

Leading Change – Who Do You Think You Are?

Earlier articles I have written have referred to Machiavelli's famous comment:

"There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things."
(Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 1532)

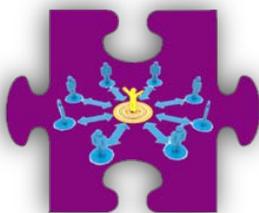
Leading change has always been difficult! However the key to success in leading change is to decide what sort of leadership you need to give. This means recognising who you ARE in the context of each change, and the particular leadership tasks you must undertake to generate effective change.

The Visionary



The **Visionary** is the person who first sees the need for change, the person who has an idea for a change initiative. For people in this position the leadership task is one of connectivity and influence. They need to get their change vision or idea shared, and to engage others with it. For them, the challenge is first to find others who are interested in the initiative. They must then use these 'like minds' to identify people or groups (I'll call them 'Consumers') that need the outcomes the initiative can bring, and to help them get those people to take it up for themselves. This is their leadership role, driven by passion, persistence and influence. Doing these things well is their best contribution to effective change.

The Champion



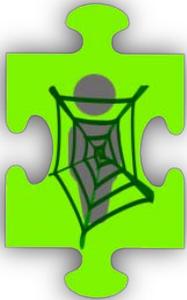
Frequently 'Consumers' lack sufficient power to implement a change initiative. They need the sponsorship of a **Champion** at senior level in the organization who can support and resource the initiative. Excellent Champions give voice to the initiative at every opportunity, and take visible actions that will make it seem real to the organization. This will mean acting as role models for the changes, and ensuring that there is solid, consistent senior support for it. Champions must use and align all the symbols of organizational power (financial and human resources, reward systems and communication channels) behind the change, advocating it at every opportunity. This advocacy includes training and coaching subordinates to support the change by word and action. This is the Champions' leadership role. If they do it well, they are doing the best they can to make the change effective.

The Executor



The role of **Executors** is usually taken by line managers and team leaders. To be effective in change leadership, Executors must turn plans and initiatives sponsored by the Champion into practical, everyday local projects and processes. They must role model the change for their teams and help their people to see how the change will work out in their own area. They must also 'reality check' the changes, communicating quickly and clearly with the Champion where adjustments to the wider plans may be necessary. Executors are often those who have to confront people who are actively resisting or undermining change, distinguishing carefully between such active opposition and the hesitancy which is often just a way for the recipient of change to express their voice as they adapt to a new situation. If Executors do these things well, they are playing their part in leading the change.

The Facilitator



The leadership role of the **Facilitator** may come from a number of sources. It may be the OD (Organizational Development) specialist, the trainer or a change manager. It may come from a committed and trusted line manager or in some cases from outside the organization altogether. However the leadership role of this change agent lies in making connections between those at all levels who are trying to make change effective. Facilitators must be able to operate without formal authority. Good Facilitators help Visionaries to find their Consumers, help Champions to give effective sponsorship and support Executors and recipients of change with their struggles. They have the confidence to 'speak truth to power' and retain the trust of those most impacted by change. They operate flexibly to catalyse and enable the change process, whatever their formal role in it. Facilitators who operate in this way are making the best possible contribution to leading an effective change process.

Conclusion

You will have noticed that for each of the above leadership roles in change, I have said that if they operate in a particular way, they are each 'doing the best they can to make the change effective'. Of course it is possible that an individual may have multiple roles in a particular change. The Visionary may also be a line manager or (probably more rarely) the Champion. An Executor may also act as a Facilitator. Someone with the title 'Change Manager' or 'Project Manager' may have to fulfil Executor and Facilitator roles at different times. However the critical success factor is for the individual to be aware of the role (s)he is playing at any particular time and to fulfil well the requirements of that role.

Significant change cannot be led successfully by a single 'hero leader', operating alone. The Champion may be the most visible leadership role, and may provide a focus for the change, but the Champion alone cannot deliver a successful outcome. Successful change initiatives are the result of the **Visionary**, the **Executor**, the **Facilitator** and the **Champion** all playing their respective parts as leaders of change.

