CHANGE MYTHS AND CHANGE REALITY

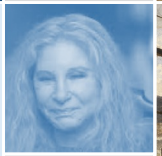


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MYTHS

THERE ARE SEVERAL MYTHS ASSOCIATED WITH MANAGING CHANGE





Myths are a waste of time. They prevent progression.

Barbara Streisand





Myths about how organizational change should be introduced and managed, with the aim of improving performance, are prevailing and persistent.

According to most research on change these myths are in many ways detached from the reality of what is needed to facilitate and enable change.

For more information on the challenges of change, see presentation: **Why is change difficult.**

MYTH	I	REALITY
CHANGE FOLLOWS A PREDICTABLE STRAIGHT-FORWARD LINEAR PROCESS		**Organizational change is often a messy, iterative, and nonlinear endeavor!**
Life is not linear, it is organic. Ken Robinson		• Different individuals adapt to change in different ways. Linearity can not account for variations. • A linear approach assumes predictability; real change demands agility and willingness to pivot. • Sustainable change requires testing, learning, adjusting – not just following a set of steps. • Linearity implies consistent forward momentum, but setbacks and resistance are normal. • Unpacking fears, values, and identity issues means the progress often moves sporadically.



MYTH

II

REALITY

LARGE AMOUNT OF CHANGE AND AT HIGH SPEED IS DESTRUCTIVE



If things seem under control, you are just not going fast enough.

Mario Andretti



The highest-performing organizations have more change taking place at a very fast pace!

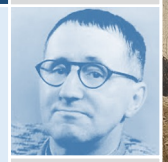
- Speed is not the most damaging part of fast change – it is the confusion.
- People have an extraordinary capacity to adapt when supported, respected, and involved.
- Slow change often leads to stagnation; fast change can cut through complacency.
- Speed is destructive when people fear making mistakes; psychological safety makes speed safer.
- Short bursts of intensity are manageable if followed by periods of reflection and adjustment.

MYTH

III

REALITY

CHANGE CAUSES ORGANIZATIONS TO GO OFF TRACK



Because things are the way they are, things will not stay the way they are.

Bertolt Brecht



Change does not cause organizational disfunction; it merely exposes it!

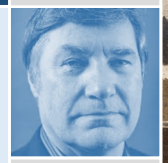
- Change becomes disruptive only when it is treated as an exception, rather than a strategic norm.
- When guided by a clear vision change can sharpen an organization's sense of purpose.
- Organizations that change with discipline and awareness are less likely to be thrown off course.
- Derailment happens not because of change, but because organizations fail to act on time.
- If change is not treated as threat, it can build confidence, alignment, and momentum.

MYTH

IV

REALITY

CHANGE SOLUTIONS CAN BE BOILED DOWN TO A HANDFUL OF SIMPLE RULES



The world simple enough to be fully known would also be too simple to contain conscious observers who might know it.

John D. Barrow



Change requires a complex, coordinated strategy of actions sustained across time!

- Every organization is different and what works in one organization may fail in another.
- Applying a rigid set of steps will not lead to an automatic shift in mindsets or habits.
- External conditions can shift quickly, requiring ongoing adaptation, not static instructions.
- Many rule-based approaches assume compliance and ignore potential emotional responses.
- Relying on rules can undermine critical inquiry, innovation, and sense of ownership.

MYTH

V

REALITY

CHANGE MUST BE DRIVEN AND CONTROLLED FROM THE TOP



Good leaders must first become good servants.

Robert Greenleaf



Leadership radiates out from the center, starting with those who want to change!

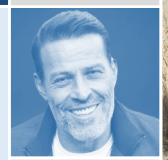
- When people are involved in shaping the change they feel ownership, not just obligation.
- Those on the top may see the big picture, but those on the ground know what actually works.
- Top-down can breed resistance while broad participation reduces fear and defensiveness.
- Most change requires decentralized decision-making, rapid feedback, and empowered teams.
- Change should not be something done to people – it is about people learning to lead themselves.

MYTH

VI

REALITY

BUSINESS PERFORMANCE WILL DIP DURING THE EARLY STAGES OF CHANGE



Setting goals is the first step in turning invisible into the visible.

Tony Robbins



Business performance generally increases throughout a change program!

- Performance dips happen if there is a lack of clarity about purpose, plan, and impact of change.
- Staged implementation reduces shock and allows time for learning and adjustment.
- Involvement boosts engagement and motivation to perform well, while navigating uncertainty.
- Achieving early successes can reinforce confidence and validate the change effort.
- When done right, change can refresh priorities, clear distractions, and refocus teams.

MYTH

VII

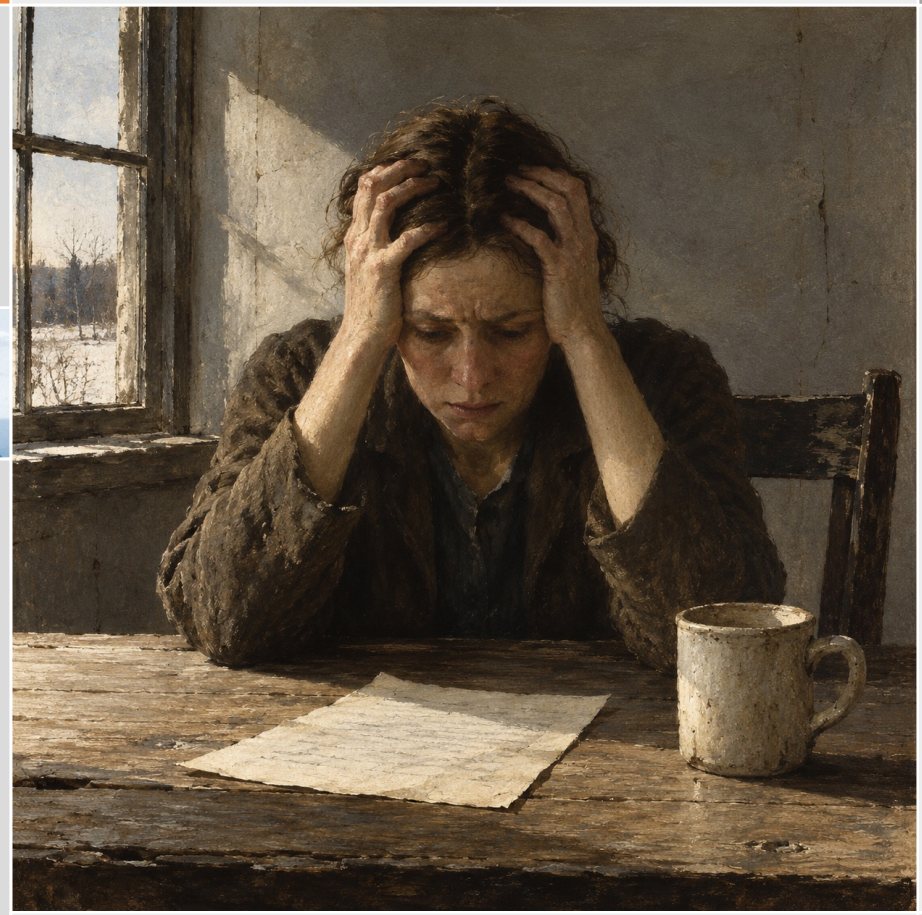
REALITY

SUFFERING THROUGH THE ‘VALLEY OF DESPAIR’ IS A NORMAL PART OF CHANGE



Happiness is not the absence of problems but the ability to deal with them.

Horace J. Brown



People do not have to experience negative feelings as part of the change process!

- Suffering often comes from poor change leadership, not change itself.
- When respected, informed, and given agency, people respond with curiosity and engagement.
- Careful preparation can replace anxiety about change with capability and confidence.
- Uncertainty is reframed as opportunity if people see change as a vehicle to learn and grow.
- Creating safe space for sharing emotions reduces doubts, frustration, and despair.

MYTH

VIII

REALITY

PEOPLE NEED TO UNDERSTAND CHANGE BEFORE COMMITTING TO IT



Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.

Dwight Eisenhower



Understanding the intended change is not necessarily a precursor to committing to it!

- Trusting leaders, colleagues, or the organization's values can precede clarity.
- Emotion drives early commitment; understanding and rationale often follows.
- Shared purpose inspires early buy-in even before all the specifics are clear.
- Engaging with change builds understanding through action and experience.
- In complex change clarity and understanding emerges over time, not upfront.

MYTH

IX

REALITY

ALL CHANGE CAN BE MANAGED BY APPLYING UNIVERSAL BEST PRACTICES



In times of rapid change, experience could be your worst enemy.

Jean P. Getty



Universal, one-size-fits-all approach to organizational change will generally fail!

- Organizational context influences how change is experienced and what will actually work.
- Universal best practices often focus on the mechanical side of change, not human realities.
- Best practices are based on what worked in the past and not what might work in the future.
- Complex problems need adaptive solutions discovered through learning and experimentation.
- Innovation comes from curiosity and contextual judgment, not compliance with generic models.

MYTH	X	REALITY
FOCUSING ON COMMUNICATION, TRAINING, AND LEADERSHIP LEADS TO RESULTS		**Factors that are hidden and difficult to define have a greater impact on outcome!**
Action and adaptability create opportunity. Garrison Wynn		• Communication and training raise awareness, but they rarely lead to sustained behavior change. • Sustainable results come when the environment encourages and supports the new behavior. • Training and messaging mostly fail to address the fears, values, or identity issues people face. • Change needs to be experienced and reflected upon, not just explained. • No change plan survives contact with reality; success comes from continuous adaptation.

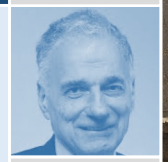


MYTH

XI

REALITY

LEADERS BUILD TRUST THROUGH THE QUALITY OF THEIR ONE-TO-ONE RELATIONSHIPS



I start with the premise that the function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers.

Ralph Nader



One-to-one trusted relationships are necessary but not sufficient!

- Change happens across systems, teams, and networks; not just through individual relationships.
- Informal peer influence and team norms carry more weight than leadership relationships.
- One-on-one trust is slow to build and hard to scale across a large or dispersed organization.
- Change requires shared sensemaking, experimentation, and coordination.
- If trust is held only within individual relationships, there is a risk in creating only pockets of alignment.

MYTH

XII

REALITY

FOCUS ON EMOTIONS DOES NOT LEAD TO BUSINESS OUTCOMES



A leader is a dealer in hope.

Napoleon Bonaparte



Emotions – positive and negative – have a huge impact on the realization of benefits!

- If leaders skip the emotional impact, people may withdraw, disengage, or push back.
- When emotions are ignored, they don't disappear; surface calm may hide deep disengagement.
- If people do not feel emotionally connected to the change, they are less likely to support or sustain it.
- Acknowledging uncertainty, fear, or doubt contributes to leaders' authenticity and credibility.
- Ignoring emotions can lead to 'check-the-box' compliance rather than real engagement.

CHANGE MYTHS AND CHANGE REALITY



THANK YOU

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