



LEADING THROUGH CHANGE

Embracing disruption with courage and compassion

Change is Constant

The psychologist Kurt Lewin, who was known as the father of organizational development, created a change model focused on “*unfreezing an organization, making changes, then refreezing the organization with the new processes in place.*”

The idea was that change is a distinct phenomenon with a beginning and an end, and that an organization could pause operations, move through it and then ramp back up.

Not anymore. Change is not only a constant; the pace of it is accelerating.

The world we live in is VUCA: volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. This acronym was developed by students at the U.S. Army War College to describe the state of the world after the Cold War. Operating in this kind of environment is not easy—as an individual contributor, a leader, a team. But it’s just that—our environment—we are completely surrounded by it, and we ignore it at our peril.

Good leaders embrace change as a reality and prepare their organizations for it. Similar to disaster preparedness, training is essential. In the same way we take a community-focused approach to disaster preparedness to build capacity, we must develop leadership at all levels. Everyone should know how to lead in times of change.

When leaders proactively and routinely invest in the necessary skills to strengthen leadership capabilities at the organizational level, the result is employees, grounded in a culture of trust, prepared to deal with change whenever it comes.

Waiting to try to build trust and develop new skills until a major disruption occurs is incredibly challenging, even for the best leaders and the healthiest organizations.

*The average organization has undergone
5 enterprise changes in the past 3 years.*

73 percent of organizations expect more change initiatives in the next few years, and only a small minority expects the pace of change to decelerate.

Source: <https://www.gartner.com/en/insights/change-management>



The Accelerating Pace of Change

Leaders are constantly navigating change within their organizations and in the world around them. For example, the impact of technology and major shifts in the global economy are driving an increase in the pace and value of mergers and acquisitions. In the first half of 2018 a record \$2.5 trillion in mergers were announced.

(Source: [New York Times Dealbook](#))

The number of jobs the average person holds in a lifetime is also increasing. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average Baby Boomer held an average of 11.7 jobs from ages 18-48. (Source: [BLS](#)) A LinkedIn review of its data from 1986-2016 indicated that the number of companies people worked for in the five years immediately after college has nearly doubled ([LinkedIn](#)) from 1.6 to 2.85, putting our economy's youngest workers on pace to surpass the average number of jobs held by Baby Boomers.

Change itself—demographic, technological, economic, socio-political—is happening at an exponentially faster pace than ever before. Before the digital revolution, industrial progress moved at the pace of one or two major disruptions every half a decade: the assembly line, the telephone, the Model-T, the mainframe computer, the cellular phone. But since 2005, technology has caused an ever-escalating increase in the pace of change and its impact on all facets of business and society.

For example, in 2004 there were about a half a billion internet-connected devices in the world. By 2015 that number was 15 billion, adding 7 million per day or 2.5 billion per year. By 2020, experts expect there will be more than 50 billion internet connected devices and 1 trillion sensors globally. (Source: [Peter Diamandis, Singularity University](#))

Reason for Optimism

Cautionary tales abound. Cynicism and overwhelm are understandable reactions. But futurist and X-Prize founder Peter Diamandis writes in his bestselling book *Abundance*, that we have reason for optimism, even joy. Diamandis believes that this unprecedented and exponential pace of change means we are living at the most exciting time in world history. “*Humanity is now entering a period of radical transformation in which technology has the potential to significantly raise the basic standards of living for every man, woman and child on the planet.*”

Put simply: change has the potential to be good. For everybody.

As organizations, we have to build our capacity not only to lead through change, but to lead change itself. We can't just navigate this radical transformation, we have to help lead it with confidence. The best leaders draw on courage and compassion to guide organizations through change.

Change is now. Do the right thing for your organization and embrace it with courage and compassion. **Here's how.**

HOW TO LEAD THROUGH CHANGE

Values Based Leadership

At InnerWill, we partner with our clients to ensure positive organizational outcomes through Values Based Leadership development, a philosophy that embodies living, working and leading in alignment with deeply discovered core values. It's more important than ever in the context of disruption to be able to reliably operate on a set of core values. When everything else is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA), we find it's more important than ever for leaders to truly know themselves and what they stand for.

We coach our clients on the Five Practices of Values Based Leadership:

1 BUILD AWARENESS (UNDERSTANDING WHO I AM)

We think of our behavior in terms of an iceberg—what is visible above the surface, and what is below the water line. The part above the surface is our style and our behaviors, and what lies beneath are our values, our beliefs and our fears. As leaders, the more we understand what is happening below the water line, the better we can make choices about how we show up. Because we generally attribute a lot to our intent and not as much to our actual behavior, seeking out feedback is really important to build self-awareness.

2 REALIZE POTENTIAL (INVESTING IN MY FUTURE)

While building awareness is a practice mostly anchored in the present, realizing potential helps leaders look to the future. How do we understand what we are working toward? What impact do we want to have on others? This practice of realizing our potential gives us the why—or the fuel—to make changes in our lives.

3 DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS (BUILDING TRUST)

The practice of developing relationships is all about how we connect with others. As we understand ourselves, how do we use this knowledge to connect better with others? When leaders have a strong awareness of their teams' values and styles we are significantly more effective at supporting their success and accomplishing goals together.

4 TAKE ACTION (LEADING WITH COURAGE)

Taking action is anchored in self-awareness and realizing potential. This practice is about making day-to-day conscious choices and decisions that are in alignment both with who you are and what you're trying to accomplish in the big picture. It takes discipline and courage to act on your values, especially when the cost is high and others are encouraging you to choose an easier path.

5 PRACTICE REFLECTION (PAUSING TO LEARN)

Every aspect of Values Based Leadership involves some element of reflection. Good leaders take the time to stop and learn. What are we learning about ourselves? About our teams? How do I apply what I am learning to improve myself and the organization?

With these Values Based practices as a foundation, leaders can embrace change with a focus on courage and compassion.



BRAVER LEADER

Courage

We often hear from our clients that the hardest part of leading through change is not knowing how the change will impact their people. Leading through change with courage means being honest about the future while providing high direction and empowering people to be successful.

Develop a vision.

- **Set a direction.** Be intentional about looking ahead. Many organizations become paralyzed in the face of change—they hold off on launching new initiatives, they wait to make that new hire, they keep that big idea under wraps. You are leading your organization through a disruptive time. Make sure you're not just absorbing the changes, but that you're actually working toward a vision that everyone shares.
- **Sometimes this vision will mean a major change for the structure of your organization.** For example, new research around artificial intelligence is enabling computers to—in many cases—more accurately and more reliably diagnose certain types of cancers. A courageous leader of a health system has to take this into account when creating a long-term plan for her organization. Even though today she is likely leading an esteemed faculty of brilliant and compassionate oncologists, she has to think how to leverage this new technology for the benefit of patients. Leading through change with courage means staying true to your values and the purpose of your organization, even when it's not popular.

Empower people to be successful.

- **Share your vision with the group.** You can't expect anyone to enthusiastically embrace the change if they don't understand where it's leading. Don't forget to give them the tools they need to be successful.
- **There is an incredible amount of trust required to follow a leader in times of change.** The team has to know the leader has their collective best interests at heart.
- **The team also needs to understand the rules—**clear goals and a consistent system of rewards and sanctions are important.

Be honest.

- **As leadership researcher and writer Brene Brown says, "Clear is kind. Unclear is unkind."** Be honest with your teams. They are likely afraid of what kind of impact this change will have on their jobs, their careers, their lives. Be kind enough to be honest. Share what you know when you can. Give them honest feedback and guidance on how to adapt to change, to build the skills they need to embrace the new reality.

Leading through change with courage means staying true to your values and the purpose of your organization, even when it's not popular.



Compassion

Leading through change with compassion is all about self-awareness. William Bridges, one of the early researchers on the topic of change management, described the disconnect between leaders and employees during a major change as “the Marathon Effect.” Usually by the time a major organizational change (a merger, a change of leadership, etc.) becomes known by an entire organization, its leaders have been working to make it a reality for months, even years. In order to lead with compassion, leaders have to circle back to mile one and run the race again with their teams. **Yes, leaders run the race twice.** Sometimes even three or four times. As many times as it takes to get everyone who is willing—across the finish line. Here are some guidelines for leading through change with compassion.

Be present and listen.

- **People have widely varying reactions to change.** The only way to get a real read on how your team is doing is to fully focus your attention on them. As leaders we have many demands on our time, but the best way to show you care about your team is to give them your time and focus.

Be empathetic and give people the benefit of the doubt.

- **Put yourself in your team’s place.** Remember how you felt when you first learned of this change and lean on those emotions to demonstrate empathy. Your team likely feels out of control. They mostly want to be seen, heard and understood. No matter what the big picture impact of the change, you can at least give them those things.

Take the time to understand and unpack why—deep down—people are resistant to change.

- **Have the courage and compassion to be curious.** Make no assumptions about why people are

resistant to change. Let go of any need for your team to “like” you or your ideas and meet them where they are. Only then can you possibly bring them along to support a change.

Be positive.

- **Look for progress. Give praise.** Celebrate small wins. Look for a balance between being realistic and optimistic. Don’t shy away from the negative impacts of a change, but do make sure to celebrate the upside. Whether that’s a teammate trying a complicated new protocol or a colleague introducing herself to a new associate, show your appreciation for these small examples of people doing things right. Look for all those little wins, and they might just add up.

Be real.

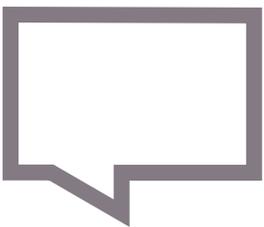
- **Teams don’t want superheroes, they want imperfect, real people as leaders.** Hiding or masking your own real emotions about a change will come off as fake. Be as transparent as possible and as optimistic as possible, but above all, be real.

BETTER BRAVER WISER

All of these recommendations have to be anchored in a commitment to integrity. When leaders behave this way as a matter of routine, they have the trust of their teams.

When leaders have the trust of their teams, their organizations are better prepared to deal with change when it happens.

And the next major change for your organization may be happening as you read this.



SO WHY NOT START NOW?

If you're interested in learning more about leading through change, [contact us](#) to schedule a discovery call today.

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