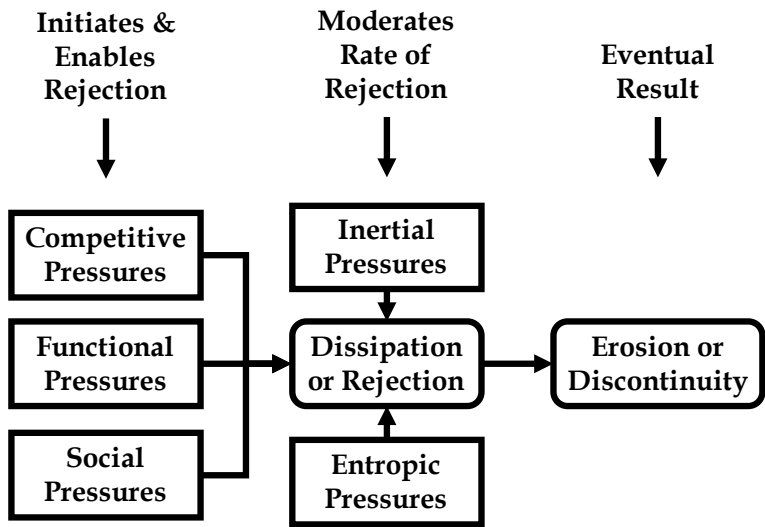
Figure 4. How institutions weaken and disappear[49]

As political, functional, and social pressures cause an institution to weaken, two other types of pressures may present themselves, some trying (desperately) to preserve the institution while others hasten its dissolution. *Inertial pressures* constitute an

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[46] Oliver, "Antecedents," 568.

[47] Oliver, "Antecedents," 567. Oliver's original term was "Political Pressures," however in practice all three categories of pressure achieve political effects on an organization or society. Oliver herself used "competitive pressure" synonymously.

[48] Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 169.

[49] Adapted by author from Oliver, 567.

"active intervention to maintain the institution."[50] 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; (4) desires to show steadfastness and purpose; and (5) fear of disruption or stepping into the unknown.[51]

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."[52] In other words, left alone, any habit (except the most vital ones) will eventual 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.[53]

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 clear and attractive alternatives or discouraging old practices.

Balancing planned changes with opportunities

To conclude, the above theories help describe the various forces of change pulling and pushing on organizations at any given time. The accumulation of natural effects of change within a social context create feelings of churn that there is so much happening outside one's control that trying to do something about it seems pointless. But this is not the case, rather the churn may provide opportunities that might otherwise not be available!

Mintzberg's (1985) intended, emergent, and realized strategies

Henry Mintzberg is a leading scholar on strategic management and planning who, following decades of consulting

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[50] Zucker, *Institutional Patterns*, 26.
[51] Oliver, "Antecedents," 580.
[52] Lynne G. Zucker, *Institutional Patterns and Organizations: Culture and Environment* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1988), 26; Oliver, "Antecedents," 580.
[53] Zucker, *Institutional Patterns*, 26.

work and research, found that there are many ways that organizations implement *strategies*, combinations of long-range goals and action plans. The idea of establishing a planned *strategy* that begins with pre-determined goals in mind and proceeds toward the goals through deliberate actions was only one way, and typically not the way most commonly exercised in practice. In a 1985 article, Mintzberg presented a taxonomy of strategies along a spectrum from the fully deliberate (where "precise intentions exist" backed by "formal controls") to fully emergent ("realized despite, or in the absence of, intentions").[54] A full recounting of the taxonomy is beyond the scope of this book, but three are worth mentioning here.

Two are worth contrasting up front. The *intended strategy* is what the organization sets out to do, while the *realized strategy* is what the organization ultimately did. For the intended strategy to be the one realized, Mintzberg suggested three conditions: (1) the intentions must be precise and well-understood, (2) there is little to no doubt among members as to the leader's intentions, and (3) nothing internal or external interfered with those intentions as the change effort proceeded.[55] Mintzberg found these conditions are rare in practice, so in many cases the organization realized only part of its initial goals (the *unrealized strategy*).

However, dynamics in the internal and external environment could lead to opportunities that the organization leverages, known as an *emergent strategy*. Mintzberg found pure emergent strategies, meaning those without any sort of intention, very rare. However, such strategies can come about due to localized actions, negotiations among different parts of an organization, or stakeholder demands.[56]

The lesson is that there is no one best way to drive change in an organization, and the way to drive change may evolve often time. But it requires leaders to orient themselves toward seeking opportunities to further organizational goals. In other words, they need to be change agents.

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[54] Henry Mintzberg and James A. Waters, "Of Strategies: Deliberate and Emergent," *Strategic Management Journal 6*, no. 3 (July-September 1985): 257-272, 258.

[55] Mintzberg and Waters, "Of Strategies," 258.

[56] Examples drawing from Mintzberg and Waters, "Of Strategies," 270.

3. Senior Leaders as Change Agents

The Army's strategic leaders recognize that as an institution, the Army experiences a nearly constant state of change …. To fulfill its mission, the Army must proactively address change. Strategic leaders anticipate change while shielding their organizations from unimportant distracters. Strategic leaders know that change generally requires influence grounded in commitment rather than forced compliance.

Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 6-22 (2019)[57]

It is easy to put such words into doctrine, but much harder to translate into action. Leaders of any organization face intense pressures to perform, but senior leaders[58] of military organizations have the unique challenge of preparing forces for combat, a high-risk endeavor for both service members and nations.

But successful senior leaders overcome these pressures and make change happen! The best are experts in change.[59] 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 resistors. 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.

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.

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[57] U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-22 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, 2019), 10-59.

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

[59] Galvin, *Responsible Command*, 61-68.

In this chapter, I will present some of the routine challenges facing senior military leaders that can dissuade them from taking on the roles of change agents. I will then discuss how senior leaders can become change agents, developing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that can help them drive needed change in their organizations.

What barriers do senior leaders face?

Answering this question could take a full volume, so for simplicity I will focus on a sampling of extrinsic and intrinsic sources of barriers to pursuing change. I am only addressing leaders who want to improve their organizations but are either prevented from doing so or are discouraging themselves from taking the necessary steps. Those disinterested or resistant to change are another matter (see Chapter 11).

Extrinsic barriers

Militaries are very large, complex bureaucracies that must integrate a range of capabilities into fighting forces and employ them where and when needed for operations. This naturally means that bureaucratic processes and decisions may present barriers to change. One example is what the U.S. defense acquisition community refers to as the "valley of death" whereby a valid capability development effort fails to become codified as a *program of record* – a program that enters the budget and for which Congress will or intends to appropriate funds for.[60] Efforts that fail to enter the budget simply stop due to the lack of funds. The barrier forms as the leader must weigh whether pursuing the change is worth it if the likelihood of becoming a program of record is limited. The risks also weigh on any companies or agencies who would participate in such efforts.[61]

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[60] An excellent graphic of this is Defense Acquisition University, "Understanding Acquisition: The Valley of Death," September 2021, https://asc.army.mil/web/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ValleyofDeath_FINAL.pdf; also see James Landreth, "Through DoD's Valley of Death," Defense Acquisition University, February 1, 2022, https://www.dau.edu/library/defense-atl/blog/Valley-of-Death

[61] Mila Jasper, "Lawmakers Want DoD to Explore Tech's Valley of Death Problem," *Nextgov* (blog), July 27, 2021, https://www.nextgov.com/emerging-tech/2021/07/lawmakers-want-dod-explore-techs-valley-death-problem/184079/

A related matter is if a proposed effort conflicts with or competes against other change efforts, such as an already existing program of record. Higher authorities may determine that the existing effort already satisfies the requirement or that the requirement is temporary or very low priority. These perspectives influenced the slow acquisition of the Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected (MRAP) Vehicle in the mid-2000s. Beliefs that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were set to end quickly and concerns about the extreme expense and waste contributed to the lag.[62] More generally, if a larger bureaucratic effort is destined to leave unresolved a localized problem, the local leaders may struggle to draw attention to their needs and have them incorporated.

A third barrier could be characterized as a zero-sum mentality, whereby leaders are required to either undertake initiatives within their allocated personnel and budgets or attempt to borrow personnel from other organizations.[63] This effectively discourages leaders from seeking additional resources to tackle important problems and absolves higher authorities from the need to re-allocate resources. My own experiences in Army council-of-colonels meetings included episodes whereby organizational representatives put forth viable proposals, which were dismissed out of hand if the representatives had not already passed the hat around and secured the resources in advance.

Another barrier is *organizational politics*, "a variety of activities associated with the use of influence tactics to improve personal or organizational interests."[64] Among the sources of politics are limited access to incentives and promotions, ambiguity over one's roles and responsibilities, and the organization's decision-making processes and structures all contribute.[65] Such factors can lead to the marginalization of individuals and their ideas, what Hill and

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[62] Richard H. Van Atta, R. Royce Kneece, Jr., and Michael J. Pippitz, *Assessment of Accelerated Acquisition of Defense Programs*, IDA Paper #P-8161 (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses, 2016), 18-24.

[63] Casey Wardynski, David S. Lyle, and Michael J. Colarusso, *Army Talent Management: Officer Corps Case Study* (course reader, West Point, NY: U.S. Army Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis, 2013), 110-111.

[64] Michael Jarrett, "The 4 Types of Organizational Politics," *Harvard Business Review*, April 24, 2017, https://hbr.org/2017/04/the-4-types-of-organizational-politics

[65] *Organizational Behavior*, University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing Edition (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 2017), 574.

Gerras (2016) referred to organizations "shooting the messenger" in response to potential military innovation.[66]

Intrinsic barriers

However, sometimes leaders also get in their own way. Intrinsic barriers are those that leaders impose upon themselves to inhibit or control the changes they would otherwise be responsible for. Sources of such barriers include discomfort with the aspects of their change ideas such as unfamiliarity with new technologies or reliance on outside experts, hubris over their preferred solutions when other (perhaps more complicated or risky) alternatives exist, and general fear of failure.[67] While these are common among organizational settings, below I offer others that I routinely encountered in my own career as an officer that appear prominent in military organizations.

The first is the idea that there is a limit to how many change efforts the organization can handle at once. Too much change is seen as dangerously disruptive, and in the high-risk world of combat and readiness, disruption is troublesome. Thus, leaders might apportion change, prioritizing a few efforts through to completion before beginning other efforts. While the approach is understandable, I found that such leaders were often using their own personal tolerance levels for change and extrapolating them on the organization. The risks were that opportunities may have been missed and the priority efforts were harmed or undone by other organizational problems not being addressed.[68]

The second is allowing oneself to become frustrated by failed efforts to the point that one loses the desire to pursue future change.[69] This is the opposite of what military organizations

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[66] Andrew Hill and Stephen Gerras. "Systems of Denial: Strategic resistance to military innovation." *Naval War College Review* 69, no. 1 (2016): 109-133.

[67] Sofia Green, "Top 10 Barriers to Learning and How to Overcome Them," *eLearning* (blog), June 22, 2022, iSpring, https://www.ispringsolutions.com/blog/barriers-to-learning

[68] I experienced this on multiple occasions in my career. One multinational command that my unit served under saw its leaders slow-roll a transformation effort, only taking on certain high-visibility projects such as a new operations center while forsaking other needed changes in order to limit overall disruption.

[69] Kristin Behfar and Dale Watson, "Leading Large Bureaucratic Organizations: The Internal Environment," in Thomas P. Galvin and Dale Watson (eds.), *Strategic Leadership: Primer for Senior Leaders*, 4th ed. (Carlisle, PA: Department of Command, Leadership, and Management, 2019).

typically espouse, such as the following from U.S. Army leadership doctrine, "[Leaders] should leave the organization better than it was when they arrived."[70]

Becoming a change agent

Driving positive change in organizations is a contact sport and it requires leaders to develop skills and attitudes conducive to climates of continuous improvement. Behfar and Watson (2019) wrote that senior leaders require "a depth of patience, resilience, foresight, and the character required to look beyond immediate events."[71] Hill and Watson (2019) suggested that leaders "must concern themselves with obtaining and maintaining advantage" yet such advantage is always "provisional."[72] In environments where change is always occurring, driving change toward desired goals or outcomes never ends because new goals will naturally appear. Leaders must therefore not think of change as a disruptive event but a nature part of leadership. They must be *change agents,* people who promote and enable positive activities to improve their organizations.[73] Serving as a change agent requires both leadership and management qualities.[74]

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 apparent, the underlying problems they represent are difficult to pinpoint. If the problems are with the members of the organization, members may make problem identification elusive by covering their tracks or

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[70] Department of the Army, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, Army Doctrine Publication 6-22 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2019), 6-8.

[71] Behfar and Watson, "Leading Large Bureaucratic Organizations," 34.

[72] Andrew Hill and Dale Watson, "The Competitive Environment," in Thomas P. Galvin and Dale Watson (eds.), *Strategic Leadership: Primer for Senior Leaders*, 4th ed. (Carlisle, PA: Department of Command, Leadership, and Management, 2019), 23.

[73] Ben Lutkevich, "Change agent (agent of change)," *TechTarget*, January 2023, https://www.techtarget.com/searchcio/definition/change-agent

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

withholding information.[75] Members may also be quick to protect the *status quo*.

Change agents recognize these concerns but avoid being deterred by them. Rather, they interpret member behaviors as signals that something is amiss—suggesting 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.[76] However, they also know that organizational energy is limited, and therefore prioritizing change and communicating such priorities is a must. Unlike those leaders who ration or control the pace of change, change agents stay open for opportunities as they arise.[77]

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.[78] 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 later. 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 paths to success

Too often, visioning stops at the point of setting the desired state. Change agents take the next step, envisioning how to achieve that desired state and ensuring that the means required are present and accessible. This is crucial in military organizations, where the price of getting change wrong or doing half the job results in failed campaigns and unnecessary loss of

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

[76] Gibbons, *Science of Successful Change*, 163.

[77] With thanks to one reviewer who raised this point.

[78] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 71-72.

life. The size and complexity of military organizations demands more than pictures or slogans to drive change. Change agents envision the 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, 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 stays on track without interfering with other priorities, and 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 experiencing failed change. While it is true that many change efforts will fail to achieve their goals, failing change efforts are those that leave a lasting bitter taste among the members, who may feel as though the change effort was damaging to the organization's performance or harmful to its reputation. Strong leadership can build on the good outcomes of an otherwise unsuccessful change. Failed change, however, is typically associated with leadership failure of some kind.

Change efforts can fail due to poor visioning or planning, leaders stopping them abruptly or inexplicably, or when they linger long after they have ceased benefitting the organization. Sometimes stakeholders will maintain greater commitment to the change effort than the organization does. Other times, a dedicated minority within the organization takes disproportionate interest in keeping the effort alive.[79] Change agents recognize that terminating a change effort requires as much thought and vision

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[79] Lippitt and Lippitt, *Consulting Process*, 34-35.

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 ending, which removes ambiguity and helps members reprioritize their energy.

Senior leaders as "internal consultants"?

Public and private sector organizations alike hire consultants to provide advice and counsel to leaders, especially regarding the need for change. Leading will bring in external consultants to provide independent analyses 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, advice, strategies, plans, or other outcomes.[80] 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.[81] 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.[82]

Consultancy and the rendering of advice are different, and it is important to distinguish them. One typically renders advice within one's established roles and duties as an organizational member. A common prerequisite is being tactically and technically competent in one's position and capable of rendering advice appropriately when needed. However, internal consulting

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[80] Lippitt and Lippitt, *Consulting Process,* 20-23.
[81] Beverly Scott and B. Kim Barnes, *Consulting on the Inside: An Internal Consultant's Guide to Living and Working Inside Organizations* (Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training and Development, 2011).
[82] Scott and Barnes, *Consulting on the Inside*, 3-12.

for the organization normally falls outside of one's ordinary duties as it implies a more strategic perspective.[83] Internal consultants help leaders think through a problem, make decisions, or act, regardless of what the problem is or how it relates to the consultant's position. Consultants may have to exercise a position that is personally or professionally disadvantageous, which can be difficult. Therefore, internal consultants are boundary spanners who place the organization's needs over their own.

Responsibilities in the military context

From their extensive experiences within the military, senior leaders naturally serve 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.[84] Thus, senior leaders have a personal stake in ensuring the profession's culture of trust, autonomy, and capability to perform its mission effectively.[85]

Another senior leader responsibility is *thinking critically and reflectively* to discriminate information, identify problems, evaluate options, and continuously learn.[86] At the strategic level, leaders must learn to operate comfortably in environments with incomplete or biased information, and must question the validity and reliability of what is available and dig for more when necessary.[87]

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.[88] As a stakeholder in the organization, the internal consultant has the right and obligation to communicate problems

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[83] Scott and Barnes, *Consulting on the Inside*, 7-10.

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

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

[86] Galvin, *Enhancing Identity Development*, 24.

[87] Douglas E. Waters, "Senior Leader Competencies," in *Strategic Leadership Primer*, 4th ed., ed. Thomas P. Galvin (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College press, 2019).

[88] Galvin, *Enhancing Identity Development*, 29.

to the leadership—speaking, in Aaron Wildavsky's words, "truth to power."[89] This can be very difficult if the leadership is the source of the problem or is adamant about ignoring it and the consequences.

Finally, however, senior leaders also need to examine the internal context of the organization and recognize any limitations in its capacity. They must be aware of the military's can-do attitude and propensity for action, and thus avoid asking too much of members or asking them to perform tasks they are ill-suited and ill-equipped for.[90]

Ethics of being an internal consultant

Consulting, whether internal or external, invokes several ethical questions and dilemmas. The integrity of the 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 to render themselves obsolete, such as when the problem is fixed or when the leader has decided to take (or not take) action.[91]

There are several ethical challenges unique to internal consultancy brought about 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 consultant.[92] The dilemmas the internal consultant faces is only partly whether to speak, but how and why.[93]

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

[90] With thanks to an external reviewer for this insight.

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

[92] Levinson, *Organizational Assessment*, 38; and 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.

[93] 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 sought to prolong the contact, potentially costing the command a lot of money. Recognizing

A second ethical challenge is one's own standing and relationships within the organization. If a senior leader directly tasks a member from deep within the organization to investigate an issue (e.g., climate or morale problem), members must avoid letting such special attention go to their heads. The good of the organization is at stake, and the consultant must strive for maximum objectivity and maintain professionalism. Consultants assuming an elevated status may harm relationships within the organization. Therefore, they must avoid interfering with the conduct of ordinary activities or creating distrust between members and their leaders.[94]

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 manipulated by the leader into predetermined solutions, despite the evidence that other solutions would be better.[95] 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 solution and why? Is it a mandate from a stakeholder? Also, why change *now*? What are the risks and benefits of alternative timelines that satisfy leaders and stakeholders while ensuring the continuity in the organization? The consultant may be able to negotiate solutions that satisfy both leaders and members.[96]

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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 successfully presented our case to the commander as a group and the consultant was released.

[94] 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 staffs that were 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.

[95] Lippitt and Lippitt, *Consulting Process*, 89-92.

[96] 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

Implications

Complacency may be the enemy, but change is not necessarily one's friend.[97] As a change agent, senior leaders have a responsibility to sustain mission accomplishment while improving the organization. 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 place senior leaders in difficult positions or increase anxiety and tensions within the organization. It falls to the judgment of senior leaders how to approach change requirements, how to engage with leaders and members, and 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.

The key is never to conflate continuity with complacency. They are not the same thing. Change agents are also continuity agents, because while fixing problems they also avoid or mitigate collateral damage to what the organization needs to preserve for predictability, reliability, or stability purposes. Especially when consulting from the inside, a change agent must recognize the boundary between what to change and what to preserve, and continuously negotiate their responsibilities with senior leaders when that boundary becomes unclear.

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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 produced a long-term suitable and feasible solution.

[97] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 36.

Part Two. A Framework for Leading and Managing Change

4. The Six-Phase Change Intervention

As highlighted in Chapter 1, the typical change management model focuses on the processes of change. This chapter will introduce some of these process models and then superimpose Pettigrew's constructs of context, content, and time on top of them. The result will be a six-phase framework that follows a general approach used by consultants beginning with the change agent encountering a problematic situation and determining that its resolution is necessary.

Following from Chapter 2, this framework views *change as a verb*, where change constitutes a deliberate act to achieve an end. The change effort is therefore an intervention into the status quo.

But this description is inadequate as it includes trivial efforts, such as someone randomly doing something disruptive (or even destructive) for a purpose that is clear in that person's mind alone. Has something changed? Undoubtedly, but for present purposes, viable interventions must exhibit certain qualities, else others may see them as series of haphazard acts:

- Mindful of the mission, vision, strategy, goals, identity, and other aspects of the organization
- Products of rational thought processes that consider the internal and external contexts, the problem, and the organization's culture and climate
- Mindful of the time, resources, and attention available to implement change[98]

Note that the above does not imply that the intervention will be beneficial to the organization or its members. Viable change efforts may include dissolving or decommissioning a unit, downsizing the organization due to reduced missions or

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[98] Scott and Barnes, *Consulting on the Inside*, 249-251.

resources, or elimination of a task and divestment of its associated capabilities. Moreover, the benefits and risks of change efforts will rarely affect members equally, and therefore leaders must assume that their efforts will generate at least some opposition. A quality intervention maximizes the opportunities for effective communication to members and consideration of their needs, for efficient planning and establishment of metrics, and for coordinated action. The organization should be better prepared to adjust and adapt as conditions change. A poor intervention may lack connection to the mission, may come about impulsively without consideration of the stakeholders' or members' needs, or be the result of leaders not communicating it well. Interventions with such problems are more likely to fail and result in lingering resistance to future change efforts.

This chapter briefly discusses what it means to intervene in the environment to achieve desired change and concludes with the six-phase framework used in this book to lead and manage change, from defining the problem to launching the change effort, and terminating the effort.

How does a change intervention work?

The basic processes of intervention involve disrupting the old, embedding the new, keeping the organization moving in the desired direction, and mitigating risk or harm. But initiating the process is difficult, and the organization should welcome (or at a minimum, not interfere with) the intervention. Many process models of change management draw from a common source, that of Kurt Lewin.

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.[99] Figure 5 depicts these three stages.

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[99] 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

First, leaders must jolt the organization out of its complacency by unfreezing it. 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*, 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.
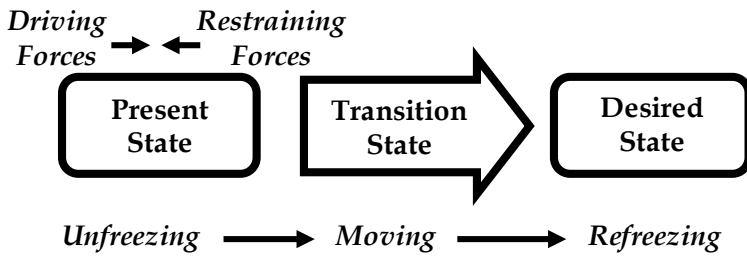
Figure 5. Lewin's planned change[100]

Exercising planned change requires the organization to expend considerable time and effort at each phase. It is certainly difficult to prepare an organization for change during the 'unfreeze' phase. Leaders often must convince 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.

Lewin's model became the inspiration or foundation for many change management models that followed. For example, John Kotter's (2012) eight-step model maps to Lewin's three-phases as shown in Figure 6.

The important lesson is that process-oriented models tend to include some analogy of Lewin's three phases even though the

Management Theories and Research," *Delhi Business Review* 9, no. 1 (January-June 2008): 1-20, http://www.delhibusinessreview.org/V_9n1/v9n1a.pdf.
[100] Graphic adapted by author from Lewin, *Field Theory*.

numbers of steps or tasks may vary.[101] But, it would be a mistake to think of these models as necessarily top-down. This impression may come from the idea that only leaders have the capacity or the authority to do or direct these actions, especially involving vision which is traditionally viewed as a commander's responsibility.[102] However, these and other process models apply in either top-down (i.e., planned) or bottom-up (i.e., emergent or innovative) change efforts.[103] The difference between the two is who is driving the change. Whereas the commander confers more legitimacy to top-down planned change, the change agent pushes bottom-up change more directly, sometimes without the explicit consent or authority of the leadership. Thus, top-down change tends to involve more of the organization, if not the entire organization. Bottom-up change may only involve a part of the organization, but the impact of the effort may span the whole organization.

Lewin (1951)	Kotter (2012)
Unfreezing	Establish sense of urgency
	Create a guiding coalition
	Developing a vision and strategy
	Communicating the change vision
Moving	Empowering employees for broad-based action
	Generating short-term wins
	Consolidating gains and producing more change
Refreezing	Anchoring new approaches into the culture

Figure 6. Comparison of Lewin and Kotter[104]

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[101] Brisson-Banks, "Managing Change and Transitions," 250-251.

[102] Galvin, *Responsible Command*, 101-104.

[103] Rune Todnam By, "Organisational Change Models: A Critical Review," *Journal of Change Management* 5, no. 4 (December 2005): 369-380.

[104] Adapted from Claire V. Brisson-Banks, "Managing Change and Transitions: A Comparison of Different Models and Their Commonalities," *Library Management* 31, no. 4/5 (2010): 241-252, 250.

What is necessary for an intervention to succeed?

As Pettigrew's Triangle (Chapter 1) shows, no two change efforts are alike even if they share similar problems, solutions, and conditions. Therefore, there is no magic formula for success. However, there are two common factors addressed in nearly all books and models of change – *proponency* and *legitimacy*. They both relate to who is championing for the change effort – be it the leader or the change agent or someone else – and who is managing it —responsible for planning and implementing the change.

Example: Proponency and Kotter's (2012) guiding coalitions

Someone must oversee making the change effort happen, and in military organizations this is typically an assigned responsibility. The common military staff model makes it simple to assign proponency for a given effort. The J-1 or service equivalent might be the proponent for interventions in personnel and administration, the J-2 for intelligence, the J-4 for sustainment and so on. The proponent shoulders significant responsibilities and must be set up for success with the time and resources to gather information, gain and maintain support, and plan and implement change.

Establishing proponency is critical during the formative stages of the effort. The moment that someone (e.g., the change agent) identifies the need for change and communicates it to another, there is already proponency. The change agent is the proponent and continues to be until the organization formally assigns a proponent if the organization does so. It may not, in which case the change agent is driving change bottom-up. The tasks of proponency are great and a single individual can rarely handle it.

This is where Kotter's concept of a *guiding coalition* comes into play. A guiding coalition is a team of individuals who serves as the initial proponent, with the right mix of organizational members who can collectively move the effort forward. The guiding coalition is not necessarily leaders, in fact Kotter strongly

suggests that a guiding coalition of only leaders will result in failed change.[105] A successful coalition has the following:

- Enough key members, such as senior leaders and staff members, so that those not included are not able to block progress, and

- Who are credible in the organization so the change effort can be taken seriously, and

- With sufficient diversity in expertise and perspectives for more informed decision making, and

- Exercising sufficient leadership to drive the change effort forward[106]

The assignment of a formal proponent – be it a subunit or staff directorate -- does not negate the importance of these qualities. Formal proponents may exercise greater centralized control over guiding coalitions or may be overwhelmed with other tasks and lack the energy to sustain momentum that the coalition originally built. Therefore, change agents must not only be mindful of proponency throughout the effort, but they should also monitor transitions in proponency to ensure continuity in the organization's commitment to change.

Proponents also must ask themselves who else needs to know. Change efforts can carry second- and third-order consequences for others and it is often better for the proponents to be proactive and reach out to those who may be affected.[107]

Example: Suchman's (1995) Management of Legitimacy

Military organizations exercise a more hierarchical and top-down culture than business or corporations. Thus, a concern for guiding coalitions is the possibility that the commander, chief of staff, or other key internal stakeholders may unilaterally decide to stop the change effort in its tracks or erect barriers to progress. They may not see the effort as valuable compared to other requirements or may not consider the aims feasible, suitable, or

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[105] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 61.
[106] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 59.
[107] With thanks to an external reviewer for this insight.

acceptable. So, while these individuals may not be members of the guiding coalition, their support or non-interference may be vital to getting the change effort off the ground.

The general idea is one of *legitimacy*, which Suchman (1995) defined as follows, "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions."[108] Suchman summarizes several different forms of legitimacy, but for present purposes the form of greatest interest is *moral legitimacy*, which is the sense that something is the "right thing to do." Suchman describes four forms of moral legitimacy. I have adapted their meanings for military purposes:

- *Consequential legitimacy* – as the need for change is known, will others judge the organization on what it does and what it fails to do to address the need?

- *Procedural legitimacy* – are the organization's approaches and methods to implementing change consider accepted and viable?

- *Structural legitimacy* – is the organization postured to monitor itself and ensure that the change effort does not break the organization while trying to implement fixes?

- *Personal legitimacy* – does the commander appear to endorse the effort and therefore the organization should be comfortable committing to it?[109]

Military organizations gravitate toward the last, personal legitimacy, under the assumption that a commander's endorsement is sufficient validation for the effort to proceed. However, such an endorsement does not necessarily endure. The commander's interest may have piqued when the guiding coalition initially presented the effort, but the commander may lack the time and interest to actively endorse the effort afterwards. Thus, the coalition must treat the commander as a critical internal stakeholder.

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[108] Mark C. Suchman, "Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches," *Academy of Management Review* 20, no. 3 (1995): 571-610, 574.
[109] Suchman, "Managing legitimacy," 579-582.

Meanwhile, a commander's endorsement does not necessarily overcome resistance on its own. There is the potential for others to put up barriers against the effort based on disputes against the commander or the coalition along the other three forms of legitimacy – that doing nothing is the best option, that the ways of implementing change are unacceptable, or that the risk of change are too great. These challenges are likely to surface continuously throughout the change effort, and the coalition must prepare to face those challenges.

When and how does one start?

Change agents may feel that their problem is urgent such that the organization must act now. Sometimes the problems are that urgent, that taking no action leaves the organization at significant risk, therefore they must face resistance to change head-on. Other times, the problem may not be as urgent, and the change agent may need to wait until the right conditions or opportunities avail themselves. But the change agent must prepare to take immediate action, as such opportunities can be fleeting.

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

How does the change agent know that favorable conditions exist? Fortunately, Andrew Pettigrew (1992) developed a set of receptive contexts that the change agent can leverage to encourage the organization to change.[110] 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 receptive and show willingness to change. It is important that these leaders hold positions from which they can champion

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[110] 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 have lessened impact.

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 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.[111]

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 may not be apparent in 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.

Example: Lippitt & Lippitt (1986) guide for consultants

As internal consultants in military organizations, 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 may require personal legitimacy conferred by a senior leader to allow the change agent or coalition to gain access to the information needed for properly analyzing the problem and developing suitable plans. This can lead to a paradox in that the change agent may need to conduct a preliminary inquiry or research of some form to formulate the change problem sufficiency to earn buy-in from the leader. Such an inquiry may mobilize resistance against the effort before it has had a chance to get moving.

The consulting process, 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.[112]

1. *Initial Contact*. If top-down, the senior leader has identified a problem and selects and empowers the

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[111] 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.

[112] 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.

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 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.[113]

The outcome of this process is a foundation of legitimacy that should be more self-sustaining, though there is no guarantee. The senior leader has committed to the effort and validated its aims and approaches to an appropriate extent.

Putting it all together

The remainder of Part II covers six overlapping phases involved in planning, leading, and managing change efforts. Figure 7 shows them, and each has a corresponding activity available in the companion *Leading Change Experiential Activity Book*, also 2nd edition.[114]

Although there is a sequencing presented, it is important to remember Pettigrew's Triangle and understand that the environment and the character of the problem will necessarily influence the processes used. The conduct of later activities may necessitate updates or adjustments to earlier ones. This is normal. In some instances, it may be necessary to re-state the problem if the resulting plan proves infeasible or unsustainable. In other instances, circumstances (e.g., external pressures, crisis situations)

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[113] Lippitt and Lippitt, *Consulting Process in Action*.
[114] Thomas P. Galvin, *Leading Change in Military Organizations: Experiential Activity Book*, 2nd ed. (Carlisle, PA: Department of Command, Leadership, and Management, 2023).

necessitate quick action. Leaders may therefore need to anchor on the change story or vision to get the process moving.

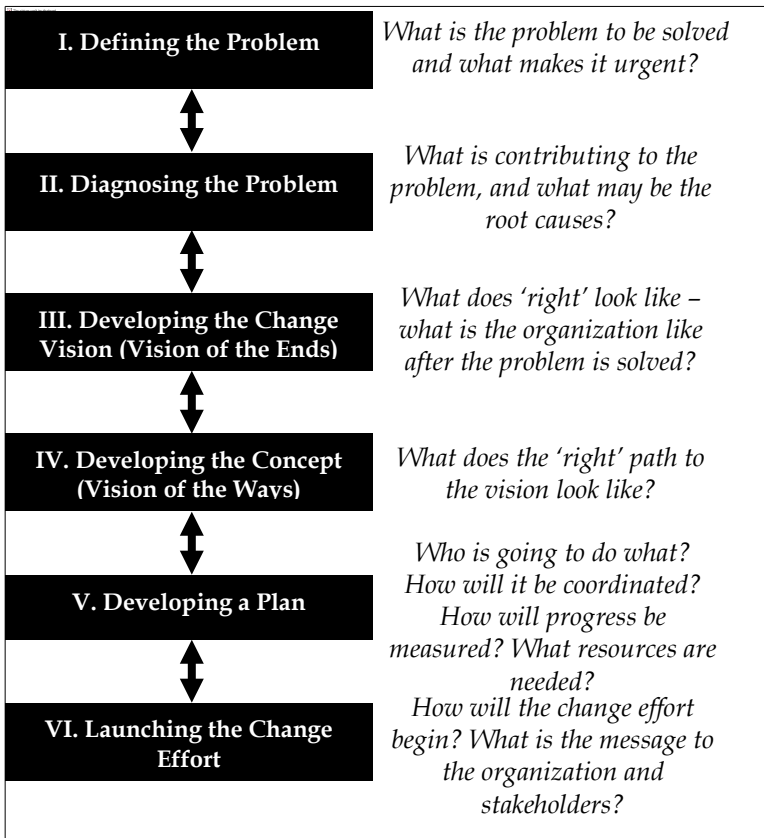|	
I. Defining the Problem	*What is the problem to be solved and what makes it urgent?*
II. Diagnosing the Problem	*What is contributing to the problem, and what may be the root causes?*
III. Developing the Change Vision (Vision of the Ends)	*What does 'right' look like – what is the organization like after the problem is solved?*
IV. Developing the Concept (Vision of the Ways)	*What does the 'right' path to the vision look like?*
V. Developing a Plan	*Who is going to do what? How will it be coordinated? How will progress be measured? What resources are needed?*
VI. Launching the Change Effort	*How will the change effort begin? What is the message to the organization and stakeholders?*

Figure 7. The six-phase framework[115]

Each of these phases has a communication component because the change agent will depend on the organization and network of external stakeholders continuously.

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[115] Original graphic by author.

5. Phase I -- Defining the Problem

Phase I is 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 tricky 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) 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 many other change management models follow.

How does one identify a problem?

Lewin's model explains one process of change. As explained in the Preface, change agents need to supply a bit of context and content. Before one begins unfreezing the organization, one needed to have figured out what was dissatisfactory in the organization in the first place. There is an apocryphal quote often attributed to 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."[116] Whether Einstein 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 change agents can develop the most

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[116] 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/

optimal plan. 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.[117] But what was the problem? 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 separate from the problem. The right questions were not the ones asked.

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.[118] He prefaces it with an example of unclear problem definition in industry like the black beret example the problem is A and has effect B. When the worker complains about B and asks for

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[117] "United States: Badge of Honour," *The Economist* 359, no. 8226 (Jun 16, 2001): 34, https://search.proquest.com/docview/224036312?accountid=4444

[118] 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

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 situation. 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. It is useful to think of the basic need as falling into one or more of the following categories:

- *Organizational performance.* Is the organization doing things right? The problem appears as shortcomings in its mission accomplishment such as a lack of readiness or inferior performance during training.

- *Organizational alignment.* Is the organization doing the right things? The problem is with the mission itself or the organizational structure such that its capabilities and performance are losing relevance.

- *Organizational commitment.* Are the members satisfied with being members of the unit? Are they happy, fulfilled, and productive or are they frustrated, angry, or seeking to leave?

Second, *can you justify the need?* In the grand scheme of things, does this problem matter? Is it worth the effort and the resources to change the organization and 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. Something worked for a time, or all prior attempts failed. Why? Such information would 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 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.[119] One can establish such urgency by drawing from either the external or internal contexts as 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 opposing parties of the nature and

[119] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 35-51.

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

Example: 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 may cause others to easily dismiss the crisis. 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 (2005) typology of four crises that organizations face. The typology has two axes--the *predictability* of the crisis (easy or hard) and the *influenceability* over the crisis by the organization (easy or hard). Figure 8 presents the four types of crises, depicting the characters of the organization's responses in the gray boxes.

Conventional (easily predictable and influenceable). These sorts of crises are those that the organization would ordinarily 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 routine crisis situations. The outcomes are often embarrassing or dangerous for leaders.

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, 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 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.

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

Figure 8. Gundel's typology of crises (with annotations)[120]

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.

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[120] Adapted from Stephan Gundel, "Towards a New Typology of Crises," *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management* 13, no. 3 (2005), 112.

Fundamental (neither predictable nor influenceable). These crises are the doomsday scenarios, where the hazard could not be foreseen, and the organization is incapable of preventing or influencing the crisis. Ordinarily, these would be extremely rare and powerful. Natural examples would include extremely powerful earthquakes and tsunamis. The catastrophic failure of the Internet or the Global Positioning System that so much of society depends on 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.[121] The gray boxes in Figure 8 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 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. 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 seems

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[121] 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, 2019).

exceptional or unusual, which might signal to stakeholders that crises could recur and therefore change is necessary.

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

How can one measure the impact of the problem?

Example: A taxonomy of competitive advantage in military organizations (2022)

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*.[122] 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, a military uses 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

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[122] Thomas P. Galvin, "What is the 'Defense Enterprise'?" in Thomas P. Galvin and Lou Yuengert (eds.), *Defense Management: Primer for Senior Leaders* (Carlisle, PA: Department of Command, Leadership, and Management, 2018), 24-25.

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

Military preparedness literature provides various descriptors of comparative advantage.[123] 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:

- *Aligned with Assigned Roles and Missions* – How well or poorly does the organization's mission and structure match what is 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—personnel, 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

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[123] Thomas P. Galvin, *Military Preparedness* (faculty paper, Carlisle, PA: Department of Command, Leadership, and Management, 2016.

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 staffing 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* – Does the organization have the full backing and support of its stakeholders, especially if the organization needs to mobilize to a war footing? Or are stakeholders (perhaps unintentionally) signaling to adversaries that the organization is in any way underprepared to fight and win?[124]

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[124] These are derived from the *principles of preparedness* discussed John M. Collins, *Military Preparedness: Principles Compared to U.S. Practices*, Report #94-48S (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 1994), cited in Galvin, *Military Preparedness.*

Defining a problem using a "change story"

Humans are storytellers. We love a good story, and all good stories are about *change*—ordinarily in the protagonist. Consider popular stories like the *Harry Potter* series. Each book placed the protagonist, Harry Potter, in a situation demanding change. From the need to leave the home of the Dursleys and attend Hogwarts in the first novel to overcoming self-doubt to face Lord Voldemort in the ultimate battle, Harry underwent tremendous growth and maturity in each adventure. Audiences loved them. As of 2018, when the Harry Potter franchise was twenty years old, over 500 million copies of the book have been sold.[125]

Can one leverage this in organizational settings to spur change? Absolutely, but is not easy. Organizations make difficult protagonists. It is tough to convey the same sense of conflict and tension in such an abstract entity. So, the approach taken in this activity is to personify the need for change. The protagonist will therefore be either the change agent (e.g., you) or the leader who would be the change effort's champion.

Figure 9 shows the structure of a change story. Briefly, the story situates the protagonist at the *current state*, in which the lines of inquiry above help to define. The star reflects the decision point that the organization faces, and there are two options. One is to keep the organization on the present path, shown as a straight line forward that leads to a situation where the current state has degenerated to a weaker *undesired future state*. Key is that for each problematic condition in the current state, there is an analogous worse version of it expressed in the undesired future state. For example, if the current state includes a problem of misalignment with the environment such that the existing organizational capabilities seem no longer appropriate or relevant, the future would see those same capabilities as growing increasing irrelevant to the point of obsolescence. The change story must express the connections between the current and undesired future states in logical fashion, without being unduly alarmist or stretching the scope of the problem beyond reason. For example,

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[125] Barry Hardymon, "Inside the Ever Expanding Wizarding World: Harry Potter at 20," npr.org, October 28, 2018, https://www.npr.org/2018/10/28/661096501/inside-the-ever-expanding-wizarding-world-harry-potter-at-20

it would not be helpful to claim that if the lowered readiness of a unit persists, the entire Army would fail.
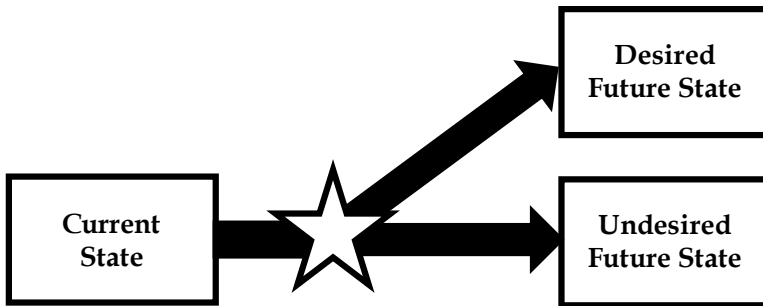
Figure 9. Structure of the change story[126]

The preferred option is to change the organization's course to a better situation where the organization corrects (or at least mitigates) the problem. This is the *desired future state.* Its elements also have analogs with the current state. In the above example of irrelevance growing to obsolescence, the desired future state would see the problem of irrelevance corrected, such as hanging and clarifying the organization's roles and missions, or its capabilities transformed to suit the environment.

The future states should clearly contrast, such that others are convinced to avoid the undesired future state and pursue the desired future state. The logical connections in the story enhance legitimacy by presenting a stark choice that others cannot easily dismiss as unrealistic or overstated. The work put into the story will also facilitate later phases by giving a head start in diagnosing the problem in detail and envisioning the change effort's goals.

[126] Original graphic by author.

6. Phase II -- Diagnosing the Problem

It may be surprising that defining the problem comes before diagnosing it. Shouldn't one research the problem first before declaring what it is? In some circumstances, perhaps, but this is difficult to do in a large, complex organization such as a military. After all, the change agent's perspective is probably limited, so one can view the change story as more like a proposal for change that requires development. The change agent may need to ask leaders to allow the collection of sufficient data to analyze the problem's causes. Even if collecting and organizing the change agent's own observations and experiences are enough to justify the change effort, leaders may not be satisfied until the whole organization has been engaged or involved to some extent.

Diagnosis is more than analysis; it is an intervention. It is an extensive and deliberate action to determine the causes of the current state. Why is the organization underperforming, is misaligned with the environment, or has dissatisfied members? What contributed to those causes? Has the organization previously tried to address these concerns? What happened or did not happen? Answering these questions often requires a greater commitment of time and energy than the guiding coalition can muster on its own. For the coalition to proceed, leaders need to legitimize the change story to allow coalition members access to data and information otherwise hidden from them.

But getting past the obvious symptoms and finding the root causes are hard. Fortunately, there are many diagnostic models available, with many having common structures that involve organizing massive amounts of data, some of it ambiguous or contradictory, and systematically pursuing promising leads while discarding dead ends. Coalition members may engage in interactions with other members and stakeholders, observations, and performance indicators. Complaints, difficulties, or unsatisfying experiences are potential indicators. If the coalition chooses to investigate, it determines what additional data to collect, from where, and how.

But the answer is not likely to be definitive or even unambiguous. Like in matters of health, the symptoms one sees

may originate from various ailments, some of which may be difficult to eliminate because the evidence may not be clear. Thus, change agents conduct diagnoses for the following purpose: to find the *best explanation* for the organization's current state, and providing *best advice* to leadership on how to proceed with change.

A detailed process model for diagnosis is beyond the scope of this book. Instead, this chapter addresses three essential questions about conducting diagnoses and offers a couple models for illustrative purposes. The first question regards common dilemmas and difficulties in conducting diagnoses and therefore what guidance from the senior leader may be useful to the coalition.[127] The second question regards how to determine what data to collect. 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 analyzing the data and generating new leads to pursue. This chapter corresponds to Activity Two in the *Experiential Activity Book* that uses the Weisbord (1976) six-box model, introduced below, as the basis for conducting a diagnosis. However, the Activity works with any diagnostic model.[128]

What are challenges of performing diagnoses?

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: 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

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[127] 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.

[128] Salvatore Falletta, *Organizational Diagnostic Models: A Review and Synthesis*, Human Resources Intelligence Report (Sacramento, CA: Leadersphere, 2008).

dilemmas that consultants typically face when negotiating the terms of a diagnostic effort.[129] The first is the *goals dilemma* that governs the effort's scope. The change agent or coalition may want to examine the full breadth of the problem expressed in the change story, but for several reasons the senior leader may not want to go that far. They will only accept pursuing a part of the problem, such as a narrow issue that one could diagnose quickly and with less disruption to the rest of the organization. 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 coalition'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.[130]

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 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 essential information only available from organizational members. Wider involvement by the organization is 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

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

[130] For a more detailed discussion about ethical challenges facing consultants, see Chapter 5, "Ethical Dilemmas and Value Guidelines" in Lippitt and Lippitt, *The Consulting Process*, 77-98.

assessment – the whole organization or just a specific entity?[131] Although the assessment may aspire to benefit the whole organization, it may only benefit 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 inferior performance of individuals.[132] Trust is critical for the internal consultant, both with the sponsor and with 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 is pursuing the study with preconceived outcomes in mind.[133] 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 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.[134]

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[131] Harrison, "Hard Choices," 18.

[132] Harrison, "Hard Choices," 18.

[133] Lippitt & Lippitt, *The Consulting Process*, 97.

[134] 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. 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.

How to identify the data to collect & analyze?

This section introduces two well-known diagnostic models designed to allow for easy categorization and integration of raw data. These are the Weisbord six-box model and the Burke-Litwin model. Both models are suitable for exploring the problems of performance, alignment, and commitment as defined in Chapter 5, although the Burke-Litwin model is more comprehensive than Weisbord. Both are also relatively simple to explain and use. The Annex includes resources for other diagnostic models that may be more applicable and comparative analyses that may allow change agents to choose the best model to suit a particular problem or type of organization.

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

Weisbord (1976) developed his six-box model following two decades of consulting experience. The model addressed two concerns of his: (1) previous models were too complicated to be of use, and (2) organizational theories were becoming too abstract for practical use. Thus, Weisbord designed the model as a straightforward way for leaders to approach organizational problems without getting mired in matters of theory.

Figure 10 shows Weisbord's diagnostic model incorporating both formal and informal structures and processes, which he expressed as the system that exists on paper versus what people do.[135] He cautioned against assuming that personality conflicts or attitudes are primary cause of problems within the organization. The natural response might be to simply remove offending individuals, but Weisbord's experiences showed that such actions would not work. The effects that those individuals had on the organization often became embedded in the overall organizational culture, such that removing the individuals would not solve the problem.

Using the model for data collection is simple – each box represents a segment of the organization's activities and disposition. The leading questions associated with each box help the change agent determine what specific questions to ask of

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[135] Falletta, *Organizational Diagnostic* Models, 9.

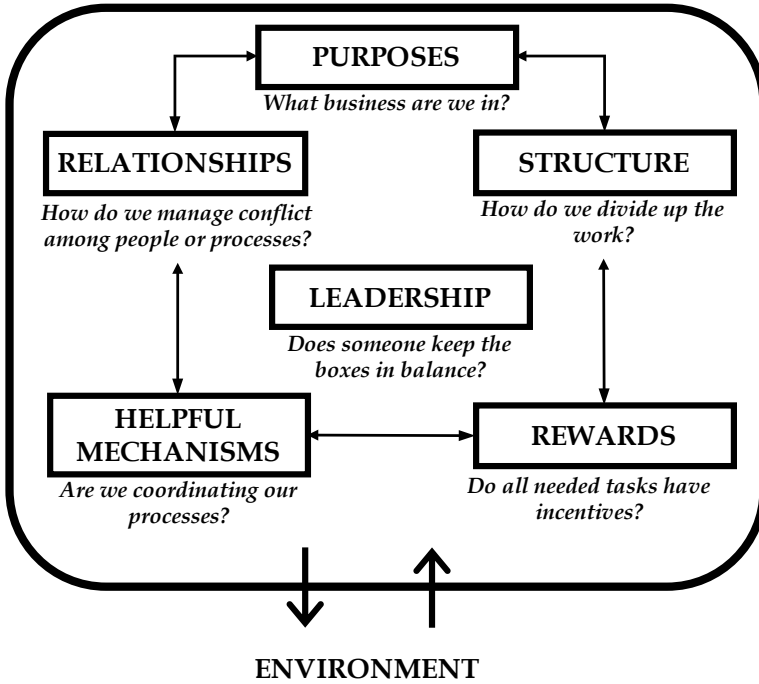members. The arrows show that the data is interrelated or interdependent, which facilitates later analysis.


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                    ┌──────────────────┐
                    │    PURPOSES      │
                    └──────────────────┘
                   What business are we in?

  ┌──────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────┐
  │  RELATIONSHIPS   │              │    STRUCTURE     │
  └──────────────────┘              └──────────────────┘
  How do we manage conflict         How do we divide up the
  among people or processes?                work?

              ┌──────────────────┐
              │    LEADERSHIP    │
              └──────────────────┘
             Does someone keep the
              boxes in balance?

  ┌──────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────┐
  │     HELPFUL      │              │     REWARDS      │
  │   MECHANISMS     │              └──────────────────┘
  └──────────────────┘              Do all needed tasks have
  Are we coordinating our                incentives?
  processes?
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ENVIRONMENT

Figure 10. Weisbord's six-box diagnostic model[136]

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

A second, more complicated model is the Burke-Litwin (1992) model of organizational performance that assesses twice the variables separated into two levels of analysis.[137] Although the authors titled their model as one of performance, it is also suitable for matters of alignment and commitment as defined in Chapter 5 in this book.

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[136] 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.

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

The model neatly divides into two nested levels, as shown in Figure 11. The *transactional* factors are inside the gray box and govern the management of routine activities that often contribute to matters of organizational performance and member commitment. These include: (a) *management practices* that govern how leaders 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 including 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, and many of them contribute to matters of organizational alignment. The model identifies five such factors: (a) the *external environment* that includes anything influencing the organization from outside, (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.[138]

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.[139] Each of these relate to interactions among one or more of the transactional (gray) portion in Figure 11, 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.

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[138] Burke and Litwin, "A Causal Model," 531-533.
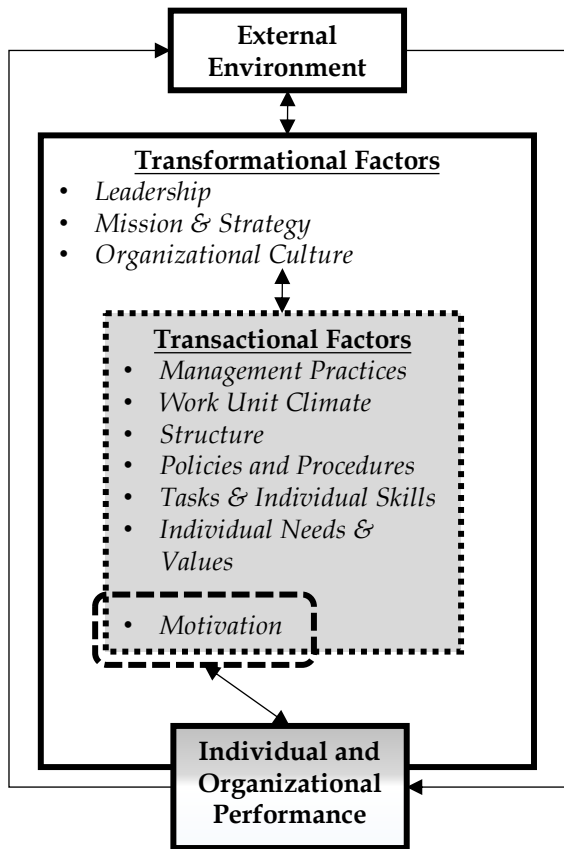[139] Burke and Litwin, "A Causal Model," 533.

Figure 11. Burke-Litwin (1992) model - simplified[140]

The model's second implication is *culture change requires transformation.*[141] Transformational variables, shown as the white boxes in Figure 11, 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.

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[140] Adapted by author from Burke and Litwin, "A Causal Model," 528. In the original diagram, each factor is indicated in its own box with direct feedback arrows to each other factor as appropriate.

[141] Burke and Litwin, "A Causal Model," 528.

How to make sense of the data?

Consider a common application of diagnosis – the medical doctor communicating with a patient complaining of a cough. To a non-professional, a basic internal search is likely to generate dozens of explanations for the cough – from minor issues such as the common cold or allergic reaction to serious diseases such as emphysema or lung cancer.[142] But to a doctor, there are other important data points to consider where determining which of these explanations are best. What is the age, gender, medical history, and recent activities (e.g., travel) of the patient? What kind of cough is it? Intuition allows the doctor to connect data points together or identify gaps in knowledge or understanding, suggesting additional questions to ask of the patient. As change agents gather more knowledge, they may rule out as unlikely some explanations, while other new ones emerge as possibilities. By the end, the doctor has: (a) narrowed it down to one and only one and thus prescribes treatment, (b) narrowed it down to a very select few and orders tests to gather important information, (c) recognizes a lack of sufficient expertise to confirm a diagnosis and refers the patient to an expert or specialist, or (d) some combination of the above.[143]

Both the Weisbord and Burke-Litwin models include this iterative process for identifying causal factors contributing to the current state and subsequently pursuing the root causes of those factors. Users add each new finding to the appropriate box in the model as additional data representing the current state. There are three steps to a diagnostic process whereby the available data leads to identifying what to investigate or uncover next. First is to identify what is important using the analytical steps in the Weisbord method – looking for misalignment between what the organization is versus what it should be, in terms of performance, behavior, or other factors. Second is to identify patterns or relationships among the relevant facts that can lead to additional information. Third is to converge on conclusions that provide

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[142] See Mayo Clinic Staff, "Symptoms: Cough," *Mayo Clinic Website,* January 11, 2018, available at https://www.mayoclinic.org/symptoms/cough/basics/causes/sym-20050846

[143] For a more thorough treatment of backward chaining, see Stuart J. Russell and Peter Norvig, *Artificial intelligence: a modern approach*, 3rd ed. (Harlow, UK: Pearson, 2009), 337-344.

better explanations for the added information. Change agents repeat these steps until they generate no further information.

Although this process sounds simple enough, it may be very difficult to do in practice due to the complexity of the data. Ambiguity, uncertainty, and incompleteness are common challenges facing the change agent. Hence, management consultants have developed various heuristics or rules of thumb to help sort through the data and determine what is significant and useful versus what may be misleading or unhelpful. One such approach follows.

Example – Miles and Hubermann's tactics (1994)

With the diagnosis challenges in mind, there are several published strategies for performing the analysis and articulating the results despite incompleteness or inconsistencies in the data. In reviewing various models, Miles and Hubermann's (1994) thirteen tactics stand out as particularly useful.[144] Instead of promoting a large, comprehensive strategy that may not fit each organization perfectly, their thirteen tactics constitute a sequenced menu of tools consultants can use at their discretion. This paper summarizes eight of the thirteen tactics 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."[145] 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 explanations for what otherwise might not make sense. But, once one proffers such an explanation, they must pursue the

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[144] Adapted from Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994), 245-287.
[145] Miles and Hubermann, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 246.

evidence. 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.

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 "roadblock" versus simply being "vigilant" or "enforcing standards." Miles and Hubermann offer a question that could help in articulating findings: "If I only had two words to describe an important feature at this site, what would they be?"[146]

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, 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 regular members, 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.

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[146] Miles and Hubermann, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 252.

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. The backlogging problem mentioned earlier could be the result of several important findings integrated together into one big problem – (1) under staffing the admin staff, (2) lacking training, (3) lower-level supervisors pushing up poor products, and (4) confusing or conflicting guidance from above.

Noting Relationships Between Variables.[147] A variable is a number or condition in the data that can change. Sometimes it is quantifiable (e.g., processing time for a staff action) or categorized (e.g., 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) *positively 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 or negatively correlated*, 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, acting 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.

Diagnosing the problem systematically

In general terms, conducting a diagnosis is like asking hundreds of 'why' questions. *Why is this symptom present, and what is causing it?* Then, for each new piece of information gathered,

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[147] 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.

one asks if that is also a symptom of the same problem or perhaps of a different problem. And so on.

Figure 12 depicts this process as a loop and shows where the theories presented in this chapter might fit. Here, Weisbord and Burke-Litwin are used as the organizing construct for the information collected. As more data is collected, it is analyzed (using a tool such as Miles-Huberman) to produce new insights or uncover more symptoms. This newly learned information is fed back into the model and the inquiry is repeated until no new information is learned or available time is exhausted.
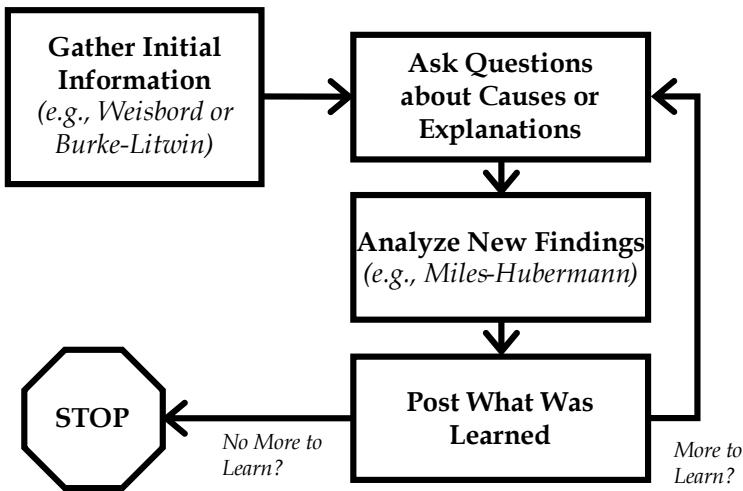
Figure 12. Iterative process of diagnosis[148]

One must constrain the questioning to the scope of the problem under consideration. The questions must be purposeful and relevant, otherwise members may find them intrusive and unhelpful. In the end, the result of the diagnosis should provide the best explanation for the problem defined in Phase I. It may not be a perfect explanation, but it should be the best one can come up with.

The challenge for consultants lies in incomplete, errant, or misleading data with which they must contend. Either the

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[148] Original graphic by author.

participant (e.g., trying to steer the findings) or the consultant (e.g., pushing a preconceived notion of what is going on) can bias organizational members. 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 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.[149]

Even with the best possible data, there are three challenges that change agents should consider in their analyses. The first is *levels of analysis*, which Burke-Litwin discusses in the form of the transformational-transactional boundary.[150] It is important that change agents 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 manifests transactionally through support to individual service members, aggregated in the form of statistics. Change agents must be clear and consistent about the levels of analysis they are using.[151]

The second challenge is *defining terms*. An example 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.,

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[149] 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.

[150] Burke & Litwin, "A Causal Model," 529-530.

[151] In my experience, a common error is when the change agent analyzes what is understood to be a systemic problem through the lens of a single instance of that problem, often the change agent's personal experience. This clearly introduces bias into the diagnostic process and must be avoided.

environmental damage)? A detailed definition of terms, and the consistent use of them, is key.[152]

The third and greatest challenge is the *distributed environment* of many large military organizations 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 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 change agents in the Pentagon understand the situation in theater. Change agents must also continuously self-reflect on their own data collection methods. Do they introduce bias or pre-suppose an assumed problem or solution? Do they gather all the data the consultant intends? Sometimes, important performance data only becomes known in face-to-face sessions or working groups, which is not always possible due to limited time and travel budgets.

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[152] Thomas P. Galvin, "Centralization and the Inefficient Quest for Efficiency," *Talking About Organizations Podcast,* May 31, 2018, https://www.talkingaboutorganizations.com/e43x/

7. Phase III – Developing the Change Vision (Vision of the "Ends")

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.[153] After determining the problem and its 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 a unified effort in support of the change.

Envisioning is not just about articulating the change effort's goal or end state, but also informing later phases such as the concept and implementation plan. Envisioning answers the members' questions of *why* the organization will undergo change, *what* the effort will achieve, *how* it will achieve it, and *when*. The answers must resonate with members of the organization. Otherwise, no matter of planning will succeed in inspiring the members to support the effort with either their hard work or their hearts. Meanwhile, some members such as planners, operators, administrators, and resource managers will be more interested in *when* and *how*. Their concerns may be primarily about the feasibility of achieving the vision and garnering the resources.

I present these two perspectives as two interdependent outcomes of the envisioning process: (1) the *change vision*, a re-statement of the desired future state specific to the change effort, in other words a *vision of the ends*,[154] and (2) the *concept*, which reflects the path and timeline of the change effort, which I will also refer to as the *vision of the ways*.[155] The change vision typically answer the *why* and *what* questions and is the subject of this

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[153] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 72.

[154] Here, the change vision is distinguished from the more general-purpose *vision statement* that organizations may use to describe the mental image of the whole organization at a future time so to spur long-term strategic change. I have found the narrower conception of a change vision being more practical, however many of the factors described in this chapter are also helpful for constructing broader organizational vision statements.

[155] Kotter, *Leading Change*, p. 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.

chapter. The concept answers the *how* and *when* questions and will be presented in the next chapter.

Below, I will discuss both the change vision and the *vision statement*, a concise expression of the change vision in one sentence. Vision statements are notoriously difficult to craft and a poorly constructed one can derail a change effort.

What makes envisioning difficult?

Let us start with the common definition of a change vision as a "mental image" or "picture of the future" in the mind of a leader or change agent.[156] This image is robust and carries a lot of meaning, but only exists in the mind of the beholder. The change vision and associated vision statement translate that mental image to words and graphics for dissemination to others. This translation is necessarily incomplete. To illustrate this, consider the Army's operational concept, published in a pamphlet from the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command[157] in 2014 entitled "Win in a Complex World."[158] The title serves as the vision statement, expressed in only six syllables.[159] However, the statement does not convey the totality of the vision, which required about 45 pages of text and graphics to explain the intended message from the title. While the vision statement is easy to spread and share, the pamphlet played a significant role in documenting the meaning of that statement so force developers could put the vision into action and build the needed capabilities. And yet, 45 pages only constitutes the final vetted product. What did the senior leader leave out of their own mental image because

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[156] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 71.

[157] For clarity, the Army's use of the term *concept* differs slightly from the use of the term in this book – in Army doctrine, a *concept* often includes visions of both the ends and the ways but focuses more on the ends because it expresses how a future force will fight and leaves the ways to force developers who determine specific capabilities and requirements needed to fight in the new environment. The example given in this paragraph is a good illustration of this.

[158] U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), *The U.S. Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World* (Fort Eustis, VA: TRADOC, 2014).

[159] The commander of TRADOC at the time, U.S. Army General David Perkins, said as much during interviews. That the concept's title was only six syllabi but conveyed considerable meaning was as a selling point for the concept. For example, see Sydney J. Freedberg, "Army Takes On Requirements: 'Everybody's Got To Change'," *BreakingDefense* (blog), September 26, 2014, https://breakingdefense.com/2014/09/army-takes-on-requirements-everybodys-got-to-change/

of disagreements among various internal stakeholders, questions of feasibility, or other tensions and controversies that naturally arise in the envisioning process?[160]

Unfortunately, the difficulties of envisioning can lead to change visions and vision statements that are ineffective, uninspiring, or outright confusing. Here are some examples of problems I have encountered in my experience with change visions and vision statements in military contexts:

1. *Some change visions make sense to external stakeholders but mean little to members (and vice versa).* 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. The converse is also true -- vision statements aimed at the membership may not make sense to external stakeholders.

2. *The change vision is pabulum or too general.* The change vision should be a fully fleshed out image that others can understand and appreciate. If it lacks depth, members may not understand how the organization will achieve it. Too many times, the change vision is just the vision statement alone. If a mere bumper sticker or slogan with no substance behind it, the vision fails to inspire.[161]

3. *The change vision conflicts with other change efforts.* Militaries have many change efforts going on at once, each consuming organizational energy and time. Does the change vision overlap with another on-going effort, or conflicts with or contradicts it? These can cause derailing of change efforts for being redundant, duplicative, and unnecessary.

4. *The change vision conveys a possible 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

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[160] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 84.
[161] With thanks to a reviewer for this insight.

misunderstandings and misperceptions. But some perceptions come about when the leader withholds information, intentionally or unintentionally. There is fear that too much information invites resistance (a well-founded concern sometimes).[162] The problem may be overly complex, so the leader wants the vision statement to be simple. This may risk a lack of clarity about the intended solutions.

There is one other challenge to consider – and that is the difference between the desired future state from Phase I and the change vision expressed here. One might assume they are the same thing, but they might not be.

In fact, in my experience, they are rarely the same. The desired future state looks at the problem in isolation and expresses the future organization with that problem solved. The change vision may deviate from this in one of two ways. First, it could be smaller -- the change effort may not solve the full problem because it might be infeasible or too risky to the mission. Perhaps the senior leader decided on what parts of the problem require resolution now and which may wait for a later opportunity. The change vision therefore re-states the desired future state in terms of what fraction of the problem that the change effort will fix. Another future change effort would handle the rest.

The other version is where the change vision is bigger than the desired future state, and very senior leaders will prefer this approach. Rather than treat the change effort as an isolated initiative, leaders will want to express a broader vision that treats the present effort as a first step toward a grander purpose. The

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[162] Personal anecdote of the author: I had the opportunity to participate in a strategic planning effort in which the going-in position was the reduction of the organization by one-half to two-thirds of its workforce 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 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.

change effort therefore becomes a vehicle for expressing strategic direction to the whole organization.

Both are valid approaches to envisioning, and the characteristics of good change visions are the same for both. The processes of development them may differ slightly.

What are characteristics of good change visions?

It is easier to describe bad change visions and vision statements then to craft good ones. It is also true that a good vision statement does not guarantee a successful change effort. So, the measure of merit used below is one of utility. What makes a change vision more useful for members and stakeholders to understand what the senior leader or change agent intends to accomplish and gather the needed energy to put the change effort into motion?

Example: Kotter's (2012) characteristics of effective visions

Virtually all change management models include communicating the desired end state as a vital part of the process. Two of Kotter's (2012) eight steps involve developing and then communicating the change vision. Kotter argues that the following six traits make for an effective change vision:

- *Imaginable*. The change vision should allow others to reconstruct a similar mental image as formulated by the senior leader or change agent.

- *Desirable*. The change vision should be appealing and satisfy member and stakeholder needs or interests.

- *Feasible*. In the absence of a mature concept, audiences should still see the change vision as achievable.

- *Focused*. The change vision must address the problem that the change effort is meant to solve and go no further.

- *Flexible*. However, the change vision should not be so prescriptive as to stifle initiative. As the next chapter will show, there can be many ways to achieve the change vision, and

- *Communicable.* The change vision must be easy to explain and easy to share with others.[163]

To the above, I would add the following that apply to military organizations:

- *Nested.* In addition to being consistent with the desired future state of Phase I, the change vision should align with the organization's overall mission, vision, strategy, and other communications. If it conflicts, then the change vision must explain the conflict and the urgency of pursuing change – which may include changing the overall organization's mission!

- *Distinct.* The change vision should account for other change efforts ongoing in the organization. While establishing its boundary from those other efforts, the change vision should also express coordination and collaboration with them.

- *Active.* In other words, show don't tell.[164] The vision should be a statement of action, not a passive description. Use action verbs! Show what members of the future organization do that is different from today? This invites members to find their own innovative paths to align with the desired future. Statements that merely describe can be like ornaments, hung on the walls or sent in e-mails but otherwise not inspiring action.

How does one make the change vision communicable?

The above characteristics do not explain the development process. It is easy to say that the change vision should be desirable or feasible, but much more difficult to do in practice. One could certainly go with trial and error, but this would likely waste time and become frustrating.

It is important to stress that Phase III is still a formative phase of the change effort. Defining and diagnosing the problem

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[163] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 74.
[164] Donald Maass, *Writing the Breakout Novel* (Writer's Digest Books, 2002). Although the book focuses on fiction, Maass also applies this to non-fiction and other forms of writing.

involved communication, in the form of fact-finding and building shared understanding. As a mental image, the change vision may be fully formed in the mind of the senior leader, but it might not yet be fleshed out in words and actions to be communicated to others. Clearly it must be before the change effort is launched, but at this point there is still room for modification.

Therefore, leaders and change agents can use the emerging change vision as the beginning of a conversation with members. The aim is to develop support for the change effort by encouraging dialogue about the problem in ways that provide the leader with important information for refining and better articulating the change vision before launching the effort. But the conversation cannot be open-ended – the leader should initiate the conversation with an approach in mind that will best encourage dialogue about change based on the situation. Messaging is important.

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

Communication scholar John Baldoni (2003) wrote that leadership messages should accomplish four functions—*inform, involve, ignite,* and *invite*.[165] Informing is about ensuring the audiences are aware of the impetus behind the change effort and the change vision. Involving is about soliciting input from others and demonstrating that communication channels are open. At a minimum, this should include providing contact information about the coalition. Igniting is about encouraging others to be creative and find other ways to contribute to the organization if not through the change effort itself. Finally, inviting is about encouraging others to participate in the effort to the best of their abilities.

Not all opportunities to communicate the vision can accomplish all four at once. Thus, the following are some rules of thumb regarding how one might use a specific communication opportunity to promulgate the change vision.

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

- If the change effort is complex and difficult to explain, then communications should focus on *informing*, and may require the help of subject matter experts. The aim, as Baldoni puts it, is to ensure clarity in what needs to be done and who may need to be involved.[166]

- If the change effort faces inherent controversy or uncertainty that inhibits clarity of the vision or triggers lingering tensions within the organization, then communications should focus on *involving*. Unity of effort is at risk, so leaders should consider emphasizing opportunities for members to get involved early on. This can include opportunities for experimentation.

- If the organization has a history of change failure or deep cynicism toward change, then communications should focus on *igniting.* Members and stakeholders may need to be convinced that the effort is worthwhile not so much on its own merits but that it is a signal that the leadership is committed to improving the organization, regardless of the costs or risks to oneself. This is yet another instance where the aim is not just to promote the change effort itself but also more change in general.

- If the organization is experiencing trust issues between leaders and members, then communications could focus on *inviting*. Kotter (2012) and Baldoni (2013) both affirm the value of leaders walking the talk and setting the example.[167] The primary concern for leaders to watch for is that members would feel the pain and turmoil of the change effort while the leaders would insulate themselves from it. Leaders therefore should consider how to use the change vision as a unifying message and communicate how the benefits and challenges will be felt equitably.

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[166] Baldoni, *Great Communication Secreta*, 32.
[167] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 97-99; Baldoni, *Great Communication Secreta*, 40.

Crafting the Vision Statement

What Baldoni's framework suggests is that the vision statement is not merely an expression of a vision but also serves a broader communicative purpose. The senior leader and change agent should consider the aim of releasing a change vision, which in turn may influence the content of the vision statement. For example, is purpose to inform members about the change effort itself, ignite a larger movement, involve people in addressing the difficulties the organization faces, or invite the organization to come together? A single vision statement might not do all four, but leaders will often accompany the vision statement with other communications.[168] This will be a significant theme when it comes time to launch the effort (Chapter 10).

A process, not a product

However, while the vision statement at launch should be a final product, it is important in this phase to embrace envisioning as a process of engagement. There is risk involved. Leaders may not always want to put their unformulated ideas into the open out of concern that members will impulsively act on them as though the ideas are orders. It is important for the leader to communicate not just the ideas but to what extent they are open for dialogue.

Envisioning prior to launch serves an ulterior purpose. *Everything that leaders and change agents do must foster conditions for more change*. How leaders craft the vision statement speaks to how leaders engage with the organization about change in general. The crafting of the vision statement is when the leaders' intentions become manifest. After all, the leader is now communicating a commitment to action – something that the previous phases of defining and diagnosing the problem lacked. Thus, collaboration on the vision statement should extend beyond the guiding coalition,[169] including those who might oppose the effort.

Leaders should test various ways of explaining the desired future state in words and graphics to learn what may resonate better and what may spur confusion or tension. How could others

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[168] Cf. Kotter, *Leading Change*, 81.
[169] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 84.

might misunderstand or misuse the vision to derail the change effort? To what extent will the overall problem (Phase I) be addressed by the change effort, and what work may remain to be addressed in the future? How can the vision assuage concerns that the effort will go too far or not far enough to fix the problem?

This collaborative process necessarily takes time. For example, the U.S. Africa Command inherited its original mission and vision from the U.S. Department of Defense upon the command's formation in October 2007. It took eight months for the command to collaborate with its many key stakeholders and develop, vet, and finalize its own initial vision and vision statement, which upon its release was well-understood and widely accepted.[170] But leaders should have a flexible deadline in mind for the release of the change vision so the effort can proceed. One must assume that no strategic change effort will satisfy everyone's equities (see Chapter 11). But, that is no reason to rush the process and converge on a solution too quickly. Doing so will risk violating the ulterior motive of fostering future change by potentially disenfranchising some members.

Some rules of thumb for writing a vision statement

First is to ensure that the change vision represents a sufficient and marked difference from the status quo. On the one hand, the change vision should reflect a future state where the organization has resolved the problem. On the other hand, it should signal a commitment from leaders to improve the organization and inspire others to action.[171] The way to accomplish this is to treat relevant parts of the desired future state as intermediate goals and stretch them for the change vision.

The story of US Africa Command's establishment offers an example. The desired future state during the formative stages was to reverse the US military's tendency to promote US approaches to resolving security concerns in Africa, with the problem being that African partners did not always see these approaches as suitable or acceptable. But as part of the change vision, leaders

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[170] Thomas P. Galvin, *Two Case Studies of Successful Strategic Communication Campaigns* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, 2018).
[171] Kotter, *Leading Change,* 81.

expanded the idea of putting the needs of African partners first (i.e., "African solutions for African problems" and the command doing so by being a "listening and learning organization"). These phrases inspired members of the fledging staff to initiate small-scale activities that enacted the change vision, such as the establishment of the Africa Deployment Assistance Phased Training program (ADAPT) in 2008. ADAPT was an entirely self-generated small-scale initiative from a country desk officer and his contacts in U.S. Air Forces Europe and two U.S. embassies in nations preparing for a peacekeeping mission but whose militaries were untrained in configuring loads for U.S. aircraft.[172]

Second, ensure that the change vision also marks a change in direction for the organization. When the organization goes forward, figuratively speaking there is no turning back.[173] This is not to say that failure is not an option, but that failure does not bring about a return to the status quo ante. Instead, failure leaves the original problem unsolved so the organization should try something else. Good change visions include language that acknowledges the possibility that the effort may experience some difficulties and have to adapt, but the vision itself remains valid. A way to do this is express these as challenges and opportunities.

Third, the change vision should provide clues as to the when and how in the eventual concept. Most vision statements should have a timeframe in mind that the change vision would be achieved. One year? Two to three? Five to seven? Longer? But some of the first questions that stakeholders and members will naturally ask is "how are we going to do this?" Senior leaders and change agents need to be prepared with preliminary answers, as "I don't know" may not inspire confidence in the effort. Rather, one should anticipate such questions in the change vision and generate invitations to get involved.

Finally, one must consider branding the change vision. This is an uncomfortable topic for military organizations because it smacks of business fads – that the change effort is shallow, and

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[172] Galvin, *Two Case Studies*.

[173] Harrison, *Organizational Diagnosis and Assessment*, 98-99; Saku Mantere, Henri A. Schildt, and John A. A. Sillence, "Reversal of Strategic Change," *Academy of Management Journal* 55, no. 1 (2012): 172-196.

that shallowness is being covered over by fancy logos and slogans. However, branding is central to many military change efforts. Heraldry, naming conventions, and other symbols can carry significant meaning and provide a source of identity to members of military units. The choice of a name, even something simple like <fill in the unit's> Strategic Plan, helps large complex organizations like militaries identify the effort. Good branding spurs interest and empowers members to spread the word. Poor branding can bring about cynicism and resistance.[174]

Branding also bridges the divide between internal and external stakeholders or between higher-level commands and the soldiers in line units. As stated earlier in this chapter, change visions risk favoring one set of audiences over others. Branding associated with the change vision is a way to help mitigate this risk. Key is choosing labels and symbols that reinforce the existing mission, vision, and values that the change effort would advance or support. If the change effort challenges a long-standing value or signifies a transformational change, branding can reinforce the change vision and make it more appealing.

An example of such branding is the transition from the Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia to the Stabilization Force (SFOR) in 1996. IFOR followed the ratification of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in 1995 (i.e., "Dayton Accords") and its mission included separating the former warring factions, establishing the Zone of Separation, and placing weapons in cantonment sites. The transition from IFOR to SFOR reflected the change in mandate, with SFOR performing similar missions but with a smaller force and focused on assisting the Bosnians with establishing their own national institutions such as a combined military. The change in name was therefore symbolic and signaled a different phase in the peace enforcement mission and reduced scope of international commitment.[175]

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[174] Colin Mitchell, "Selling the brand inside," *Harvard Business Review* 80, no. 1 (2002): 99-101.

[175] William W. Crouch, "IFOR Becomes SFOR," *SFOR Informer*, no. 1 (January 8, 1997), https://www.nato.int/sfor/historic-moments/ifor-to-sfor/ifor-sfor.htm

8. Phase IV – Developing the Concept (Vision of the "Ways")

The change vision establishes the desired outcomes of the change effort. The natural question that change agents will receive is this, "Ok, what's your strategy?" In the pure sense, it is not possible to develop a detailed strategy because the ways and means have yet to be determined. A tension may build between proponents and opponents of the change regarding means and how limited or constrained resources might make any change effort impossible. This tension is very real in the military context, as many large-scale change efforts depend on appropriations from legislatures.

For the change agent, discussions on resources can seem distracting and potentially derailing. But change agents need to focus on the question of *how* – how is the change effort going to proceed in general terms? While the details can come later in the plan, the change agent cannot avoid the question of what resources are needed such as personnel, materiel, funding, and time. For this phase, what is needed is a *concept* for the change effort – what is the *vision of the ways*. What does the path to the change vision look like? What will it take to achieve the vision, and therefore what opportunities should the organization be looking for?

Of the phases in this change model, developing the concept is the hardest. Proponents of the change effort will be reticent to give out too much detail as it may constrain needed decisions and arm opponents with ways to block the effort. A poorly communicated concept may confuse members and stakeholders – of course, this is also true of poorly communicated plans once the means have been assigned.

Is there one best way or many ways?

Chapter 2 introduced Katz and Kahn's (1966) construct of *equifinality* that there are many different paths to the same result in an open system.[176] The implication is that there are many

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[176] Katz and Kahn, *Social Psychology of Organizations*, 30.

different approaches one can take to solve an organization problem. If one does not work, there are always other approaches. I will illustrate this through a hypothetical vignette.

The "Story of the Four Commanders"

Imagine a unit that is having a vehicle readiness problem as a new commander takes charge. This commander takes the requisite time to survey the organization and its processes and systems and determines that the best approach to correcting the readiness problem is through incentives and sanctions – e.g., carrots and sticks. The commander institutes a 'gold medal' rating to recognize subordinate units that achieve higher standards. Members who institute best practices receive awards or other benefits. Staff officers likewise may receive awards for efficient behaviors such as reducing time it takes to order and receive parts. For those whose status remains the same or gets worse, leaders would sanction those units in some way. Perhaps, their omission from receiving rewards can incentivize the right behavior? Otherwise, leaders may out the unit publicly during staff briefings for failing to keep up. The approach may work initially, but over time units may develop ways of gaming the numbers to look good or avoid looking bad. Also, there is a ceiling each unit reaches, and they cannot improve further because of some external dependency. In short, some things got better, other things did not. Two years later, the first commander departs.

In comes the second commander, who instead decides that this is a training problem. Bringing in outside experts or leveraging untapped in-house expertise, the commander institutes a training and leader development regimen to address procedural shortcomings and experience gaps. Sustainment training follows any initial training and education activities. Over time, there are some signs that the training is effective. However, expertise is expensive and like any military organization, turnover is a challenge in sustaining continuity of the training regimen. In short, some things got better, other things did not. Two years later, the second commander departs.

The third commander arrives and is a 'numbers' person. This commander wants everything quantified, even subjective matters that are difficult to quantify. Stoplight charts, metrics, and

measures become primary decision support tools for identifying and prioritizing problem areas and surging resources to fix them. Progress may appear as favorable trend lines – the numbers getting higher means the unit is getter better. However, this approach has its limits as well. Data collection is resource intensive for those metrics that cannot be automated. The reports may sacrifice clarity for accuracy and provide unintentionally misleading information. Some metrics are not reliably quantifiable and interactions among the metrics can produce skewed results. In short, some things got better, other things did not. Two years later, the third commander departs.

The fourth commander takes the guidon and decides that none of the earlier approaches are best because there was insufficient involvement of the members. What do the soldiers think about the problem? Thus, the commander formed focus groups, informal interviews, staff calls and other events to gather input and encourage members to devise solutions on their own or make recommendations to leaders. Engagement also becomes the primary means for checking on progress, exposing hidden problems, and generating solutions. Hoping to realize the Hawthorne effect,[177] the commander believes that engagement alone will motivate members and garner stronger commitment to what solutions come about. However, such engagement requires investment of time up front, and some members interpret this as slow rolling the problem or talking about things rather than doing something. Sometimes louder, angrier voices drown out reasoned ones, causing working groups to founder. Some things got better, other things did not. Two years later, the fourth commander departs.

When I tell this story, I conclude by turning to the students and asking, "You are the incoming fifth commander. What do you do?" The common answer I get is a "hybrid" solution of all four since it difficult to imagine total adherence to any one of these approaches working. They correctly say that all change efforts will involve some combination of incentives, training, reporting, and participation to make a well-rounded effort.

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[177] Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. "Hawthorne Research," https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hawthorne-research

My counter to them comes from experience that the commander's individual preferences -- how the commander prefers to do things and what signals of progress the commander accepts as valid – influences which solutions to pursue. If the commander is a numbers person, then all the successful working group sessions, training, and carrots and sticks will not satisfy the commander until the key measures start showing improvement. A commander who values collaboration and participation may be OK with the change effort but may feel uncomfortable with the stability of progress until being satisfied that everyone in the organization had an opportunity to give input. And so on.

There is another lesson in this story regarding the challenge of implementing change efforts that will outlast the tenure of the first commander. One hopes that changes of command will not result in unnecessary disruption to a change effort, but more generally, leaders need to be careful about what changes they impose to not generate unneeded frustration among members.[178]

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

The methods described in the above story reflect common philosophical and practical approaches to change since the earliest days of change management in industrial organizations. Chin and Benne (1989) conducted a historical analysis of change strategies and narrowed them down to three general classes: *power-coercive*, *rational-empirical*, and *normative-reeducative.*[179] 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. The below presents these general strategies in detail.

Power-coercive strategies – using autocratic or formal ways

The first commander employed a *power-coercive* approach using rewards and sanctions as the driver for change. Power-coercive strategies impose change on the organization regardless of whether members are unwilling or compliant. From a top-

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[178] With appreciation to multiple external reviewers.
[179] 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.

down perspective, such strategies align with the traditional concept of military command--what the commander says, goes. However, command authority is not the only form this takes. Legislation, policy changes, and doctrine are also coercive, incentivizing or prohibiting certain behaviors. Compliance is the main metric – commanders assume that if all strive for the rewards, the organization progresses toward the change vision.

Power-coercive strategies can also occur bottom-up. The members of an organization can mass to protest an unjust policy or regulation or in support of a desired change from leaders.[180] For example, the voices of unjustly treated service members have brought about significant changes in the military structure and culture, such as in the aftermath of publicized reports of sexual harassment in the U.S. military during the 2010s.

Despite the labelling of these strategies as 'power' and 'coercive,' the methods used need not be autocratic. Incentivizing members may involve a lot of persuasion, such as when the guiding coalition is pushing the change effort. Absent specific direction from a commander, other members of the organization may need incentives to join the effort.

Conflict or competition is the ultimate engine of these strategies,[181] 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 can also be very effective when organizations face crises or must respond to an external mandate. In the latter case, implementing the 1986 *Department of Defense Reorganization Act* ("Goldwater-Nichols") involved continued emphasis by senior military and civilian leaders on the benefits of operating as a joint force. Provisions of joint professional military education, publication of joint doctrines, and norming of joint

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[180] Chin and Benne, "General Strategies," 40, specifically cited Gandhi's civil disobedience and strategies of nonviolence as examples.
[181] Chin and Benne, "General Strategies," 39-40.

assignments became both part of one's military career, but the stakeholders also demanded a culture change toward jointness.

Rational-empirical strategies – a scientific approach

The third commander used a *rational-empirical* 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]."[182]

While rational-empirical labels a single category, the two terms represent different manifestations, with *rational* referring to qualifiable logics and *empirical* to quantifiable. Each represents changes that leaders drive through data based on assumptions of what constitutes unmistakable evidence of progress. One of the earliest theories in this category was Frederic Taylor's scientific management, an effort to increase efficiency on the assembly line by finding the "one best way" to accomplish tasks.[183] Although reviled due to its impersonal consideration of workers, remnants of Taylorism persist 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 duty position or moving personnel around the organization to more productive locations based on their specific talents. However, critics say these approaches prioritize personality over job performance.[184]

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[182] Chin and Benne, "General Strategies," 23.

[183] 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.

[184] "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

Mathematical modeling is common in these strategies because it can help leaders make sense of complexity. Examples include the U.S. military's Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution system, service specific force management analysis processes, combatant command capability requirement models. Each establishes metrics that allow leaders to compare progress among unlike efforts and weigh options for funding priority efforts or designing new organizations.[185] But as shown in the story of the four commanders, change efforts driven metrics 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 target figures equates to achievement of the change goals or vision. This requires accurate data, and valid models that 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

The second commander exercises a *re-educative* approach while the fourth commander used a *normative* approach. While Chin and Benne combined these into one class, *normative-re-educative*, they are distinct in the ways that members become engaged. *Re-educative* models emphasize change through training or education by using external or internal experts to influence the behaviors of members. *Normative* approaches are more therapeutic, relying on the general expertise of members who share their knowledge in a participative fashion.

Normative-reeducative approaches assume that driving change requires influencing sociocultural norms and value systems. 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.[186] Normative (therapeutic) and reeducative (training) constitute two variations based on how leaders use

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[185] For more information, see Thomas P. Galvin (Ed.), *Defense Management: Primer for Senior Leaders*, 1st ed. (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, 2018).

[186] Chin & Benne, "General Strategies," 31.

consultants--toward instituting new or adapted norms through self-reflection and corrective action or instilling change through training, education, and coaching.[187]

Normative strategies assume that change efforts must address a matter of human relationships or morale within the organization. Consultants thus prioritize 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.[188] A more modern and current variety is *action research*, which adds reflection and communities of practice to systematize research and solution development as social activities.[189] 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.

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[187] Kenneth Benne 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.

[188] 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.

[189] 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 like action research in methodology, except the purpose is more explicitly organizational learning whereas action research 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).

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.

How does one synchronize activities?

Chin and Benne's strategies are useful for envisioning how one sees the change effort proceeding and how to gauge progress. The next question is how to *drive* activities and bring about progress. Organizational energy for change and available resources are necessarily finite, so change agents must also consider how best to generate energy for the change effort while not becoming an obstacle to other important organizational activities. Understanding the pacing of change will be useful.

Example: Gersick's (1994) pacing of change

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.[190] 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 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

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

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 through scheduling important decisions or milestones well in advance. It is then easier for the effort to sustain momentum.

Event-driven change tends to be more reactive, as the change effort progresses based on events and conditions. Progress may come in bursts after remaining stagnant for significant periods at a time. Gersick (1994) analogized event-driven change to 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 change effort. This 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. If no such event occurs over an extended period, the change effort could become forgotten.

In time-driven change, stakeholders will expect periodic reviews or progress at a regular rate, so leaders must account for this during the change effort's formulation. For example, the concept may require intermediate goals or objectives as key indicators of progress. If event-driven, 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.

Assembling a Change Concept

With the above building blocks in place, it is now time to put it together to explain how the change effort will work while still allowing flexibility as the situation evolves. Fortunately, military organizations already have a useful construct for communicating the key elements of a concept, one that both satisfies member and stakeholder curiosity while also, in Kotter's terms, empowering

broad-based action.[191] If constructed properly, the concept should not be personality dependent, rather it should provide the logical justification for implementing the change effort regardless of the leader or the change agent. New commanders may want certain things done differently or for different reasons based on their preferences, but this should not require undoing progress.[192]

Construct: The "commander's intent" (2012)

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.[193] 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.[194]*

Therefore, the concept includes four components: (1) purpose statement for the change effort and what it will accomplish, (2) listing of key tasks, (3) explaining the transition that members will undergo, and (4) end state of the change effort.

The purpose statement needs to be clear and brief. It should re-state the overall problem as defined in Phase I (Chapter 5) and place the change effort in context – how it will help the organization avoid the undesired future state and pursue the desired future state? The purpose statement should also explain why the concept is sensible, feasible, suitable, acceptable, and incurs only acceptable levels of risk. However, the purpose

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[191] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 105-120.

[192] With thanks to an external review for this insight.

[193] E.g., 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).

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

statement should not be too prescriptive and unnecessarily constrain the organization. Flexibility remains important.

The key tasks should list major actions and the important relationships that members must cultivate. The set should not be extensive or exhaustive. If too many, then planning should combine activities into broader categories without losing meaning. While there is no magic number that the set of key tasks should not exceed ten (10).

Explaining the transition is important, as the change effort could be disruptive, and members may withdraw support from the effort if they do not appreciate how the long-term gain overshadows any short-term pain. Bridges (1991) describes *transition* as a "process that people go through as they internalize and come to terms with the details of the new situation [that] change brings about."[195] The concept should address, in general terms, how the change effort could affect members and show that working through any challenges is worth it.

The end state is an expression of the conditions under which the change effort succeeds and therefore the effort can cease. These are easy because they typically leverage the work already done in previous activities and they do not require much specificity. The concept will then inform the plan, incorporating the means and finalizing responsibilities of leaders and members.

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

9. Phase V – Developing the Plan

With the vision and concept established, leaders turn their attention to planning to assign resources, responsibilities, and coordinating mechanisms. 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 chapter covers two planning considerations – how to establish phases or other milestones and how to establish governance structures. Should these considerations establish a conflict with the concept, then the change agent should recommend a change to either the concept or the plan. It is normally better to have the change vision, concept, and plan aligned with each other.

What are the phases of planning & implementing change?

It is best to think of the change effort having already begun, rather than thinking of it as starting only once launched. The work already done to examine, define, and diagnose the problem and envision the solution has already changed the organization in some way. The emerging effort has mobilized both supporters and resistors. However, there is a difference between the change effort before launch and after launch. The organization's commitment to the change effort necessarily gets greater. Prior to launch, the senior leader could theoretically cancel the effort with only some impact on the organization. After launch, that option is no longer available as the organization has now publicly acknowledged the change effort and its leaders have invested in seeing it through.

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

W. Warner Burke (2002) captured this concern through a framework identifying three phases of planned change – *pre-launch*, *launch*, and *post-launch*.[196] Launch represents when implementation has gone public, with expectations that members

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

and stakeholders alike acknowledge and enact the plan as appropriate. The below discuss each phase 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 to stem misinformation among members and allow plan development.

Pre-launch is also when key leaders, members of the organization, and stakeholders, receive the change vision for sharing and discussion.[197] 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, which is the decision point where the leader certifies the change effort as having begun.

Launch – Full Implementation Begins

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

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[197] Ibid., 279-280.

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.[198]

Burke describes the launch phase as when the message spreads, the planning of the initial events take place, and the organization is fully engaged on the pending change effort.[199] 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 not a single event, but 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.[200] 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."[201] More information about launch is given in Chapter 10.

Post-Launch – Implementation, Sustainment, Termination

If the organization performs the launch well, *post-launch* should be easy. For the construction of the new building, *post-launch* begins with the proverbial first shovel striking the ground, as proponents have already completed the challenging work of preparing everyone for the construction of the building. All that remains 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. Communicating the change vision must never cease.[202] There is a risk of waning

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[198] Mantere, "Reversal of Strategic Change,"280.
[199] Mantere, "Reversal of Strategic Change,"280.
[200] Mantere, "Reversal of Strategic Change,"280.
[201] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 117-130.
[202] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 126.

interest and organizational energy levels once *post-launch* begins, or when achieving the next major milestone, such as Initial Operating Capability.[203] 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 that "no plan survives first contact with the enemy."[204] Often, despite the best efforts to develop comprehensive strategies and plans, the actual implementation of the change effort brings unforeseen barriers to surface. Key for proponents is to swiftly identify any new barriers, determine their impact on the strategies and plans, and adjust. 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?

When one discusses organizing a change effort, two things should come to mind: (1) how to divide the work, and (2) how to coordinate everyone's actions. In militaries, the answers to these questions are only self-evident in the cases of large-scale transformational efforts. Dividing the work is straightforward because the bureaucracy's design already aligns with such purposes. The standard J-staff model establishes responsibilities for human resource management, security, operations, sustainment, planning, public affairs, and resource management. Another example is the ordinary U.S. Army acquisition process

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[203] Initial Operating Capability (IOC) often describes 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*.

[204] This saying originated from a similar statement made in an 1871 essay by the Prussian general Helmuth von Moltke, and since evolved into its present form. For a detailed history, see "No Plan Survives First Contact With the Enemy," *QuoteInvestigator* (blog), May 4, 2021, https://quoteinvestigator.com/2021/05/04/no-plan/

for new weapons systems has DOTMLPF – whereby different agencies own responsibilities for establishing doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leader development, personnel, and facilities. Coordination is similarly straightforward as ordinary business practices establish methods of collaboration, information sharing, and decision making. This perspective leads to a common architecture of change efforts (also sometimes called "strategic plans") whereby they are subdivided into "lines of effort," each a change effort unto itself.[205] This is consistent with how popular business literature presents change management — the change effort must become the organization's focus and leaders must suppress or overcome resistance.

But this may not work for all types of change efforts. What if the ways and means are not fully programmable in advance? What if the concept calls for significant bottom-up action where common metrics are impractical? The nature and character of coordinating the effort may differ depending on the answers. Thus, a more comprehensive model for understanding the planning process of change will help.

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

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.[206] Each motor represents a general architecture for a change effort. But change efforts can also exercise any combination of motors, providing change agents with a wide range of planning options.

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[205] 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.

[206] 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.

Life Cycle Motor – Traditional Engineered Approach

The *life-cycle* motor is the simplest of the four motors and represents the typical military case described above. It has clearly defined start and endpoints, and the organization pursues the change vision *in toto* through a single monolithic effort. 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.[207] The life-cycle therefore consists of a "process of change … progressing through a necessary sequence of stages [with] an institutional, natural, or logical program prescrib[ing] the specific contents of these stages."[208]

Because programming is a common feature of any defense bureaucracy, this motor often describes the preferred approach to managing change in military organizations, even when the motor does not accurately portray the translation of the change effort's concept into action. In effect, the life-cycle motor provides a structured approach to decision making about change that places the senior leader as the focal point. The senior 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.

Figure 13 presents a general diagram of this interpolation of the life-cycle motor. Named change efforts (e.g., Army Transformation or weapons programs like the F-35) align readily with this motor of change as it facilitates the programming and budgetary process in the U.S. defense enterprise.[209] The motor's

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[207] 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

[208] Van de Ven and Poole, "Explaining Development," 520.

[209] This is because U.S. military organizations (whether joint or service) rarely have the disposable assets to pursue the change effort and must therefore petition Congress for resources. The petition normally involves providing a thorough program with goals and

narrative conveys unity of purpose that helps with clean divisions of labor and clear roles. For weapon systems, a minted "program of record" falls under a project office with assigned personnel to oversee development, acquisition, fielding, and sustainment. Similarly, DOD and its services centrally manage other change efforts under a designated proponent.
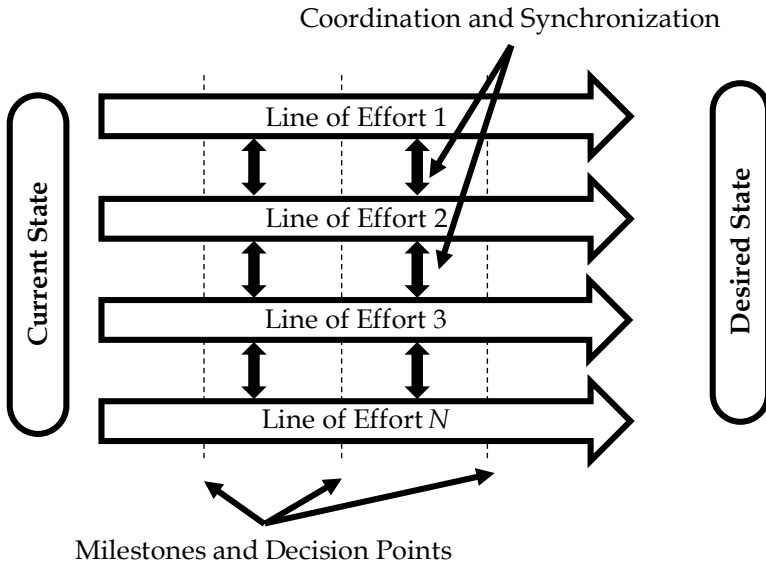
Coordination and Synchronization

Current State

Line of Effort 1

Line of Effort 2

Line of Effort 3

Line of Effort *N*

Desired State

Milestones and Decision Points

Figure 13. Traditional engineered approach (life-cycle motor)[210]

However, it will be important to separate how organizations characterize change efforts from how the change will occur. The life-cycle motor accurately applies only when the effort is indeed a single total effort and the outcomes and methods are prescribed such that the outcomes of each activity are generally known and progress can be measured on the basis of those outcomes.[211] For example, within a weapon systems acquisition, there is a line of effort devoted to training, comprising a clear sequence of discrete actions leading to units having soldiers trained on the equipment

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milestones expressed through annual budgets, such that programmers can adjust should Congress allocate the resources differently.

[210] Original graphic by author.

[211] Van de Van and Poole, "Explaining Development," 520.

and ready for its fielding. However, other change efforts behave differently because the effort may not exist as a single entity – its multiple concurrent efforts may be independent or even in conflict with each other – or it may not be possible to plan the activities in advance and instead be iterative. These cases are where Van de Ven and Poole's other three motors come into play and affect how one constructs the change plan. Yet, the engineered approach in Figure 13 could still reflect how the organization communicates the plan to members, as it provides a simple and clean narrative that obscures the messiness and confusion that the other motors of change may introduce.

Teleological Motor – Compliance Approach

The second-most common form of change effort in military organizations is one where the aim is compliance. It could take a positive form, in which the desired state sees the whole organization following some sort of regulation or procedure. Consider adherence to counterterrorism, operational security, and information assurance as examples. The desired end state is 100% of personnel trained and following the requirements 100% of the time. Or they take a negative form, in which the desired state describes a situation where something does not occur, such as the case of sexual harassment and assault; fraud, waste, and abuse; and discrimination. The desired state is ideal, but its achievement may be impossible or at the very least not durable. Attaining a training level of 100% may be only temporary due to ordinary personnel turnover and the continuous need for updating the policies, procedures, and so on. 100% compliance is difficult to achieve because one assumes that any large organization will have its share of those who fail to enact the training, misunderstood some of the information, or are flat-out rule-breakers.

Van de Ven and Poole's *teleological motor* characterizes this form of change, which is iterative and subject to shifts in the goal. Change is not so much prescribed as constructed.[212] See Figure 14.

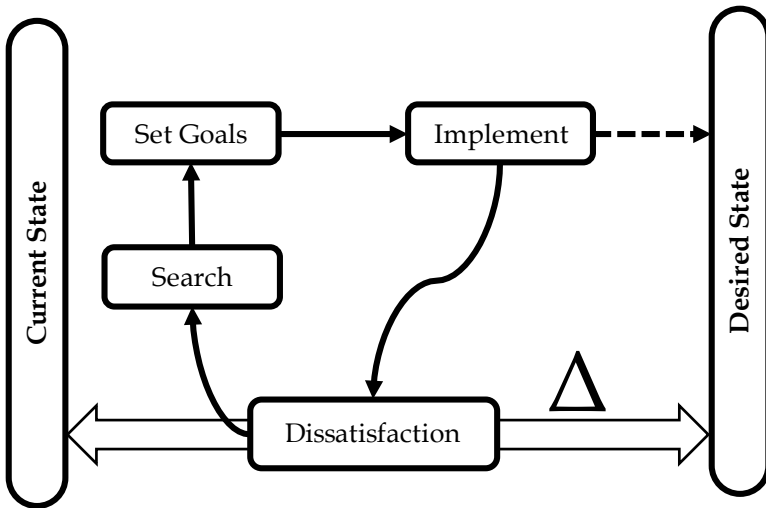[212] Van de Ven and Poole, "Explaining Development," 520.

Figure 14. Teleological motor of change as defined[213]

The teleological motor functions on a cycle where the organizations assesses itself against the goal, takes action, and then re-assesses. Van de Ven and Poole called the distance to the goal *dissatisfaction*. Ostensibly, the action should pull the organization closer to the goal, but the progress is difficult to measure, so constant cycles of feedback and action are needed. Leaders set goals, perform activities, assess results, and calculate the new deltas. The process repeats.

Figure 15 shows one way to think of how change efforts of a compliance nature might leverage this this motor of change. It imposes a "life-cycle" metaphor, reflecting how an organization may try to plan or engineer a change effort where enforcing compliance is the aim. For illustration, assume that the change effort is of a new policy on information assurance that leaves the organization out of compliance, so in the current state there is 0% compliance. Thus, the organization releases an online training package that all government computer users must take individually to maintain currency. The aim is 100% compliance by a designated period, with intermediate goals set for partial

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[213] Van de Ven and Poole, "Explaining Development," 520.

compliance. Notionally, the Figure shows three benchmarks where one-fourth of the members have achieved the training.
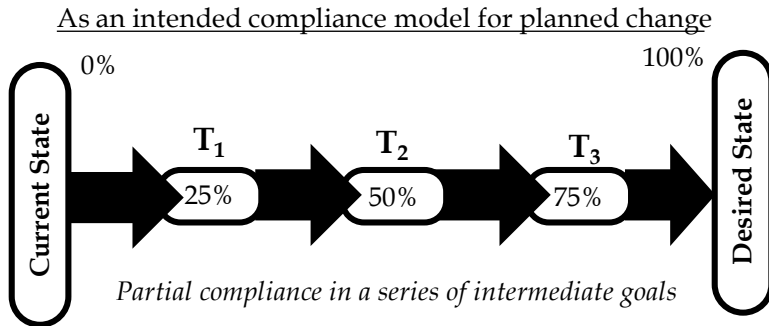
As an intended compliance model for planned change

Figure 15. Teleological motor as applied in planned change[214]

This is attractive for the proponents and trainers because such benchmarking appears simple and straightforward. The online delivery method can help address the turnover problem. But the problem is that while one can count the numbers trained, one measures compliance in practice. The desired state includes zero violations of the policy *and* zero violations of any kind in the information assurance arena![215]

Consequently, the actual change effort looks more like Figure 16, where there are periods of progress and potential periods of regression. The training may be faulty or too difficult for all users to complete. Initial progress toward the goal, as depicted in times T_1 and T_2, may disappear in the face of a new threat – to the point that by T_3, the unit may be further from the goal than when it started! New violations, policy clarification, updates to the training, routine replacements of computers and software, all these can impede progress toward the goal.

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[214] Original graphic by author.
[215] The teleological motor describes well 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 order 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.
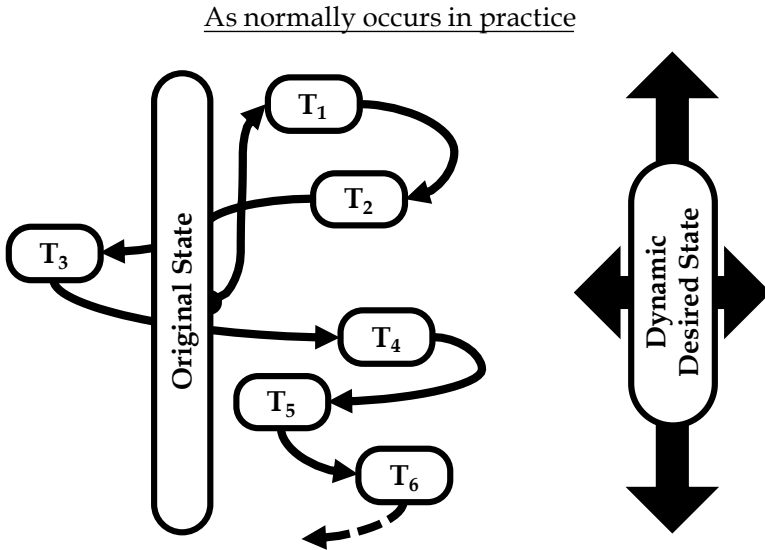
As normally occurs in practice

Two steps "forward" – two steps "back" – with a shifting target

Figure 16. Teleological motor as it occurs in practice[216]

But the desired state *also changes!* Consider the introduction of social media that completely changed the ways that people interact with one another. Some members of the organization would have seen it as a threat to information security while others would view it as an opportunity for more effective and efficient collaboration. Regardless, it changed the desired state and how the organization measured its delta from it.

Obviously, no organization welcomes the idea of chasing moving targets and seeing all the hard work reversed. But especially when the goal is the eradication or avoidance of something, one cannot expect an engineered approach to change to be successful.

This is where the *proponent* comes into play. The proponent will perform a monitoring role. They collect relevant data and watch over the organization and the environment to check progress toward the goal and detect signs that a reversal is

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[216] Original graphic by author.

pending. The hope is one can prevent or mitigate reversals, and quickly resume forward progress. I suggest that the proponent be more passive and less aggressive than for other motors (see below) because the data collection can be intensive and intrusive. Units can consider a balance of top-down data calls and open-ended channels for bottom-up reporting of issues and concerns.

Evolutionary Motor – Experimental Approach

When exercising the *evolutionary* motor, organizations pursue a predetermined set of goals in multiple ways, harnessing so-called best practices and abandoning those that do not work as well. Figure 17 depicts a simple case of the motor as described in Van de Ven and Poole, whereby a new practice shown as triangle replaces an old practice depicted as a rounded rectangle.
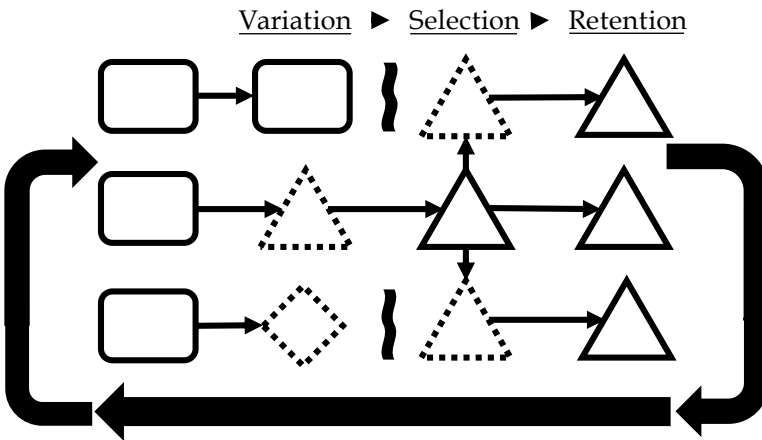
Figure 17. Evolutionary motor of change as described[217]

The cycle depicted is one where various parts of the organization (could be different divisions, geographic locations, or even individual members) introduce *variation* through changes in the standard practice. Variations can range from minimal to radical. Members share ideas and *select* one or more variations as better fits. The chosen way is then *retained* and embedded. As applied in a planned change effort – one hopes that the cycle

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[217] Original graphic by author.

produces iterations of progress toward the desired state, that the variations selected represent some sort of improvement.

But hope is not a method, and in fact, this motor can become the source of bad habits in an organization. If the enterprise-wise staffing process is too difficult to navigate, a staff section may concoct a workaround and find it succeed. Word spreads and others adopt the workaround even though in the end it may cause the staffing process to become inefficient or ineffective. Each change effort may operate under its own independent desired state, making matters complicated. So, as Figure 18 shows, the leaders must manage the evolutionary process to ensure the organization reaps the benefits of these bottom-up efforts without incurring unnecessary risks.

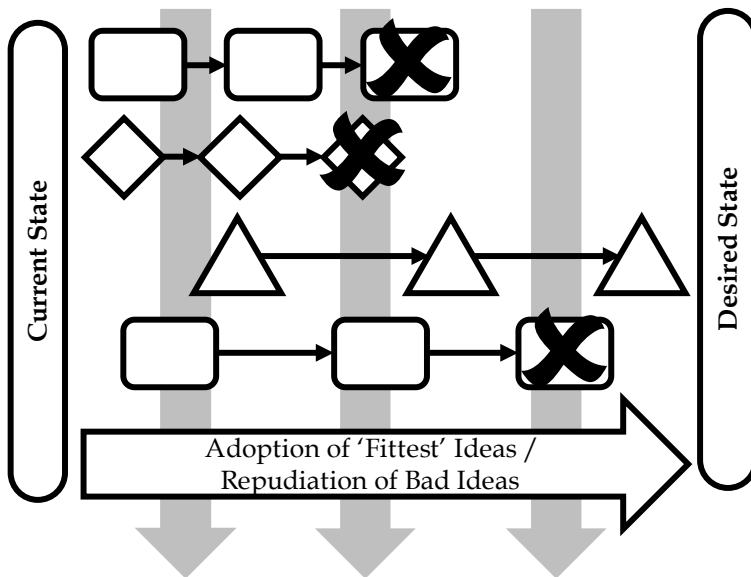Shapes represent independent activities (experiments)

Figure 18. Evolutionary motor as planned change

The bottom arrow in Figure 18 reflects the proponent's primary responsibility to monitor the activities of subordinate elements, capture best practices, share them, embed them, and identify emergent practices that leaders may need to eliminate. This proponent may be more intrusive than the compliance model

described above because the proponent is in a position to judge. It may direct experiments or prohibit some activities.

Dialectic Motor – Synthetic Approach

The dialectic motor represents the type of change that goes most against prescribed military culture. Militaries value unity of effort, but this motor operates on conditions of unresolvable paradox, whereby two (or more) perspectives come into a state of persistent conflict. Take, for example, the persistent tension in defense programming and budgeting to adequately fund three requirements – readiness, modernization, and force structure (e.g., personnel costs such as pay and benefits; stationing costs such as real property, facilities, utilities).[218] All three are critical to the military's capacity to meet national security objectives, but they reflect a paradox because it is not possible to fully source all three, thereby necessitating tradeoffs and managing risk. When a leader's strategic direction includes prioritizing any of them (e.g., former Chief of Staff of the Army General Mark Milley's statement in 2015 that readiness was the Army's number one priority), this meant that the other two requirements would receive less priority. However, these three competing requirements do not necessarily reflect a zero-sum situation, because there are transaction costs associated with shifting priorities. Moving money from modernization to readiness could mean disruption to acquisition programs that benefit from steady and reliable funding streams. The costs of increasing end strength include requirements for onboarding (e.g., basic training) and stationing (e.g., housing and family services) which may place pressure on readiness and modernization.

There are tensions that naturally exist in organizational life that are unavoidable, according to Lewis (2000) and the military exemplifies each:[219]

- The needs of the individual versus the needs of the collective. Consider any human resource or talent

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[218] Lou Yuengert, Bob Bradford, and Tom Galvin, "The Strategic Choices Framework" (working title), in Tom Galvin (ed.), *Defense Management: Primer for Senior Leaders*, 2nd ed. (Carlisle, PA: Department of Command, Leadership, and Management, planned in 2023).

[219] Marianne Lewis, "Exploring paradox: Toward a more comprehensive guide," *Academy of Management Review* 25, no. 4 (2000): 760-776.

management initiative and how the needs of the Army or other service can conflict the needs of the individual service member or their families. Lewis also stated that tensions among subgroups could also be paradoxical.

- Centralization for efficiency and control versus decentralization for flexibility and effectiveness. Consider how local initiatives can conflict with service-wide efforts, or how joint and defense agencies absorb service functions to ensure consistency across the enterprise at the expense of service-specific needs.

- Continuity versus change. Consider how military organizations value predictability, stability, and reliability but also how they clamor for new ideas and innovation.[220]

There are other paradoxes peculiar to military organizations. One is the natural tension facing a military between its professional character on the one hand and that of a public-sector bureaucracy on the other.[221] Tensions also naturally exist between visions of how militaries are employed such as heavy versus light or conventional versus unconventional.

Figure 19 shows the dialectic motor as described by Van de Ven and Poole, showing the basic case of two competing perspectives, called the thesis and anti-thesis.[222] These perspectives need not be opposites of each other – for example, readiness and modernization are not mutually exclusive.[223] However, these perspectives can include entirely different worldviews that are incompatible with each other. At some point, there arises a conflict requiring action. The organization forges a synthesis of the two perspectives that allows resolution of the

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[220] It is important not to equate continuity with complacency or resistance to change. Thomas P. Galvin, "Is there a difference between continuity and complacency?" *Reflections on Management* (blog), March 10, 2020, https://reflections.talkingaboutorganizations.com/s4e05-continuity-vs-complacency/

[221] Lacquement and Galvin, *Framing the Future.*

[222] Andrew Hill and Dale Watson, "The Competitive Environment," in Thomas P. Galvin (ed.), *Strategic Leadership Primer,* 4th ed. (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College press, in press), 13-24.

[223] For example, efforts to modernize can have natural spin-off benefits to the readiness of a force. An experiment with a new tactical approach or new weapon system may spur improvements to how the current force fights.

situation, but this synthesis is not durable. At some point, the organization realizes diminishing returns and must break the synthesis, and the cycle starts over – but never to the previous state as the synthesis has changed the thesis and anti-thesis in some way, not necessarily for the good.
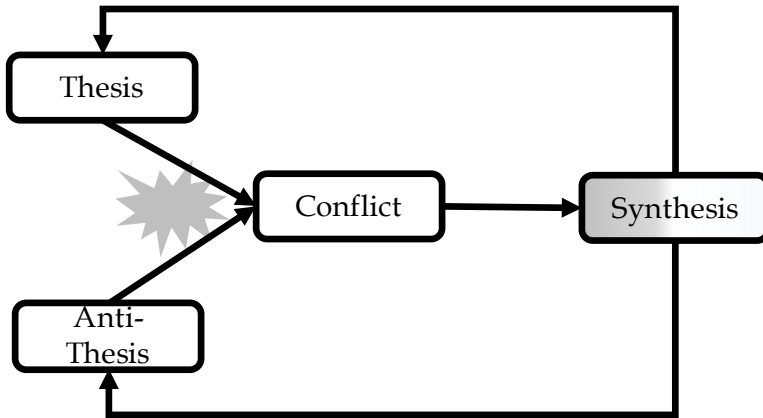

Figure 19. Synthetic approach (dialectic motor)[224]

Synthesis can take several forms. One is a negotiated solution whereby both parties to the conflict agree to a compromise. The synthesis breaks when the solution is no longer tenable and both sides accrue unacceptable risk. Another is where one side wins in the conflict (e.g., the example of declaring readiness the top priority). Because the tension is persistent, one cannot ignore the losing perspectives for too long, as eventually circumstances will weaken the winning perspective and a new debate begins. The third case is a condition whereby the thesis and anti-thesis remain separate from each other, pursuing their separate worldviews with minimal contact to resolve urgent differences. This synthesis breaks when interoperability suffers unacceptably, and a comprehensive approach of some kind could help resolve the tension.[225]

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[224] Graphic by author adapted from Van de Ven and Poole, "Explaining Development," 520.

[225] Van de Ven and Poole called these negotiation, domination, and stalemate.

Why would anyone include this kind of motor when planning change? Because it is unavoidable. But the best way is to identify the key sources of tension and have the plan express guiding principles or strategic direction that helps the organization navigate the tension as it arises. Key is that only the senior leader can set the guidance – the proponent can recommend and advise but lacks the authority and legitimacy to publish such guidance on its own, especially the proponent shows clear bias in favor of one side of the conflict. The proponent must have the capacity to monitor the change effort for conditions indicating that the tension is becoming a barrier to progress. The proponent should then communicate this to the senior leader for resolution.[226] See Figure 20 that shows how conceptually one can use this motor to drive planned change toward a desired state.
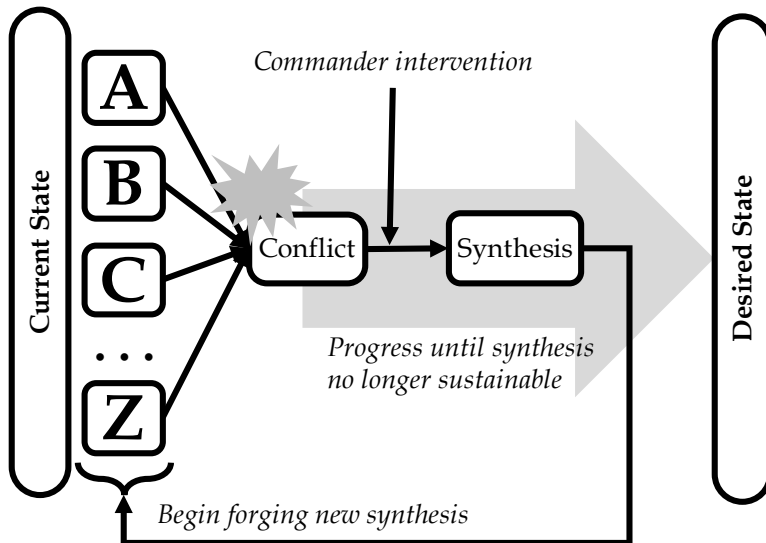

Figure 20. Dialectic motor as an element of planned change[227]

For example, a change effort in talent management should incorporate into its planning the necessary principles, metrics, and strategic guidance regarding the inevitable struggles to reconcile the needs of the organization and the needs of the

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[226] Galvin, *Responsible Command*, 26-29.
[227] Original graphic by author.

individual member.[228] How does one balance the need for accuracy of the skills that an individual soldier may provide and the unit's need for sufficiency of personnel regardless of an individual's talents? What about the needs of the individual and their families versus the collective military with respect to permanent change of station assignments? What constitutes fairness in personnel matters, such as between the military being a meritocracy and the military needing to be representative of society across all ranks? How does the system account for members who follow non-standard but necessary career paths without penalizing them in some way? Therefore, what are the expectations of the senior leader, the proponent, and the organization in addressing these difficult questions?

Combining Motors

One can combine Van de Ven and Poole's motors when planning the effort.[229] 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 may work simultaneously as competing visions (e.g., conventional vs. counterinsurgency) which, in turn, spawn interdependent change efforts. As a force, the competing vision still synthesizes toward satisfaction of the national security strategy or budget proposal. The Department of Defense and the services exercise all four motors taken together across the hundreds of on-going change efforts.

Designing the architecture of the plan

If the concept (Phase IV) is generally well accepted, designing the plan is a matter of applying means over time. In other words, the concept provides the answers to *how* and *when* the change effort will occur, while the plan adds *who* and *with what?* Planning is important for fostering successful change, but that does not mean that only the most detailed plans succeed. In large, complex organizations, pursuing the perfectly detailed plan may

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[228] Lewis, "Exploring Paradox."
[229] Van de Ven and Poole, "Explaining Development," Section III, 526-532.

needlessly drain needed energy away from other priority activities, reduce flexibility, and constrain learning. Risk is another factor. If a desired outcome involves high risk activities that are difficult or dangerous to perform, the planning for that outcome may need to be more detailed to mitigate that risk.

Otherwise the plan should provide only enough detail so members may understand: (a) what the effort is trying to accomplish, and (b) their roles in its accomplishment. The U.S. Army's philosophy of *mission command* is helpful for describing how a good plan translates to organizational action:

> *Exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander's intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders …*[230]

The plan should therefore have three interdependent components: (1) a proponent with the needed authorities and responsibilities for governing the change effort, (2) an unambiguous division of labor among the subordinate organizations, and (3) clear lines of communication and coordination. I elaborate on each below:

Proponency and governance

This involves establishing authorities and responsibilities for overseeing the effort and ensuring progress. This is normally done by identifying an *office of primary responsibility* (OPR), which can be an established formal organization or cross-functional working group. Regardless of the mechanism used, the OPR requires the following:

- Sufficient capability and capacity to monitor activities associated with the change effort. The OPR must collect and analyze the necessary data to measure progress.

- Sufficient authority to direct activities on behalf of the senior leader.

- Sufficient authority and capacity to develop and publish reports to the senior leader as required or directed. This

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[230] Department of the Army, *Mission Command*, Army Doctrine Publication 6-0 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2012), iv.

includes routine in-progress reviews. Such reports should also be available to the organizational membership.

These cannot be taken for granted, as one must assume that the OPR is not necessarily resourced for the additional responsibilities of managing change. Or, if the OPR is to be assembled from within the organization, that there could be an impact on other duties. Also, OPR responsibilities are inherent to the organization and should not be outsourced. Even if particular responsibilities are assigned to contractors, the OPR must be postured to assess the accomplishment of the task and its synchronization with other parts of the change effort. However, the scope of OPR duties depends on the division of labor. [231]

Division of labor

This answers the question of who-does-what and it will depend on the character of the activities to be performed. This is where frameworks like Van de Ven & Poole (1995) can be handy, along with organizing constructs the military organizations may already be using. Consider a change effort involving a new weapon system fielding or other capability development. Military organizations normally have constructs for dividing the work – the U.S. military, for example, employs the life-cycle motor as the basis. DOTMLPF (Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership & Education, Personnel, and Facilities) establishes seven distinct lines of effort, each with its own objective that collectively achieves the overall desired state of the weapon system delivered to a force that is trained and ready to employ it under battlefield conditions.[232]

However, the lines of effort differ in character. Materiel development typically employs the life-cycle motor in which the system is designed, developed, produced, and fielded at first but then subsequently updated in a planned fashion. This cycle can

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[231] This subsection derives from my personal experience. In too many cases, members who are already very busy are assigned OPR as collateral duties, often without the needed authorities, added resources, or time to perform the task. As this is often unavoidable, the best resolution is for leaders and OPRs to negotiate the duties and if possible grant the OPR some relief from other responsibilities, at least temporarily.

[232] *Defense Acquisition University Glossary*, 14th edition (Fort Belvoir, VA: Defense Acquisition University, July 2011), s.v. "DOTMLPF" and related terms.

be done deliberately such as upgrades and modifications to a hardware platform or rapidly such as bug fixes and security patches in software applications, but it is still operating in life-cycle fashion with a unified start and end.[233] Others like Training and Leadership & Education may operate more as a compliance effort, with activities designed to impart skills and knowledge about the system but success being measured via evidence that soldiers can apply the training. Thus, the character of the work to be done and the outcomes will influence the mix of motors employed in the plan.

Other common organizing constructs can follow functional or structural lines depending on the context. A unit-level change effort may follow the G-staff construct by dividing work functionally according to the staff structure.[234] A change effort may also be divided geographically by region or location if the local context is significant. For example, one might divide service-wide changes in family support programs by base or divide military partnership initiatives by regional commands (e.g., U.S. Southern Command for Latin America, U.S. European Command for Europe and Eurasia). The advantages of relying on such constructs are that the work practically divides itself and one can leverage existing coordinating mechanisms such as regular staff meetings. However, there are disadvantages in that the change effort may find itself competing for attention and resources against other routine activities.

Another option is to establish separate organizations answerable to the OPR that will perform the work. Some might be standing organizations such as military research labs and innovation centers while others might be temporary organizations that would disband after the change effort is complete. This is advantageous when the risk of disruption to the organization is great, but this could be offset by the need to reallocate resources to the new organization.

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[233] This is the idea behind the Adaptive Acquisition Framework in which different "pathways" are established based on the type of capability under development. Department of Defense, *Operation of the Adaptive Acquisition Framework*, DoD Instruction 5000.02 (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, January 2020).

[234] In other words, matters pertaining to personnel are assigned to the G-1, of security to the G-2, and so on.

Coordinating mechanisms

The plan must include an appropriate amount of coordinating mechanisms to allow the OPR to issue assignments, collect reports, keep the senior leadership informed, and intervene when necessary. Three mechanisms are presented for consideration. The first is based on Gersick's conceptions of time-driven and event-driven change from Chapter 8. Time-driven change establishes benchmarks and decisions based on the calendar, such as annual budgets or summer personnel rotations. Event-driven change causes decisions to occur based on conditions, often in the form of achieving measured progress. One can therefore break the change effort into *phases*, with intermediate goals as short-term targets indicating progress toward the overall vision. As conditions within each line of effort meet the goal for the given phase, a decision can be made (by the senior leader or the OPR) to move to the next phase.

Coordinating mechanisms could also involve regular *communications* to ensure continued attention on the effort. One can use in-progress reviews on a timely basis (e.g., monthly, quarterly), newsletters or other routine materials, and town hall meetings or similar gatherings to disseminate progress reports.

Finally, *measures of performance* and *measures of effectiveness* are needed. The former provides information about how well the activities within the change effort worked in isolation. Was the training completed successfully and was there retention of knowledge? Is the new capability being developed on schedule? The latter is more difficult to measure as they are indirect. To what extent is the organization changing its behavior to match that of the desired future state? These measures need not be quantitative, and in fact certain types of change efforts may require qualitative data collection instead. Regardless, the measures must be applied consistently so that proper comparisons of measures can occur across the lifespan of the change effort.

10. Phase VI – Launching the effort

To this point, the organization has invested time and energy to putting together the change effort but has not necessarily committed to doing it. The effort is in a pre-decisional state with room for adjustments or the possibility of cancellation with minimal impact on the organization. Supporters of the change would be disappointed, of course, but would otherwise return to operating under the *status quo*. Knowledge of the problem, its diagnosis, and the vision and plan to fix it may mean that another effort may arise at a future time – just not now.

What is "launch"?

Burke's *launch* phase (Chapter 9) represents a point of no return for the change effort. At launch, the senior leader or proponent has committed the organization to the effort and legitimized it, often publicly. A big event such as a ribbon-cutting or all-hands meeting may see the new logo unveiled or guidon unfurled. Or launch could be more subtle with the senior leader announcing a decision during a staff call or signing a memorandum directing the change effort to go active. Launch can occur at a meeting when the senior leader makes the decision to proceed or signs the initiating memorandum. Or it occurs discreetly without a clear formal communication beyond the leader's inner circle that the change effort is proceeding.[235]

Launch is a phase -- not a single event. The ribbon cutting is just one action among many to signal to the organization and stakeholders that the change effort is active, and the ribbon cutting need not be the first. Launch can occur as a slow roll-out over a protracted period. Regardless of how fast or how publicly the launch occurs, it comprises several synchronized activities, all drawing attention to the change effort.

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[235] Personal anecdotes from experience. This can happen unintentionally when a busy leader loses track of all the decisions and communications made and believes that enough guidance or intent has been communicated to warrant action by members, who in turn are waiting for precise orders. It can also happen intentionally when the leader feels that the staff is risk-averse or too beholden to formal processes. Thus, the leader conducts a surreptitious launch as a way of judging which members can show initiative.

Like the change effort overall, one must carefully plan the launch. However, senior leaders, change agents, and guiding coalitions must be the ones driving the launch plan rather than delegating it to the staff who would treat it as an ordinary part of operational planning. Key is the message, which must convey the urgency of the problem, presents the essentials of the change vision and concept, and instills confidence that the effort will succeed. The coalition should know what kind of reactions to expect and be prepared to shape the message to fit any reasonable contingency.[236]

The launch phase involves significant communication. Activities often associated with launch phases include: (a) ceremonies or events designed to mark the transition from planning to implementation, (b) engagements where members carry the message around the organization or among external stakeholders to inform them of the launch and what it means, (c) communications with the media or other platforms to get other parties to help spread the word appropriately among the public as appropriate, and (d) short-term "wins" that demonstrate the change vision without too much risk.[237] In large, complex organizations, the launch phase can take weeks or months to reach all critical stakeholders and maximize their buy-in.

Getting the word out is only half the battle – countering misinformation and disinformation that may surface as a result is an important aim. Launch is when opponents may choose to mobilize against the change effort. They may not necessarily seek to stop the effort, but they can try to discredit it and weaken support among members and stakeholders. Therefore, to the maximum extent possible, leaders should conduct the launch at the time most advantageous to the change effort. There is risk of launching too soon, such that it precedes the availability of resources or distribution of messaging through the organization and thereby puts members on the defensive. Launching too late means word may leak out and leaders must react.

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[236] It also puts the change effort at unnecessary risk of resistance. Several firsthand experiences involved change efforts (especially experimentation) dictated from higher without any attempt at explaining how the effort will benefit units. Typically, the results were disappointing as members struggled to implement change and resisted at every turn.

[237] Kotter, *Leading Change*, Chapter 2.

Planning and implementing launch

There are five steps to launch preparation and implementation with most of the work done during pre-launch. The moment launch begins, the guiding coalition may recognize that audiences are not receiving the message as expected, and therefore they should adjust the plan. However, this is not possible if preparations before launch failed to establish the capacity to collect data and generate feedback. The needed sensors will not be in place and the coalition will not know where or how to get reliable feedback.

Launch planning is like a change effort in miniature. There is the need for a clear concept on how launch will proceed, a plan for all its activities, and measures of performance to help assess whether the launch was successful. Good launch planning ensures that launch occurs under the most favorable conditions possible. Launch preparations include the following five steps, shows in Figure 21.

The first step is to decide when to launch, which may also include deciding how to decide when to launch! While stakeholders or others may dictate the precise date and time, that does not necessarily constrain the senior leader to a specific event at a specific time. In fact, the launch may not have a predetermined date associated with it. The leader may decide to hold the change effort in a dormant status until conditions are right, so that the launch phase provides maximum exposure at the height of audience receptivity. Or in times of crisis, the leader may decide that the best opportunity to launch is now, that the change effort could be an effective way of mitigating the crisis while also solving the original problem. There is also the potential to do what I've experienced as a so-called "soft launch," announcing the change effort and thereby committing the organization to it early on, before the concept and plan are together to communicate a promise of action to stakeholders.[238]

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[238] Personal anecdote from experience. This tactic has also been used by outgoing leaders under external pressure to 'do' something they do not wish to do, or do not wish to hand over a half-planned communication campaign to a successor who might prefer to go a different direction.
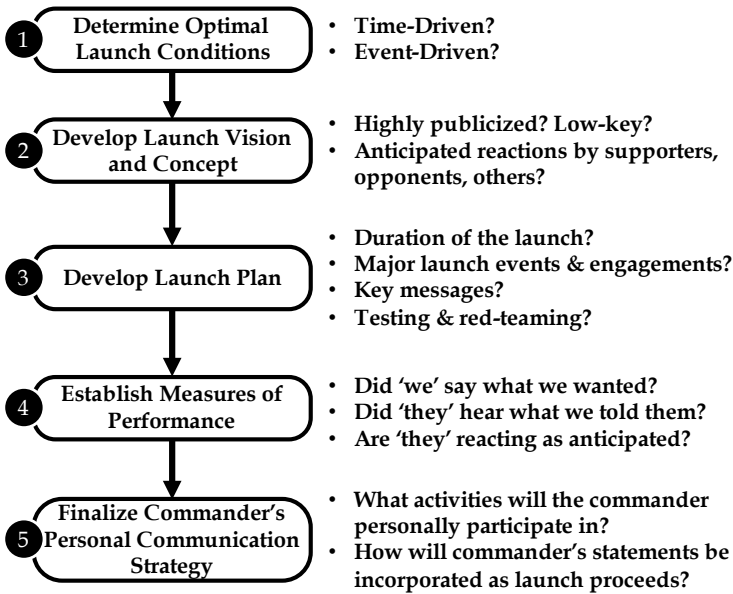
1 · Determine Optimal Launch Conditions
   • Time-Driven?
   • Event-Driven?

2 · Develop Launch Vision and Concept
   • Highly publicized? Low-key?
   • Anticipated reactions by supporters, opponents, others?

3 · Develop Launch Plan
   • Duration of the launch?
   • Major launch events & engagements?
   • Key messages?
   • Testing & red-teaming?

4 · Establish Measures of Performance
   • Did 'we' say what we wanted?
   • Did 'they' hear what we told them?
   • Are 'they' reacting as anticipated?

5 · Finalize Commander's Personal Communication Strategy
   • What activities will the commander personally participate in?
   • How will commander's statements be incorporated as launch proceeds?

Figure 21. Five steps to launch a change effort[239]

Step 1. Determine optimal launch conditions

There are two ways to declare launch conditions – *time-driven* or *event-driven.*[240] *Time-driven launches* are set to dates on the calendar and can be a single date or a period bounded with a predetermined start and end. The fixed date can be determined in many ways but often follows an external condition that the organization either does not control or must leverage to bring attention to the campaign. At the enterprise level, launches might be based on the fiscal year to leverage the budgetary situation. Sometimes campaigns are time-driven based on the tenure of a senior leader or stakeholder whose departure could negatively affect the campaign. Other times they may be set arbitrarily, such as a leader deadline for action (e.g., "I want X done in 30 days").

Event-driven launches are conditions-based. Once the guiding coalition verifies that the pre-determined desirable conditions are

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[239] Original graphic by author.
[240] Connie J. G. Gersick, "Pacing Strategic Change: The Case of a New Venture," *Academy of Management Journal* 37, no. 1 (1994): 9-45.

present in the environment, launch occurs as soon as practical. Or, if the campaign is the result of a crisis, launch may need to begin immediately. There can be greater flexibility in event-driven launches for leaders to delay if the conditions are not right – for example, socialization is incomplete, certain barriers to communication remain unaffected, or the effects of other strategic events are unknown. However, leaders should be concerned about the length of time that passes, as the organization's commitment to the campaign can wither away, rendering the campaign overcome by other activities and forgotten.

Step 2. Develop the launch vision and concept

Readers may be asking, "Another vision and concept? How many of these do we have to do?" This is another reminder that envisioning is a continuous process that will serve multiple purposes throughout the effort. Each phase introduces its own challenges to the original concept, and launch is no exception. There are many ways that launch can occur, ranging from the highly publicized to the low-key, secretive approach. Either can work, and often launches occur somewhere in between. But envisioning the launch helps with understanding what must take place to effectively communicate the change effort without unintentionally emboldening opponents.

The launch vision should describe the conditions in the environment when launch concludes. Are supporters of the change effort going to be satisfied and mobilized to participate? Would opponents of the change effort see their disagreements sufficiently countered or weakened to the extent that they no longer constitute critical barriers? Would those sitting on the fence remain neutral or would they be convinced to become supporters? Ideally, one would want all these questions answered "yes," but one must be realistic. Neutral parties are not likely to change their minds based on launch alone. Opponents are unlikely to change their minds and may double down on their opposition. Most importantly, supporters may become passive. – Some were willing to help get the effort launched but afterwards may prioritize other neglected activities or duties.

Baldoni's four "I"s offers a way to think about this (see page 81). After sorting out the primary audiences for the launch effort,

which can be great in number or smaller and most focused, the vision would express how those audiences should respond. Who needs to be informed, get involved, feel ignited, and be invited because of launch activities?

The launch concept determines the required kinds of launch events, so to preposition information and mobilize the resources necessary to conduct those events effectively. Like the concept for the whole change effort, *how* and *when* are important to sort out, but also *who*. Who is going to establish the key themes and messages for the launch effort, and who is going to disseminate them? How will the various audiences be engaged, directly (e.g., by guiding coalition members fanning out to various locations or through remote telecommunications) or indirectly (e.g., through carefully crafted messages delivered through the media)? A sign of a poorly conceived launch concept is that all attention goes to the seminar launch activity – the ribbon-cutting ceremony– without consideration of how key audiences not at the ceremony will be engaged.

The critical element of the concept is what themes and messages to disseminate. The launch concept should be clear about what the organization wants to say. The other elements of the launch concept parallel those of the change effort itself – (1) purpose statement to explain why the effort is being launched, (2) key tasks, perhaps expressed as the set of launch events to be performed, (3) description of the transition from pre-launch to post-launch and how it will affect members of the organization and others, and (4) when the launch phase will end, whereby the effort is then in full implementation.

Step 3. Develop the launch plan

Detailed planning begins. The organization must set which events go in which sequence and what each event is supposed to accomplish. Sequencing events may depend on the audiences and established protocols. For example, such protocols may require engagements at higher levels first before the target audience. For example, if the audience encompasses an entire geographic area of responsibility, there may be a need to engage with a multinational stakeholder first before engaging with member nations – for example, a change effort involving NATO may

require engagement at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe prior to engaging with member nations. Or change efforts involving interagency partners may require engagement at department or ministry level before the bureaus or subordinate agencies.

The coalition should also decide how many times to directly engage the same mass audiences. Is one 'town hall' at one base or post sufficient? Or must there be multiple engagements scattered at different bases? How many of these engagements will fit in the calendar? To what extent can leaders assume that the preferred message is the one that will spread to individuals not engage? The desired sequencing of launch events may not be feasible due to scheduling and other challenges, but one should weigh any deviations against the risk of some segments of the audience feeling slighted or not receiving the organization's messages.

With the events sequenced, the next action is to set the *script* for each event. All launch events provide opportunities to deliver the desired messages, including to those audiences not physically present to hear or witness a communication. Scripts reflect both the messages to disseminate and how to disseminate them. They can be highly prescriptive, such as a speech read verbatim although such communications can seem inauthentic and off-putting to the receivers. Less prescriptive forms may include "talking points" or similar constructs designed to ensure consistency of the message while allowing flexibility for the speaker.

Red-teaming, or testing and evaluating, the themes and messages will help identify problems with the campaign prior to launch. Planners should assemble a team of members with no direct connection to the campaign's development and/or personnel outside and independent of the organization to evaluate the themes, messages, leader-specific messages, and corporate identity. It is best if the red team is familiar with the intended audiences of the campaign, stakeholders and third parties alike, especially those with whom the military ordinarily has limited contact such as foreign populations.

Problems to anticipate include but are not limited to: (a) failed delivery of messages, (b) the clear rejection of it by key audiences,

(c) premature exposure to the change effort due to leaks by opponents or insiders, (d) unsuccessful countering of misinformation or disinformation of the effort, and (e) unexpected challenges with the ways and means required, including unforeseen resource requirements. The coalition should anticipate what harm may come to the change effort in the event any these occur. Sometimes these challenges present opportunities or leaders can mitigate them through pre-emptive action. For example, one can uncover concerns about premature exposure through a small-scale test communication known as a *trial balloon* where a message goes public in a limited way to gauge reactions.[241] If favorable, the coalition can consider the test message as OK and incorporate it more aggressively in the plan. If unfavorable, the coalition can deny the message, and subsequent avoid the use of that message as the change effort proceeds.

A final consideration for the launch plan is which audiences the organization must exclude. This is not a comfortable subject, as knowledge about excluding an audience can harm the organization's reputation and negatively impact the change effort. However, there are several reasons to exclude an audience other than to disarm opponents. Change efforts involving sensitive information may require limits on knowledge of the effort to only those with a need-to-know basis. Laws, policies, and regulations may prohibit certain audiences from access to information, such as prohibiting contractors from exposure to potential future contract actions by the government. While members of the coalition might normally be aware of such constraints, mistakes can occur, particularly when the launch effort is diffuse and distributed with multiple communications going on simultaneously. The plan should therefore consider options and opportunities to respond when things go wrong.

Step 4. Establish measures of performance

Measures of performance provide the means for determining the general effectiveness of the conduct the launch events. It is

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[241] Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, s.v. "Trial Balloon," https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/trial%20balloon

different from measures of effectiveness that seek to determine the impacts of launch on the audiences, such as to what extent they drop their opposition. Although one should try to measure those effects, it is difficult to develop reliable and valid measures that would correlate with the future success of the change effort. The focus for launch should be on what the organization controls, which is the effective delivery of the message. One should design measures of performance to do more than just inform the coalition of the organization's activities. They should also trigger decisions on how to adjust the launch and the overall change effort going forward.

One set of measures should aim to answer the following question, *did we say what we wanted to say to all those we wanted to say it to?* The aim is to identify gaps and inconsistencies caused by mistakes, deviations from the script, or oversights in planning. The coalition should use these measures quickly adapt the launch to correct any errors and provide clarity as needed.

Another set of measures answers a similar question but from the perspectives of the audiences, *did they hear what we told them?* The coalition should position itself to catch say-hear gaps, where the audience misinterprets the message and therefore acts in unanticipated ways. It would be useful to ascertain the possible cause – the result of confusion, conflation of terms, latent biases, or something else – and then take corrective steps for future communications. It is important to ensure that the direct receivers heard and are acting on the right message, so coalition members should adapt the launch to avoid or minimize say-hear gaps.

A third set of measures focus on surprises –*are the audiences responding as anticipated?* It is possible for the launch events to draw out hidden views on the change effort. For example, external stakeholders may have been reticent to show either support or opposition, but launch may force them to take a side. The initial responses among members could also be surprising if they feel that the change effort as launched is different from what they had initially supported. This could happen when conditions in the environment have changed since the coalition initially identified the problem.

Step 5. Set the senior leader's personal communication strategy

Through the process, senior leaders evaluate their personal roles in the launch so to harmonize their activities with the organization's efforts. They should communicate how they will decide that the conditions for launch are satisfied. Will it be through a formal communication stating that the campaign has begun or informally by exception (e.g., the campaign launches unless the senior leader explicitly stops it). Similarly, senior leaders should set clear expectations on the extent to which the coalition keeps them informed through launch. Under what circumstances must the leader intervene and make decisions about the launch based on premature release of information or extenuating circumstances potentially impeding the launch?

A challenging aspect for the senior leader is choosing which launch events to participate in, which to observe, and which to delegate responsibility to others. Without question, those that the senior leader personally attends will receive greater attention, and the audiences may notice the differences (e.g., one audience gets the senior leader while another got only the deputy). Leaders may use multimedia as a means of expanding one's personal profile over the campaign, such as delivering social media releases and recorded messages at launch events. Decisions on levels of participation also rest on other demands of the senior leader.

Senior leaders must weigh risks associated with their choices. The levels of participation can influence post-launch expectations. A leader who is everywhere promoting the launch early on may not be able to sustain that pace afterward, which may prompt opponents to suggest the change effort will be short-lived. A leader's misstep could have a greater impact on the campaign than a misstep by a member. Also, opponents may choose to target the senior leader with criticisms unrelated to the change effort and thus interrupt the desired momentum.

Senior leaders should avoid being their own judges regarding the measures of performance. The leader's perspective could be unduly rosy or be overly self-critical. It is difficult for leaders to be objective over their own performance at launch events, thus it is better to rely on independent or unbiased sources.

Part Three. Other Challenges of Leading Change

11. Resistance and Ambivalence

As American philosopher Eric Hoffer observed that even when necessary, change is highly unsettling. He said that, "every radical change is a crisis in self-esteem … [A] population undergoing drastic change is a population of misfits, and misfits live and breathe in an atmosphere of passion."[242] Even in the best of circumstances, when leaders and members are united in the goals, there will be uneasiness about undergoing change efforts. *Will things work out? What will happen to me?* Of course, the ordinary churn in the environment (Chapter 2) can alone bring this about as. Conflict, tension, and friction are parts of organizational life.[243] What this chapter is concerned with is when this uneasiness grows into barriers against change efforts.

Naturally, when one's goal is to lead change, the *status quo* constitutes a barrier. In Kotter's view, the *status quo* perseveres in one of two ways: (1) through the deliberate acts of those seeking to preserve it, or (2) organizational barriers preventing individuals from supporting the change.[244] 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.[245]

The trouble with Kotter's use of "troublesome" is its oversimplicity. It draws from a classic narrative of a worker who has developed skills and knowledge which the change effort might make obsolete, and the worker does not wish to go along. If the change effort follows the traditional life-cycle motor of

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[242] Hoffer, *The Ordeal of Change*, 3-4.
[243] Lewis, "Exploring Paradox."
[244] Simplified view of Kotter, *Leading Change*, 102.
[245] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 112-113.

change per Van de Ven and Poole (1995), the troublesome supervisor is a problem. The organization is trying to change as a unitary whole; therefore, anyone not on board is an obstacle potentially requiring remediation or removal. The message is fix thyself or go home.

This view of resistance is too narrow to be useful in large, complex organizations such as militaries. When one considers the natural tensions that exist due to common organizational paradoxes, it is a given that any expression of a change vision risks triggering those members whose views follow an opposing perspective. For example, consider joint-service tensions or interservice rivalries, where these competing views emerge from history, culture, and discrete areas of expertise. A change effort that favors a joint perspective is likely to trigger concerns over the services' equities. Likewise, change efforts by the services to pursue service-oriented aims could certainly raise doubts among those whose interests are in furthering jointness. So, opposition to one's change effort is unavoidable in practice.

But resistance is not the toughest challenge that change agents will face. The greater challenge is one of *ambivalence*, the state of conflicted feelings that members will have about change. While the resistor may be direct and say 'No!' to the change agent, more members are likely to feel uncomfortable and say little – neither committing wholeheartedly to the effort nor seeking to block it. Perhaps, they do not feel comfortable committing or do not feel as though they understand the change effort and its purpose. Perhaps, they are unclear as to how the effort will affect themselves or others or are concerned that the change agent is overly optimistic about the chances of success.

Thus, there are many ways and reasons that members oppose change, some more nuanced than others. Key to overcoming these concerns is open communication from the senior leader or the guiding coalition. Getting people on board with the change effort despite their misgivings is a matter of trust between the coalition and the organization's members.

How do people react and cope with the change surrounding them?

Example I – Transition theory, Bridges (1991)

Even when members widely accept and embrace a change effort, 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."[246] That is, change causes a transition to take place. Whereas Lewin depicted changes as a sequence of three distinct phases, Bridges depicts 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 *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 exceedingly 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 of breaking with the past and thereby dealing with it successfully.

Bridges calls the second phase *The Neutral Zone*, an emotional "no-man's land" marked with high anxiety as one takes a "journey from one identity to the other."[247] While in this zone, members may be looking over their shoulder, figuratively

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

[247] Bridges, *Managing Transitions*, 37.

speaking, to the old ways and may suddenly find them more attractive than the uncertain and immature new ways that the change effort is promoting. The temptation to become frustrated and go back is palpable. Thus, 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. This is also why it is helpful to include a discussion of the pending transition while formulating the change effort's concept (see Chapter 8).

Bridges' third phase is *The New Beginning*.[248] This phase occurs concurrently with the previous two phases but grows in importance over time. Bridges emphasizes that fearing the new is separate and distinct from letting go of the old. Individuals may be anxious as the organization institutes the new, unproven way. The problems and the undesired second-order effects of the change may manifest. Members reaching this state may no longer desire to go back to the old ways, but that does not mean they are happy or satisfied.

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 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 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 be *socialized*[249] to some degree. This is a natural outgrowth of the

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[248] Bridges, *Managing Transitions*, 50-54.
[249] 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 John Van

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 uninformed in advance may resist change solely because they feel excluded. Senior leaders 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 willingness to support. Challenging this notion, John Clawson (2012) identifies seven distinct 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.[250] 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."[251] Rather, the contrast is in whether or not the members have been informed. Members buying-in with active resistance, therefore, 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.

Maanen, "Police Socialization: A Longitudinal Examination of Job Attitudes in an Urban Police Department," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 20, no. 2 (June 1975): 207-228.

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

[251] Clawson, *Level Three Leadership*, 200.

What forms of resistance might change agents encounter?

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

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 easier 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.[252] *Cognitive* responses are harder to discern and may appear as reluctance, a state of not being ready to change.[253]

Ambivalence is a state of internal conflict, of competing desires or attitudes toward something.[254] Ambivalence captures well the uneasiness about change that Hoffer depicts earlier in this chapter but manifested specifically toward change efforts. 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

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

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

[254] Merriam-Webster, s.v. "Ambivalence," http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ambivalence

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, expressed as "Good idea, but _____." The "but" 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…"[255] Rather, she viewed ambivalence as a potential source of energy, as a way of allowing change agents to engage with and listen to members while planning and implementing change. This is 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.

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[255] Piderit, "Rethinking Resistance," 790.

How do *organizations* resist change?

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

Things would be much simpler if only individuals exercised resistance and ambivalence. Then, leaders and change agents can communicate with members individually in hopes of informing them and changing their minds or at least encouraging them to stay out of the way of progress. However, individual resistors 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, formidable opposition. This occurs even if the potential change intervention is demonstrably 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."[256] Like receptor cells in the body that detect pathogens, people recognize the onset of a change effort and begin asking questions.[257] Rumors or gossip emerge and resistance becomes mobilized as fear and misperceptions spread. Avoiding or rejecting the change may follow, as may sabotaging the change effort.[258]

Very large organizations often have robust and powerful immune systems due to their natural complexity. Despite the coalition's best effort, much of the organization is likely to learn of the change effort indirectly through second and third-hand sources rather than first-hand from the senior leader or change

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[256] 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.

[257] 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).

[258] Gilley, Godek, and Gilley, "Change, Resistance," 6.

agent. Resistance can mobilize quickly when the change agent is driving the change without clearly conferred legitimacy coming from the senior leadership. Resistors 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.[259] Or, resistors may be responding to the lack of resources or fear of seeing them lost or reallocated.[260]

If there is no resistance, is success assured?

Before concluding this chapter, it is worth addressing why squashing resistance is rarely a good approach. This will be tempting because, as stated above, opposition is unavoidable. So, to what extent is it worth the energy and time to placate all perspectives? Instead, why not just have the senior leader issue the directive and force compliance?

The answer is because some change efforts, even when planned properly and fully embraced by members, are doomed to failure. In such cases, the best option is one where the organization ends the effort in a way that fosters future change efforts. The authoritarian approach does not do this. Instead, members would become naturally resistant to future change.

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

Oreg et al. (2018) opened with a simple case of an information technology project in a private firm. Members universally supported the project and embraced the new capability, but the software failed to work properly. Support weakened, and ambivalence toward the effort grew to the point that the project failed.[261] The lesson in this case study is that there are many ways that a change effort can fail to succeed, but it is far better to establish an environment receptive to change rather than force change efforts upon members.

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[259] Personal experience of the author.
[260] With thanks to an external reviewer for this insight.
[261] Shaul Oreg at al., "An Affect-Based Model of Recipients' Responses to Organizational Change Efforts," *Academy of Management Review* 43, no. 1 (January 2018): 65-86.

Resistance and ambivalence are not static entities 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").[262]

The first category of predictors involves factors that influence the extent that members see the change effort "as being aligned with their own interests."[263] 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 affects them in practice, they may re-appraise how well served are their interests (personal or organizational). 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.[264] 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 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

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[262] Oreg, "An Affect-Based Model," 75-79.
[263] Oreg, "An Affect-Based Model," 76.
[264] Oreg, "An Affect-Based Model," 77 and 79. The authors use the term *psychological distance* to encompass these and other related factors.

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.[265] 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 phase 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.[266] It is not always a good plan to squash resistance at every turn but consider it an important indicator that leaders need additional information. What are they not considering? Whose perspectives are they overlooking?

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 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 inferior 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 on-going prevents rumors and gossip from questioning the leaders' motivations. In very large organizations, leaders must never assume that the purpose and strategies for change are clear. For example, 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

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[265] Oreg, "An Affect-Based Model," 78.
[266] Gilley, Godek, and Gilley, "Change, Resistance," 8-11.

vision statement of "Acquisition excellence through leadership with integrity" offered no sense of what the reforms would look like.[267]

Purposeful two-way engagement, leveraging ambivalence as a tool, is a beneficial way to use such situations to strengthen the change effort.[268] 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.[269]

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[267] 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.

[268] I prefer this term to 'socialization' which is common in the U.S. Army. Socialization implies more push than pull, in that the purpose is to inform others of a *fait accompli* solution rather than construct a mutually agreeable one.

[269] Another firsthand experience from teleconferences where the proponent of a local change effort declared that it was to become a *de facto* Army standard because a general said so (sometimes invoking the term 'best practice'). 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.

12. 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, can take 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 inherit a change effort?

Senior leaders or change agents inheriting change efforts should start with the approach that efforts should continue until evidence shows that they should not. One should avoid canceling a predecessors' initiatives too soon as it will only encourage resistance against one's own initiatives.

Of course, senior leaders should take the time to evaluate the efforts objectively and decide to what extent do they need to continue and why. For each change effort, they are five options: (1) continue the effort as is, (2) continue with modifications, (3) re-design the effort, (4) stop the effort, or (5) completely undo the effort, reverting to a *status quo ante*. The latter two are not the same, as stopping means ceasing the expenditure of organizational energy and accepting new state of the organization, while undoing means undertaking a second change effort to restore as much of the original situation as possible.

Senior leaders have much more to communicate than just the decision. They must assume that opponents of the change effort will use the transition as an opportunity to undermine the effort. Therefore, senior leaders must deliver timely messages to their organizations indicating that the efforts are under review and that members must remain committed 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 senior leaders' assessment might not be feasible (e.g., powerful external stakeholders wanting to continue a change effort that the leader believes must stop), doing a proper assessment helps arm the senior 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. These are tough questions to answer. All are context specific.

Has the situation changed?

To answer this question, one should try reconstructing the original change story and developing the historical trail of the change effort to its contemporary form. From that, it is possible to assess if the effort is still appropriate for addressing the originally intended problem.

The initial urgency that spurred the change effort may no longer hold, and predecessors may have invested so much into the effort they failed to recognize the situation has changed. 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 force may still require the capability to defeat or deter other similar threats. For leaders assessing the effort, the 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 change agent.

What is the relationship between this effort and others?

Service members swim in a churning sea of ongoing change. At any given time, there are dozens, even hundreds, of change efforts! Some are enterprise level; others are local. Some are mature, programmed, and progressing; others are in the idea stage where change agents are generating urgency and forming the guiding coalitions. Some change efforts will depend on others. For example, the fielding of a new weapons system may depend on facility construction, technological readiness levels, or the abilities to recruit and retain the right talent to enact the change. Of course, sometimes interdependent efforts can come into conflict due to competition for the same resources. Senior leaders and change agents must see clearly through the churn and help the organization understand what change efforts are ongoing and why, and where each effort fits in the overall strategic picture.

Senior leaders also must understand that any action altering a change effort carries the risk of delaying it, with cascading effects on other on-going change efforts. This does not excuse the leader from making tough decisions to terminate efforts that are not progressing. Rather, it is better for leaders to make well-informed decisions, alert stakeholders (internal and external) of those decisions and set conditions to allow other change efforts to continue. Bottom line: Leaders should always make decisions about change in such a way that they foster future change.

What are the obstacles, and which are most critical?

There are numerous potential obstacles to progress, the question is which represent critical barriers. I define a critical

barrier is a something that clearly prevents achievement of the change vision. Leaders must mitigate such barriers otherwise the effort may fail, or face significantly delays. There are several common sources of critical barriers, but these are not exhaustive.

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.

Resistance *and ambivalence* constitute potential sources of critical barriers, but senior leaders must avoid making hasty judgments as to how critical they are. It can be easy to overreact and treat any opposition as faults rather than opportunities. They may attempt to squelch or steamroll opponents. But underreacting is another common mistake that senior leaders and change agents make. Not wanting to be distracted from the change effort and their many other responsibilities, they ignore or downplay the opposition hoping that the merits of the effort will be self-evident enough. As Chapter 11 implies, ambivalence left alone now can become resistance tomorrow.

The governance mechanism, including pacing of the change effort, is another common source for obstacles. Appropriate governance enables the change effort, while ineffective governance communicates to members that the effort really is not important. Perceptions of incompetence erodes trust in the coalition, the proponent, and potentially the senior leader. An organization may react unfavorably to artificial or unrealistic deadlines, especially if the deadlines are based on the leaders' expected tenures. In other words, if the whole change effort is designed around the senior leader and less so the organization,

members will feel emboldened to slow-roll the effort and wait for the successor. Senior leaders can combat this by maintaining members' focus on the change vision and how the organization will benefit in the long term. Senior leaders must ensure that intermediate deadlines are meaningful and guide decisions. Otherwise, members may view such data gathering and reporting as unproductive busywork. Trust in the effort could erode.

Senior leaders should also pay attention to how the communication campaign supports the effort. Kotter has observed that leaders tend to undercommunicate change efforts and this can lead to leaders and members forgetting about the change effort or lowering it in priority. But leaders can overcommunicate by talking about change at unhelpful times or in unhelpful ways. If the senior leader does not vary the message, the message can become boring or uninspiring. Leaders can also derail efforts if they primarily communicate about them as part of their closing remarks at staff calls, where the change effort is but one of several priority actions touched on briefly. The message, and therefore the change effort, can appear to be divorced from the priority activities of the command. Rather, leaders should integrate communication about change into other activities.

A corollary to the governance issue regards the quality and timing of key implementing directives. A personal experience involved a chief of staff who signed the command's strategic plan as the last act on duty prior to transferring authority to the next chief of staff. The incoming chief of staff immediately cancelled the strategic plan and started over. This sequence of events signaled to members that the command did not take change seriously, and the new chief of staff had difficulty getting the next strategic plan started.

Is the concept or plan 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 preferences are misaligned with the culture, necessitating changes in the concept or plan.

For example, if internal crisis spurred the change effort, one might expect leaders to include some power-coercive strategies to communicate and drive the needed changes. This may not align with an organizational culture that prefers participative methods and values collaboration as the ordinary way of doing things. Changes related to weapons systems or organizational structures tend to rely heavily on data analysis, which may favor rational-empirical approaches. What if the organization is squeamish about quantifying things and distrusts the numbers, preferring instead to rely on expert judgment or gut feel?

Retooling the change effort should not require cancelling it. If the concept or plan is the source of a critical barrier, then the concept or plan should be re-examined. Leaders can revise choices made previously regarding how the effort proceeds.

Sustain or terminate the effort?

The above implies that the change effort should continue, and indeed that should be the change agent's default approach. Terminating a change effort quickly after assuming responsibility is a high-risk move. It can send a message to members that putting energy into a change effort is not worth it because it can be arbitrarily cancelled at any time.

But at any time, change agents must be open and honest about assessing whether an effort should continue. If the effort is still relevant and workable, then it should continue. If the effort is reaching a point of diminishing returns or leaders are becoming impatient over perceived lack of progress, but the original problem remains, then the change agent should offer recommendations to transform the effort into a new one that potentially avoids or mitigates barriers the current effort faces. Such deliberations should be done carefully to avoid tipping off resistors or other opponents prematurely, as they could begin working to undermine the change effort before a firm decision is made about its fate.[270]

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[270] With thanks to an external reviewer for this insight.

Once the fate is determined, how to communicate the adjustment?

Regardless of the outcome, the senior leader should first establish legitimacy over both the change effort and its fate. If the effort is to continue, the senior leader must demonstrate acceptance and ownership of the change effort. This severs the change effort's 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 had 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 clear about what stays the same and what will change. This reduces 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, senior 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 to abandon or pursue another way. Senior 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 leaders do not empower opponents to cease all efforts (e.g., because the

boss allegedly said 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 the reversal of a strategic change effort. The *status quo ante* was desired but not achieved because the organization was changed by the failed effort, leaving indelible memories and artifacts behind.[271] 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, DoD restored the GS system. 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 excessive administrative burdens. But the abolition of NSPS left behind problems of pay variance and its incompatibility with the GS rank structure. 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 the DoD intended NSPS to address.[272]

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[271] Mantere, "Reversal of Strategic Change."

[272] 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.

What is "success" or "failure" and how does one declare it?

Causation in dynamic and complex environments is extremely 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. If things did go wrong, supporters may pass the blame to outsiders. Opponents can use anything short of absolute attainment of the change vision as evidence of failure. They may also claim that any successes were the result of luck or exceptional circumstances. It can be difficult to sort out the truth from the rhetoric.

Senior leaders must be careful to avoid perceptions of being mere cheerleaders for change efforts they own or initiated. Change efforts are not successful based on the leader saying so. Rather, they are 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 6). 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?

2. What evidence suggests that the effects would 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 several 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 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 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. 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.

To Learn More

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