



STRATEGIC CHANGE JOURNEY TO HIGH PERFORMANCE – FROM RESISTANCE TO RESILIENCE

By Debbie Craig & John Gatherer

“Change is avalanching upon us & we are grotesquely unprepared for it”

Alvin Toffler

Introduction

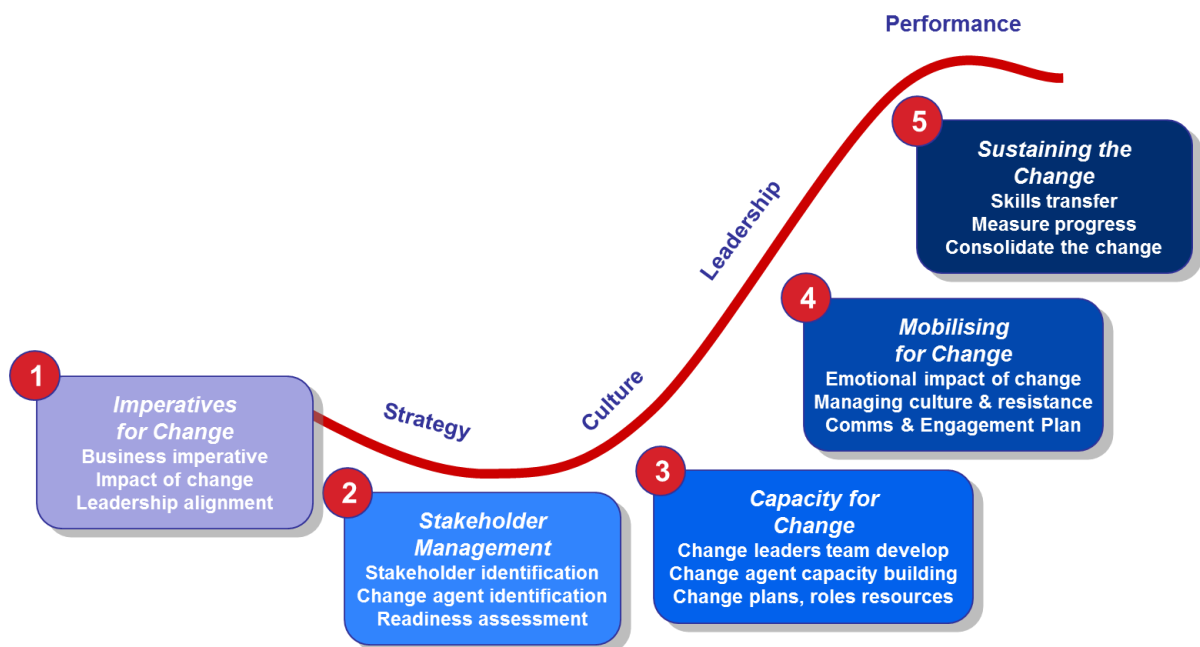
The rate of change that the futurist Alvin Toffler anticipated in the early 1970's has accelerated exponentially beyond all our imagination and expectations. Just consider the changing global scenario in the last few weeks: the world has been faced with volcanic ash clouds that left hundreds of thousands of people stranded; an oil spill off the Gulf of Mexico threatening tourism, the coastal environment and natural species for years to come; financial instability in Greece, affecting most of Europe, as well as global markets, international banks and investors; political instability with a hung parliament in the UK; earthquakes and Tsunami warnings in Indonesia; death of country leaders in the Polish Air disaster; a potentially catastrophic terror attack prevented, near Times Square and many other events.

South Africa faces huge uncertainty, change and anticipation as we prepare for a World Cup, with initial visitor number predictions affected by the recent recession, local price hikes and security concerns; municipal and other strikes heralding the volatile annual wage review season; continued political infighting, lack of consequence management and backbiting and petrol price increases. The competitive landscape is continually changing for organisations as some survive and some fail. Changes in leadership structures, strategies and culture impact people at all levels. On a personal level, people are faced with relationship uncertainties, financial worries, health challenges, crime escalation and how to raise children in this complex world of change and uncertainty.

What is the result? Change fatigue, stress, active resistance (conflict), passive resistance (non-action) and a general attitude of survival. “If we keep our heads down long enough and do the minimum, this will all blow over”. That is one way of “coping” with change! On the other hand, leaders are wanting (and needing) engagement, commitment and a creative, energised response to organisational challenges. They need people with ideas, energy, confidence and competence to anticipate and tackle each potential change event with possibility thinking, scenario planning, and courage to overcome the fear of uncertainty, take calculated risks and ride the successive waves of change as a professional.

So how do organisations bridge this gap between change fatigue, resistance and apathy to an energised, creative and resilient response to change?

In our experience, a critical strategy is the practice of **strategic change journey charting and tracking**. This involves a strategic approach and proactive management of the various phases of change when implementing either a short-term local project or a long-term new global strategy. We work with our Catalyst Strategic Change Framework and Toolkit to customise change journeys in partnership with organisations to ensure innovative, sustainable change focused on building confidence, competence and change resilience. Important aspects include building an organisational wide imperative and leadership commitment to the change, understanding and managing critical stakeholders needs and expectations, building capacity for change in leaders and change agents and ensuring change is planned for, communicating and mobilising for change at all levels and sustaining the change through skills transfer, measures and consolidation and hand-over.



Case Study

One of the ways to describe the impact of leaders managing change is to illustrate some of the realistic steps involved, significant, concerted effort and commitment that can be applied in the work environment to achieve optimal results.

We have been working with a multinational company for the last three years to assist them with implementing a strategic change journey. When we started, the organisation faced many of the change challenges mentioned above, including internal competition between sales and operations, silo mentalities, professional rivalries and much energy spent in maintaining the status quo and power dynamics. The initial goals for one of the regions over four years were the following:

- align the leadership team around a common vision and strategy;
- craft a culture of high performance, innovation, engagement and teamwork

- build leadership confidence and competence to implement the strategy
- implement a talent management system to ensure the right people were in key positions to drive the strategy.

Our approach focussed on engagement, involvement and empowerment of as many people as possible at each stage to reduce the potential resistance to change, which is exacerbated when people are not involved.

The journey evolved over time as different issues and challenges were discovered during each phase of implementation which we will outline below. After our initial implementation in South Africa which led to significant business and culture change and results, we were invited to build a similar strategy and leadership and change capability in operating divisions in South East Asia and China for an accelerated implementation. The process was very well received, taken up with enormous willingness and commitment and once again, the results started to show. Not long after that we were invited to the global head office for discussions on a wider global approach and implementation of three key aspects of leadership development, culture transformation and talent management across operating divisions in five countries. Although there have been a few differences in implementation in different environments, the following key elements seem to be what drive results:

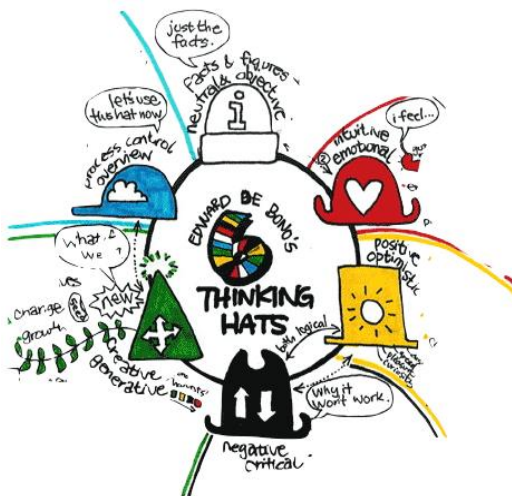
Organisational Diagnostics

This involved a strategic review of the organisation including, strategies, structures, performance, results, culture and people established through document review, interviews and focus groups. The results of the diagnostics were used to design the initial phases of the strategic change journey and were fed back to the leaders at the leadership alignment workshop.

Leadership Team Development and Alignment (top 35)

This involved a 4 day interactive workshop with the executive and senior managers, focusing on the different elements of transformational leadership. The purpose was to share the results of the diagnostics as a reality check, to craft a vision for the future, to identify the key strategic challenges and barriers to achieving the vision, to expose leaders to new thinking around personal mastery,

engagement and change management, to surface the team effectiveness issues facing the leadership team (including the unspoken ones), develop the core values and behaviours required for the change journey and to gain buy-in to the need for a strategic change journey driven by the senior leadership team.



Innovative Strategic Review and Possibility Thinking (top 35)

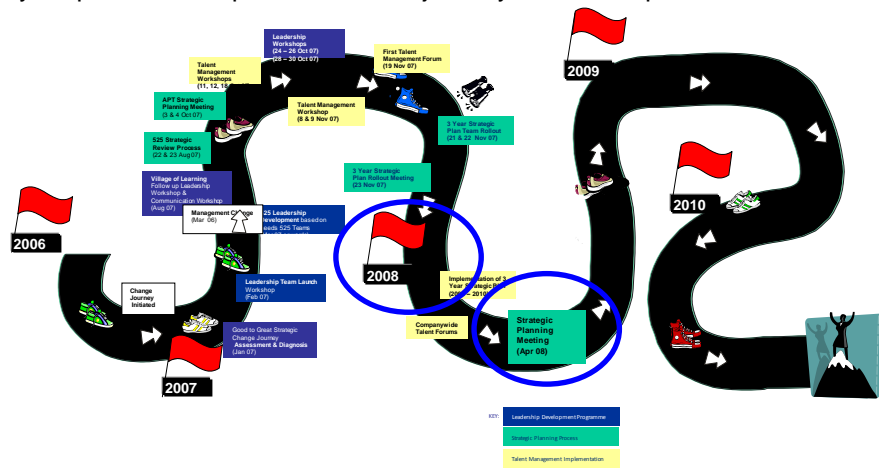
The next step was to commit 2 days to exploring innovative responses to the strategic challenges and to identify new opportunities. Leaders were exposed to possibility thinking, innovative examples from other

companies and a process of 6 hats thinking to explore ideas. Ideas were presented, discussed and prioritised into 8 Strategic Projects and draft charters completed in preparation for the more detailed

strategic planning process. The danger of strategic planning without new thinking is just more of the same!

Strategic Planning – goals, targets, measures, rewards (top 8)

After detailed preparation, the Executive Team met for 2 days to hammer out the strategic goals, targets, measures, owners and rewards that would help them drive the journey over the next 4 years. Governance structures to measure progress and make decisions were established. A scorecard system for performance management was entrenched. Significant rewards and incentives at all levels were attached to key results and stretch targets with reward sharing implemented to build co-operation between old silos. A change management plan for all key stakeholders was outlined. Lastly a visual journey map was developed to track the journey. See example below



Strategic Projects Charting (Project Teams)

Project leaders and teams were nominated and approved, followed by detailed project chartering, resourcing and team building. Initial time and priority conflicts of some managers were addressed by involving key talent from lower levels in the projects and re-looking at the performance measures to ensure a balance between project work and job functions. Project management coaching was also available for teams that required assistance. Healthy competition was encouraged through newsletter updates and show and tell events as part of the Quarterly Strategic Review Sessions.

Middle Management Leadership Development and Strategic Alignment (middle management)

The next level of managers also participated in a 2 day off-site interactive workshop to involve and engage them in the desired vision, strategy and culture of the company, and to build key leadership skills in Personal Mastery, Team Mastery, Engagement, Coaching and Change Management to prepare them for their role in the Strategic Change Journey.

Employee Engagement Events (all employees)

Whilst it was the role of managers to ensure communication and involvement of their teams lower down in the organisation, there were a number of key communication vehicles and events to ensure engagement and involvement. One of the highly successful events was a “Village of Learning” whereby the project teams put together visual and interactive displays of their projects in a large hall.

Employees were invited in groups to listen to the CEO talk about the vision and strategy and change journey and then to roam around the hall, to listen, engage, give inputs and ask questions of the project teams. This also put additional positive pressure on the project teams to deliver and show early progress to the whole company. Training programs were updated with change journey information. Values posters were put in strategic positions. Electronic boards were used for progress updates and Leadership Training reminders. Booklets were produced with summaries of leadership, personal, team and change tools. Many of these initiatives were driven by the project teams.

Talent Management Training and Implementation (all staff)

An annual strategic talent review process was implemented to ensure the right people, with the right skills, were in the right place at the right time to drive the strategy. The review process included identification of mission critical positions and key talent at all levels of the organisation, as well as succession planning and development planning to build readiness. Career discussions were a critical aspect of the review, with managers and employees trained in the Talent Management process, tools and in how to hold effective discussions. This process led to some restructuring to allow more movement and opportunity to develop additional skills. Global talent management became a reality as global workgroups used the process to plan global changes to resolve problems and build future potential leaders and technical specialists.

Quarterly Strategic Reviews (top 35)

To keep the momentum, to report on progress and to address new changes and challenges, quarterly strategic reviews were held with the senior leadership team (top 35). Presentations were streamlined and visual reporting encouraged with the focus on interaction, discussions and the sharing of innovative and continual improvement ideas. New leadership and project management techniques and tools were introduced at each session including 360 leadership assessments, meta-competencies for leaders, innovation tools, change management tools, movies for learning themes, etc. Middle managers were also involved in some of the events where cost and logistics allowed participation e.g. Evening events, Year-end functions, etc.

Just-in-time additional training and events

Strategic reviews identified additional training or exposure required to manage sticking points in the journey. One of the core skills identified to build skills throughout the organisation quickly at low cost (during economic low times), was **Coaching Skills for Line Managers**. In this way, managers were given the opportunity to learn and practice coaching conversations (including holding difficult conversations) in a safe environment and then go out and build coaching into their everyday management style. Another core skill was innovation and how to increase **innovative thinking** throughout the organisation - traditionally the focus on R&D departments. A key group of people were trained who then implemented innovation systems internally, but also in collaboration with some of their key customers with resounding success. **Change management** was also key to managing the change journey with minimal resistance. A change toolkit based on the change framework above is available for leaders and project managers to bring into any session.

Imperatives for Change	Stakeholder Management	Capacity for Change	Mobilising for Change	Sustaining the Change
Business imperative Compelling Reason & Vision for the change Business Case	Stakeholder identification Stakeholder Identification Change Principles and key messages	Change leaders team development Change leaders team development	Emotional impact of change Workshops to work through emotional cycle of change Personal empowerment workshops (victim to victor)	Skills transfer & empowerment Skills Requirements and Development Empowerment through leadership structures, performance & reward
Impact of change Change Impact Assessment Behaviour change Employee Relations Issues HR integration issues	Change influencers Role and Identification of Change Influencers	Change agent capacity building Change agent capacity building Processes, skills, tools for change	Managing culture & resistance Identifying resistance and blockers Managing culture & alignment with business processes & policies	Measure progress Monitoring and Reporting Performance Management aligned to strategic plan Surveys
Leadership vision & commitment Leadership alignment workshop Vision, values, culture & strategy Project governance & budgets	Readiness assessment Change readiness options focus interviews, focus groups & surveys	Change plans, roles, resources High level Change Plan Activity Timeline Quick Wins Plan Risk Plan	Mobilisation and Communication Mobilisation and Communication options & plans	Consolidation & Enabling Action Strategic review sessions Integration into business processes Consequence management

With these processes of journey management, project teams, governance structures, communication and change plans in place, when the early signs of the **economic crisis** hit, there was a **quick response**. Strategic projects, operational priorities and cash flow issues were reviewed leading to some readjustment of short-term goals and projects. During this time, the organisation gained ground in many areas from their competitors mostly due to the attitude and competence of their people – embracing the change, never giving up, looking for innovative solutions to challenges and working together in collaboration across the globe. Despite short-term challenges, the organisation never lost sight of the longer-term strategy, and picked up the projects that were put on hold as soon as the business environment allowed.

An 18 month review of the change journey asked participants what had changed since the journey was embarked upon. A summary of comments included the following:

- Companywide alignment around a clear vision, strategy, direction, action plans and progress reports
- Leadership commitment and courage to take on the change and be more proactive
- Improved performance management, financial awareness and professional drive
- Increased communication, sharing of information, transparency and village of learning,
- Better team work, team spirit, less silos and more effective feedback,
- Improved efficiency of processes, technology, safety and execution of projects
- Tangible change in culture - more accountability, discipline, focus, ownership and responsibility
- Leaders are more involved, more open, more consultative, more participative and coaching and developing others more

Conclusion

This organisation is now a number of years into the strategic change journey, with an eye on the summit of this climb, but also very aware of the next mountain, the next challenge and how to

continue to reinvent itself for continued high performance. Aspects of the programme continues to be implemented in different regions with plans for implementation and integration across all regions and operations. We believe that if certain key change management principles are followed with commitment, courage, humility and visionary leadership there are bound to be great results for the business AND people who become more engaged, empowered and fulfilled.



SOURCES: Toffler, A. 1970. *Future shock*. New York: Bantam Books. HBS Press.; de Bono E. *Six thinking hats* 1985. Key Porter Books Ltd. Toronto, Ontario; Kaplan R. & Norton D. 1996 *The Balanced Scorecard* Harvard Business Review

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



DEBBIE CRAIG

Debbie has over 18 years' experience in the field of strategy, leadership development, change management, talent management, high performance teams and organisational development. She has worked and consulted at leading local and global organisations in the private and public sector throughout Southern Africa and internationally in the UK, Australia, South East Asia, China, South America and the USA. Debbie is a skilled strategist, design architect, team builder, a powerful facilitator, change agent and executive coach. Her passion is transformation and empowerment which she facilitates through individual coaching and empowerment workshops, team-development workshops, corporate training and consulting assignments and organisation wide strategic change interventions. Debbie is the founder and Managing Director of Catalyst Consulting which she has grown into a successful consulting company with her business partner, John Gatherer.

Debbie has published a book, "I am Talent", on optimising potential and career aspirations, has written numerous articles, appeared on radio talk shows and presented at conferences.



JOHN GATHERER

John has over 38 years' experience in the fields of HR, labour relations, training and development, leadership and strategic change management, having held senior and executive positions in Anglo American plc and the De Beers Groups. John joined Debbie Craig at Catalyst Consulting as Principal Consultant, specialising in strategic change, leadership development, talent management and executive coaching, working locally and internationally. John brings a deep and practical knowledge and expertise to his roles as facilitator, consultant and organization development specialist as well his ability to think strategically and design innovative solutions. John has managed large scale people management projects and transformation journeys in Africa, Asia, China, the UK, India, Kuwait, Australia and the USA.

John has co-authored a book, "I am Talent" with Debbie Craig, on optimising potential and career aspirations, has written numerous journal articles and contributing chapters to Management education publications and presented at conferences and workshops. John's other passions include photography and travel and he has written and published a number of photographic "coffee table" books on African Wildlife and Adventure Travel.

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