A few notes on Change Management

As the workplace continues to redefine itself, the task of managing change continually grows in complexity.

Today’s TD professionals will face change in almost every aspect of their careers, as well as assume a number of roles when facilitating change. Those roles can include change agent, leader, facilitator, sponsor, coach—and, ultimately, a champion of the change strategy. From establishing ownership of the initiative to modeling change themselves, TD professionals will be called upon to plan, assess, implement, support, and evaluate all phases of the change process.

Numerous theories and approaches relate to organizational change, including systems thinking, appreciative inquiry, chaos and complexity, and action research.

The authors of the 2013 ASTD Competency Study defined a set of key knowledge related to each Area of Expertise (AOE)

There are two topics that relate to, or cross over to other AOE. Process Thinking and Design, refers back to Knowledge Management. Diversity and Inclusion, relates to Integrated Talent Management. You may wish to do some research on these topic to provide additional details and information that is specific to the given AOE

The actions required to manage change successfully are too numerous to list here, but the authors of the ATD study defined a set of key actions that provide some essential behaviors and activities required for facilitating change. Along with these actions come concrete examples of work, or outputs—the tangible items that the professional creates. The following table provides some examples of key actions and outputs related to facilitating change.

### Key Actions and Outputs

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<tr>
<th>Key Actions (Do)</th>
<th>Examples of Outputs (Deliver)</th>
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<tr>
<td>· Establish sponsorship and ownership for change</td>
<td>· Strategy for involving stakeholders and engaging employees</td>
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<td>· Conduct diagnostic assessments</td>
<td>· Change needs assessment</td>
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<td>· Provide feedback</td>
<td>· Case for change</td>
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<tr>
<td>· Facilitate strategic planning for change</td>
<td>· Change strategy</td>
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| · Create a contract for change | · Design requirements  
· Change plan, including outcomes, expectations, milestone events, and appropriate pacing  
· Metrics to measure change outcomes and change process |
| · Build involvement  
· Support the change solution | · Communication strategy |
| · Encourage integration of change into organizational culture | · New models of programs or approaches |
| · Manage consequences | · Documented contingency plans |
| · Evaluate change results | · Project reports  
· Evaluation report documenting effect of change and best practice |
Organizational change requires taking a systemic view of an organization. TD professionals can examine all processes provided they employ appropriate **systems thinking**. How organizational systems affect processes and where a systemic solution may be useful are central to the facilitation of organizational change.

Systems thinking is the process of understanding how things, regarded as systems, influence one another within a whole. In organizations, systems consist of people, structures, and processes that work together to make an organization "healthy" or "unhealthy." Systems thinking puts problems into the context of the larger whole to find the most effective place to implement an appropriate solution. Systems thinking uses a set of practices based on the belief that the component parts of a system can best be understood in the context of relationships with each other and with other systems, rather than in isolation. Because of this interconnectedness, small changes to parts of a system can benefit the whole system before a situation reaches the crisis stage.

**Chaos theory** studies the behavior of dynamic systems that are highly sensitive to initial conditions, an effect which is popularly referred to as the butterfly effect. Small differences in initial conditions (such as those due to rounding errors in numerical computation) yield widely diverging outcomes. Chaos theory assumes that order exists even when not immediately apparent.

**Complexity theory** is the study of complex systems. It attempts to explain how organizations adapt to their environments and cope with uncertainty. As complex adaptive systems, organizations exhibit characteristics of chaos and complexity. The central premise of complexity theory as it relates to organizations is that order can emerge out of chaos.

You may wish to research the definition of chaos and complexity theories and what guidelines to use for applying them to an organization. There are pros and cons of applying these theories, how they relate to organizational change, and the implications for trainers and organization development (OD) solutions.

**Chaos and Complexity Theories Defined:** More than 30 years ago, chaos and complexity theories began to take shape in the scientific world. A critical leap occurred in 1977 at the University of California, Santa Cruz, when a group of doctoral students began exploring the ways in which order emerges from chaos. Borrowing theories that physicists and mathematicians had been exploring for decades, they discovered that the universe is a vibrant and chaotic system, not a static machine subject to our control. As their research progressed, the students determined that, although the universe and other systems are extremely complex, they contain patterns that can lead to a greater understanding of their structures and an ability to predict patterns that they will follow.

**Just what are chaos and complexity anyway?** Answers vary depending on who provides the definition. Purists would criticize combining the terms because they represent distinct theories from different disciplines. Some explain the difference between the two by saying chaos is the study of how simple systems can generate complicated behavior, whereas complexity is the study of how complicated systems generate simple behavior.

**The Future Can and Cannot Be Predicted.** When dealing with complex systems, the effect that an action will have on the entire system is never certain. Even the smallest differences get exaggerated over time—that is, small stones cast into the organizational pond can create huge ripples throughout the system. Although exact quantitative predictions are impossible, one can make relatively accurate guesses about the qualitative aspects of a system. For example, when conducting a training program, one can be reasonably certain that everyone learned at least some of what the trainer was teaching. How much participants remember and how well they apply that information back on the job cannot be predicted.

**Appreciative inquiry theory** is an affirmative approach to personal and organizational transformation. The appreciative inquiry approach is based on the assumption that positive questions and conversations about visions, values, successes, and strengths have the power to enliven possibilities and engage people in creating exciting new realities. David Cooperrider, Suresh Srivastva, and their colleagues at Case Western Reserve University developed appreciative inquiry in the 1980s. According to Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros (2003), the aim of appreciative inquiry is to help the organization in:

- envisioning a collectively desired future
- carrying forth that vision in ways that successfully translate intention into reality and beliefs into practices.
At the core of **appreciative inquiry** is a belief that reality is socially constructed—that the world is created in conversation. When conversations focus on strengths, possibilities, and vision, the reality is more likely positive and inspirational. When conversations focus on problems, complaints, and weaknesses, those things become more prominent and real. According to the appreciative inquiry approach, if the OD practitioner and the client take a problem-solving approach to change, this limits their ability to create a new and exciting future. The appreciative inquiry approach focuses on opportunities and possibilities, not on problems. By having open and positive conversations about success and what is possible, practitioners and clients can come to solutions that can produce more desirable results.

The OD practitioner can use **appreciative inquiry** in a variety of consulting and coaching situations, including change solutions and general facilitation. Appreciative inquiry creates a context for inclusion and participation and can transform traditional hierarchical organizations into workplaces characterized by collaboration, engagement, and partnership. Appreciative inquiry can help managers transition from an authoritarian to a more empowering style because it is participative and inclusive. It is also useful for helping to renew and re-engage professionals who are stuck in a routine. Appreciative inquiry is an approach that shifts the focus of analysis and dialogue from problems and concerns to opportunities and visions. Appreciative inquiry uses research, feedback, action planning, and action to implement robust change solutions. The difference is what's being looked at and talked about.

When using appreciative inquiry, practitioners still acknowledge problems, but they frame those problems to focus on what's possible in the future. For example, a problem of high turnover would become an inquiry into what being an employer of choice might look like. A problem of long product-development cycles would become an inquiry that explores product-development strengths and the creation of a vision for world-class product development. These may seem like subtle changes, but they are not. Shifting the focus and conversation to the affirmative opens up participation and creativity. Appreciative inquiry unleashes employees' passion and power. It is a powerful tool that can improve business productivity and results. In fact, OD practitioners who use appreciative inquiry find that the approach can yield effective results, sometimes even more quickly than other problem-solving approaches. **Appreciative inquiry** engages participants and produces more and better ideas than some other techniques and cuts down on resistance to change. The appreciative inquiry approach honors current strengths and builds upon them to help participants build a vision and plan for the future.

David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva developed the 4-D cycle to guide OD practitioners and clients through the appreciative inquiry approach. The 4-D cycle can be used for large or small solutions. OD practitioners can even use the 4-D cycle when coaching individuals and teams.

This illustration shows the elements of the 4-D cycle

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**Cognitive Dissonance Theory** states that when contradicting cognitions exist, this conflict compels the human mind to acquire or invent new thoughts or beliefs or to modify existing beliefs to minimize the amount of dissonance between cognitions.

**Change is a business decision that has significant emotional and political effects on people.** What motivates employees will vary, but understanding motivating factors is perhaps the most critical element to consider when implementing organizational change. It helps to minimize resistance and avoid failure to institutionalize the change. Failure to maximize retention during major change can also affect its outcome.
TD professionals can help management understand how to motivate employees during a transition by rewarding those who have embraced change and providing support to those who have not.

When examining the workplace environment, there are two influences that have a great effect on the motivation of employees: management and performance.

**Management**

Instead of coming from some nebulous ad hoc committee or corporate institution, the most valuable recognition comes directly from a person's manager.

**Performance**

Employees want to be recognized for the jobs they do. The most effective incentives are based on job performance—not on nonperformance issues, such as attendance or attire. TD professionals should consider this when integrating motivation into job design, performance feedback, pay-performance systems, and relationship-building initiatives.

J.R. Hackman and G.R. Oldham's job characteristics model explains in detail how managers can make jobs more interesting and motivating for employees. According to Hackman and Oldham (Lauby, 2005), every job has five characteristics that determine how motivated workers will find that job: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. These characteristics determine how employees react to their work and lead to such outcomes as high performance and satisfaction, and low absenteeism and turnover.

1. **Skill Variety:** The extent to which a job requires an employee to use a wide range of skills, abilities, or knowledge is referred to as skill variety. For example, the skill variety required of a research scientist is higher than that of a food server.

2. **Task Identity:** the extent to which a job requires a worker to perform all of the tasks necessary to complete that job from the beginning to the end of the production process. For example, a crafts worker who transforms wood into a custom-made piece of furniture, such as a desk, has higher task identity than a worker who performs only one of the numerous operations required to assemble a television.

3. **Task Significance:** the degree to which a worker feels his or her job is meaningful because of its effect on people inside the organization (such as co-workers) or to people outside the organization (such as customers). A teacher who sees the effect of his efforts in a well-educated and well-adjusted student enjoys high task significance compared with a dishwasher who monotonously washes dishes as they come into the kitchen.

4. **Autonomy:** the degree to which a job gives an employee the freedom and discretion to schedule different tasks and to decide how to carry them out. Salespeople who have to plan their schedules and decide how to allocate their time among different customers have relatively high autonomy compared with assembly-line workers whose actions are determined by the speed of the production line.

5. **Feedback:** the extent to which performing a job provides a worker with clear and direct information about how well he or she has completed the job.

Hackman and Oldham (Lauby, 2005) argue that these five characteristics influence an employee's motivation because they affect three critical psychological states. If employees feel that their work is meaningful and that they are responsible for work outcomes and for knowing how those outcomes affect others, the employees will find the work more motivating, be more satisfied, and thus perform at a high level.

The details of the change management plan should spell out how employees will be personally involved in the change, as involvement is one way to foster commitment to the change. Although the change plan lays out where the organization needs to go and what the organization will do as a whole to get there, employees will need to decide how work processes are redesigned to meet changing needs. This involvement allows employees to increase learning and problem-solving skills. The effort to redesign work also provides employees with opportunities to work through the feelings and emotions that are part of adapting to change.

**Overcoming Resistance or Complacency**

When planning how to deal with resistance, the change manager looks at a number of things. First, assess the organization's overall readiness for change and, based on the results, plan to lessen resistance. A force field analysis is one way to assess which forces within the organization will affect the attempt to introduce change. Force field analysis, created by Kurt Lewin, recognizes two types of forces: driving and restraining.
Driving forces are those that help implement a change, whereas restraining forces are those that will get in the way of change. Because forces are defined based on their positive or negative effect regarding the change, what may appear as a driving force, might instead be a restraining force. For example, although incentive systems are generally regarded as a positive benefit, if the existing system is not reinforcing the new behaviors, it becomes a restraining force.

The force field analysis ensures three things:
1. no areas have been overlooked
2. the forces to be taken advantage of are known
3. there’s time to develop other strategies if the analysis reveals areas not considered previously

Once change managers have identified the driving and restraining forces, they can develop strategies to either take advantage of drivers or reduce the effect of restraints. Line or department managers and supervisors are best involved by requesting their insights on what forces they see as restraining or driving the change.

By increasing driving forces or reducing restraining forces, change managers can move the status quo toward the wanted change. Because systems move toward equilibrium, it is advantageous to reduce restraining forces rather than to increase driving forces; an increase in driving forces also results in an increase in restraining forces.

The plan for reducing resistance must take into account the time necessary for the people and the organization to react to the change. It must also acknowledge the reality that, although there is a need to allow time for adjustment, there is still work that needs to be done.

Examples of Driving and Restraining Forces

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<th>Restraining Forces</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic benefits</td>
<td>Traditions</td>
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<td>Environmental factors</td>
<td>Organizational politics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee needs and desires</td>
<td>Employee attitudes</td>
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<td>Availability of technology</td>
<td>Costs</td>
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Five Levels of Listening
Communication is a complex process that involves different levels of listening. It starts with the most basic, nonverbal behaviors and evolves to high-level behaviors that signify a more intense, meaningful level of listening and connecting.

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<th>Levels of Listening</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
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<td>Passive listening</td>
<td>Demonstrating nonverbal behaviors, such as affirmative head nodding, eye contact, note taking, smiling, or presenting a thinking pose at appropriate moments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening for knowledge</td>
<td>Listening first for facts and logic and then mentally listing things in a sequence or pattern to form conclusions</td>
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<td>Active listening</td>
<td>Demonstrating appropriate nonverbal behaviors that respond to questions posed or asking questions to increase understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening for clarification</td>
<td>Paraphrasing in different words to help increase understanding of previous comments and dialogue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empathetic listening</td>
<td>Identifying feelings by confirming with the speaker if an intuition about his or her feelings is correct</td>
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Communication Channels
The change manager can help facilitate acceptance by knowing how communication moves through the organization. One way is to conduct a communication audit. It will reveal where communication breaks down and how it is received. Such an audit generally consists of information interviews, focus groups, surveys, policy and procedures review, and observation. Informal communication networks, which can facilitate or sabotage change efforts, are also important to watch.

Information from interviews and focus groups is helpful in understanding the communications environment and defining what types of questions to ask in the audit. Questions for information interviews and focus groups cover such topics as:

- what messages are being received
- credibility of communications
- how leadership is perceived
• how information moves through the organization, and the quality and quantity of the information provided
• preferred sources of information compared to actual sources
• what forms of media are preferred for different types of messages

References


Note: More references available upon request.