

## Driving Workplace Change

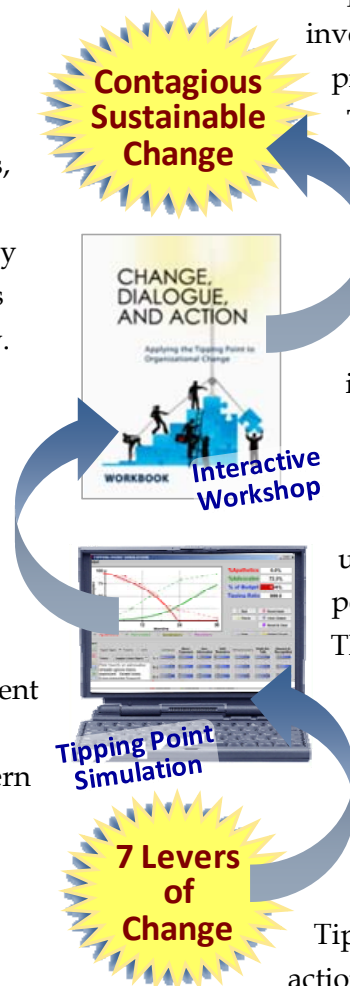
By Andrea Shapiro, Ph.D.

The ability to survive in the current business environment is not about *whether* an organization can make changes. It is about *when* and *how effectively*. Business and organizational leaders want to go beyond simply surviving to thriving and growing. Despite this, the business literature is full of statistics about companies' inability to successfully implement changes that are needed to adapt and grow. This lack of success applies to a range of sectors from technology and manufacturing to healthcare and education. Moreover, it applies across a broad variety of change initiatives. Whether it is an initiative designed to improve quality, reduce product development time, or increase customer satisfaction, there is a similar pattern of disappointing results and abandoned efforts. It is time for a change in change management.

The status quo is familiar and comfortable, and it is often adequate for the current situation. Thus, making the case for a new direction can be challenging. Leaders who

involve employees in planning and implementation can help them see the need for a new path for the future. Although employee involvement is key, the concept alone doesn't provide a roadmap for execution. The **Tipping Point** model of change, developed by Strategy Perspective, has been used by major corporations, nonprofits, and government agencies in the United States, Canada, and Europe to provide such a roadmap. It demonstrates the importance of the knowledge and commitment of employees who have experience with the change. Employees who appreciate a change's value are in a unique position to explain this value to their peers – no one is closer to the actual work. They can point out the benefits of the change to colleagues who are underwhelmed by what it has to offer, and quell the angst of those who are overwhelmed by what it might entail to implement.

Through the **Seven Levers of Change**, the Tipping Point model provides a clear map of actions that leaders can take to leverage employee knowledge and experience to support successful organizational change.



## Learning through Action

No matter how useful and powerful it may be, studying a model can be tedious. To make the Tipping Point model and its effects easier to understand and apply, Strategy Perspective created a computer simulation – an interactive learning tool – that makes the model come alive. The simulation integrates change theory and the experience of change leaders. It is the centerpiece of a workshop called **Change, Dialogue, and Action**, where participants learn the fundamentals of the underlying model, see real-life case studies, and observe how they play out on the simulation. Participants then compete in teams to devise strategies for improving on the results of the case studies.

Using a simulation goes beyond lectures or slides; it provides a platform for experimentation and dialogue. As they work together to improve on the strategies in the case studies, participants learn from the model and from one another. Norm Fowler and Heidi Grenek took advantage of the Tipping Point simulation in a Design for Lean Six Sigma (DfLSS) program at Xerox Corporation. The following is part of what they had to say:

*Implementing a change initiative within a large corporation like Xerox amidst competing demands, limited funding, and a healthy dose of skepticism for “flavor of the month” programs is a challenge in its own right. Throw in the need to make it both pervasive across the entire product delivery community in three sites on two continents and sustainable over time and you have what many would consider a quixotic quest. After doing some research on models for change management, we converged on the Tipping Point model as the framework we would use to guide the development of our*

*DfLSS program and aid our decision making. In a single one-day session, we used the Tipping Point [simulation] to familiarize the deployment team on the basic concepts of the model and had a focused brainstorm to prepare for potential failure modes and solutions for our specific initiative.\**

## The Tipping Point Model Basics

There are two fundamental constructs in the Tipping Point model: employee attitudes toward a change at any given time and the seven levers of change. Employee attitudes reflect their questions about an impending change or their concerns about management’s support for it. The seven levers of change are actions that leaders can take to address these questions and concerns. Used together, in balance, and with attention to potential side effects, the seven levers can encourage a positive attitude toward a change initiative.

At its heart, a change is an idea – about getting work done better or faster or cheaper. Ideas spread when people advocate them. The best advocates have expertise in the area affected by the change and have seen it improve workflow, product quality, organizational capacity, or whatever it was designed to do. When change leaders support these advocates by using the seven levers, it encourages further employee participation and involvement. This advances employees’ beliefs that this initiative will be fully deployed and creates more advocates, making the levers key to deploying and sustaining a successful change initiative.

## The Seven Levers of Change

The levers of change focus on two key areas of implementation: (1) furthering employee understanding of the value of the change

initiative, and (2) building an environment within the organization that supports its implementation. A brief overview of the levers highlights how they address these areas and shows their breadth, applicability, and value.

The first lever spotlights drawing on employees who already understand the initiative and its value. It is about creating opportunities for them to personally share their experiences. The second lever is about judicious use of mass exposure. Using it to get the word out about the change initiative – making sure employees are informed about the initiative and what to expect from it. The third and fourth levers are concerned with hiring experts and dealing with resisters – including the inherent advantages and disadvantages of both. The fifth lever deals with ensuring that the needed infrastructure is in place – making sure that employees have the tools that they need to implement the initiative. The sixth lever is about leadership – being fully engaged with the change initiative. This includes articulating the case for the initiative, properly budgeting for it, and monitoring progress. The last lever deals with rewarding behaviors

consistent with the change, especially those that move deployment forward.

The seven levers do not have equal value. All

are more effective when used in combination with the others. Importantly, some can be detrimental when used alone, if overused, or if used too early or too late in the deployment.

#### Seven Levers of Change

- 1) fostering contacts with advocates
- 2) carefully using mass exposure
- 3) hiring expertise if necessary
- 4) shifting resistance
- 5) providing needed infrastructure
- 6) leading by example
- 7) rewarding successes

The simulation puts all these levers together. It is challenging because it captures important interactions between the levers and reflects how these interactions play out over time.

Combinations of levers can appear to be effective over the short term, but fail to get results as the simulation run continues. This fidelity with real-life change initiatives helps participants recognize the value of applying the seven levers in effective combinations and with careful timing.

### Change, Dialogue, and Action Workshop

The Change, Dialogue, and Action workshop is a powerful tool. It helps participants understand the seven levers, how to put them to work to involve employees, and thus create sustainable change. Norm Fowler and Heidi Grenek from Xerox continue their account of using the workshop to understand how to apply the levers of change:

*Through the experiential workshop and subsequent discussions we were able to better understand how to utilize the interdependency of the seven levers of change to drive toward the tipping point where DfLSS is embraced by an organization. Throughout our deployment we used the model to align our actions with our macro-objective of pervasive and sustainable change in the product development community.\**

### The Power of Experiential Learning

It would be nice if a single computer simulation could give the perfect solution for implementing any change in any organization for all situations. Unfortunately, it just isn't that simple. Each lever in the Tipping Point model represents specific types of actions and decisions that

typically vary for different organizations and different change initiatives. For example, consider the lever dealing with infrastructure needed for the initiative. Clearly, a supply chain management system has a different set of infrastructure requirements than a quality initiative would. Furthermore, the timing for putting infrastructure components into place would not be the same in different organizations (even for the same change). Actually, this variability in infrastructure requirements reinforces the amount of thought and discussion required for any change initiative in any organization. The workshop provides a forum for this sort of discussion, along with friendly competition that adds a bit of fun.

Exploring the model behind the simulation and letting participants experience how it plays out with their own input to case studies are important aspects of the workshop. Competing in teams adds another dimension. It forces participants to think about and discuss how best to use the levers. They work out which ones should be used together and deliberate on the effects of timing when applying each one. It also encourages discussion that helps participants go beyond an understanding of the levers to see their own and their teammates' assumptions about implementing a change initiative. The power of the workshop to foster dialogue and help participants learn from each other's experience should not be underestimated.

Using levers that are important in a real change initiative, thinking about how the levers interact, and considering teammates' ideas and know-how adds depth to the simulation experience and makes it easier to apply the learnings to their own change initiative. Helen Nicol reports on using the ideas from the workshop when implementing an initiative that includes a large

IT component in the National Health Service in the United Kingdom:

*Change is complex, and being able to debate and discuss this complexity using the Tipping Point methodology and simulation tool has meant that more and more people are beginning to realize that they need to revisit and re-evaluate their assumptions, if the projects they are working so hard to complete have a real chance of leading to successful and long-term service improvement.*

*Workshop participants realized the potential pitfalls associated with the overuse of mass exposure and [hiring expertise]. It led the participants to completely rethink their approach to communications and engagement activities. On completing the workshop, their original plan for a large, generic promotion of the change was radically altered and a more individual, people-based approach was adopted, including tailored training and road show events which facilitated a two-way discussion about the implications of the change. This enabled resisters to air their views and led to one of the most skeptical people becoming the most avid supporter of the program.\**

Exposing participants to a broad-ranging approach to change and providing a venue for discussion foster a shared vision on what is needed to put a change into operation. It helps teams discover effective implementation strategies for change initiatives in their business. Dr. David Yarrow of Time for Change is a certified Change, Dialogue, and Action workshop facilitator. He has delivered the workshop for several years, in a variety of organizations, including government,

healthcare, academia, and manufacturing. He summarizes outcomes that he has seen as follows:

*Received wisdom can be a dangerous thing, especially relative to people's attitudes, behaviors and willingness to change. The Change, Dialogue, and Action workshop is an invitation to question received wisdom, to take time out to try some ideas and think differently for a few hours and then to apply the ideas to real change. The workshop is an excellent learning vehicle. It provides people with an opportunity to share their experiences of change and their knowledge and beliefs about what works and why. More than this, it provides a powerful tool that helps them to make sense of their experiences, and in many cases to gain insights that challenge assumptions that they and their colleagues have been making for years.*

*After several years of leading Change, Dialogue, and Action workshops, my belief in their value and impact has been reinforced many times. The real benefit comes when people who are working together on important changes can apply fresh insights to their plans and their practical implementations. They can achieve better success rates with their changes, and save time and money too! When they realize this, and do it, the real impact of the learning begins to show through.\**

## Choosing the Levers for Your Change

A computer simulation sometimes invites people to think it will simply provide the "right" answer. The Change, Dialogue, and Action workshop teaches participants about the levers but doesn't provide a pat formula for

using them. Choosing the levers and their timing depends on the specific change initiative and the organization. Dr. Patricia Zigarmi, of the Ken Blanchard Companies and coauthor of *Leading at a Higher Level*, has used the Tipping Point simulation in their Leading People through Change program. Recognizing that there are many choices a change leader must make, she describes how the simulation helps leaders think and talk about those decisions:

*Are the best investments in orchestrating opportunities for advocates to talk about the change with their peers or are the best investments in infrastructure? How critical is effective sponsorship or aligned leadership? When should investments in mass exposure be made to communicate the business case or vision? These choices are critical to the successful implementation of change. The Tipping Point simulation is the vehicle for the conversation about these choices and for developing a deep understanding of how the levers work systemically.\**

Selecting the right levers and in the right combinations for your organization is where leadership comes in. Gale Adland is the director of a Meals on Wheels (MOW) program. MOW is a volunteer-driven program to address hunger, particularly among homebound seniors. The need in her community was greater than the capacity of her MOW office. Initially, she attempted to increase capacity by increasing their volunteer staff, but more people were more difficult to manage.

After attending a Change, Dialogue, and Action workshop, Gale put more levers to work to increase their ability to feed more seniors in need. These included investing in tools designed to manage meal programs, ensuring that employees who understood the tools brought

each other up to speed, monitoring progress and recognizing successes, and dealing with resistance. By using the levers appropriate for the change and organization, they were able to increase the number of homebound seniors that they could serve by more than a third. In Gale's words, "I am certain this would not have been possible without the upgrades to our systems and having a staff fully engaged in the new processes." Choosing the appropriate levers for her situation made the difference.

## Summary

By combining the an interactive model of change, fostering discussion in groups, and using the simulation to make it experiential, the Change, Dialogue, and Action workshop is a

effective roadmap for real employee involvement to create sustainable change. Using these levers in concert when implementing any change initiative makes it easier for people to make sense of the change and recognize that management fully supports it – making it more likely for them embrace it.

There are two options to have the workshop delivered in your organization. A certified Change, Dialogue, and Action facilitator can deliver the workshop on most continents, or you can become certified to deliver the workshop either in your company or through your consultancy. Visit Strategy Perspective on the web at [StrategyPerspective.com](http://StrategyPerspective.com) for more information.

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\*Based on first-hand experiences excerpted from *Creating Contagious Commitment*, 2nd ed.

Andrea Shapiro, Ph.D., is founder and principal of Strategy Perspective. She brings a unique perspective to organizational change based on experience in software development, business modeling, management, and organizational learning and development. Andrea designed and developed the Tipping Point computer simulation, which forms the heart of the Change, Dialogue, and Action workshop. She has delivered the workshop to organizations implementing many diverse change initiatives, including supply change management, customer relationship management, and several quality initiatives. She has accredited hundreds of change leaders and consultants to deliver the workshop worldwide in their own work in organizational change. Her book *Creating Contagious Commitment* gives detailed real-life examples, theory, and background, all of which will appeal to any manager faced with implementing a significant organizational change.