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Organizational Change for Corporate Sustainability

A guide for leaders and change
agents of the future

Leading Toward Sustainability

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Facing up to the future

Leadership is the creation of new realities. In this final chapter we discuss the leadership of change and the roles that different kinds of change agents can play in constructing the new reality of the sustainable corporation. Transforming the way we do business is no minor task and will require the inspiration, energies and skills of more people than are currently engaged in the task. If we are to create a sustainable world, we need many more effective leaders. Despite powerful forces moving global society towards sustainable practices, the difficulties of making the shift are formidable. There are many people who see their interests threatened by these developments and who have a strong investment in maintaining current practices. This is particularly true of those who have deeply entrenched positions of power in the traditional system. In the face of the

principalities and powers of this world, of presidents and politicians, terrorists, drug lords and arms merchants, multinational magnates and media barons, star war scenarios, germ warfare and genetic manipulation, we may well ask: What is the value, if any, of *my* puny actions?

In raising the issue of change leadership, we cannot ignore how much easier it is to accept the status quo, to respond to our fear of change and our desire for certainty, to opt out rather than to engage actively in attempting to change the organizational world. Most of us, if we are honest, would rather let someone else lead in this kind of endeavour. Change of the order we are advocating here threatens us with uncertainty and chaos. It is much easier to hold on to traditional ways of doing things and to accept the leadership of others who don't question the status quo. The past, because of its familiarity, seems to offer us security – more security, at least, than a divergent and uncharted future. However, as we have argued throughout this book, many past practices are unsustainable. If we want the world we know and love to survive, we must change it. If we are to survive and thrive ourselves, we too must change. To change, however, requires the rawest kind of courage.

Paradoxically, only by relinquishing the security of the known, letting go, and choosing to risk the unknown can we realize the full potential of our past. The acrobat, flying through the heights of the circus tent, must let go of the trapeze bar before turning in space to grasp the bar she hopes her partner has launched towards her with perfect timing. The excitement, beauty and meaning of the act come from the completion of the full trajectory.

Choosing to lead change similarly involves courage, risk taking and the development of high levels of skill. These are the focus of our discussion in this chapter. The chapter is also designed to help you answer some basic questions about your own potential role as a leader of sustainable change:

- How do I equip myself to be an effective leader?
- Where shall I start?
- Who can I work with to have the most impact?

We are entering an era, I believe, when world class enterprises will build . . . sophistication in understanding and tapping the intelligence and spirit of human beings.

Source: P. Senge³

Key factors in change agent competency

What do we need to be effective change leaders? We need clarity of vision, knowledge of what we wish to change and the skills to implement the changes. But none of these can be fully effective without maturity and wisdom. In the end it is who we are, not what we know or can do that makes the crucial difference in effecting organizational change. Ideally change agents need the following characteristics – but note the provisos that follow.

Goal clarity

'I know what outcomes I want to produce.' Yes, we do need to know what we want to achieve, but our understanding of the goal doesn't have to be precise when we begin. What we need is a 'strategic intent', a direction, a deep, intuitive response to the organizational situation in which we find ourselves, an aspiration to nudge our organizational world a little closer to the ideal of sustainability. Jaworski tells of a meeting he had with physicist David Bohm in 1989 – a meeting that proved to be a life-changing experience. Bohm spoke about how 'thought creates the world . . . we participate in how reality unfolds'.² Jaworski went on to read Bohm's work and was particularly struck by his concept of 'implicate order' – the notion that 'the totality of existence is enfolded within each "fragment" of space and time – whether it be a single object, thought or event'.³ As change agents, our role is to be part of the process by which the implicate order unfolds. We don't control this process; we are co-creators; midwives aiding the birth of a new order.

Role clarity

'I know what to do to produce change.' Of course, when we start, we often do not know what to do. We may not have a clue about what to do to make change happen. This is a paradox we face as change agents – we need to find a viable and effective role to play in midwifing the future but everything seems to conspire to block us. Reflecting on my own experience as a change agent, I realize that I floundered about for years, often getting in my own way and others'. My estimate is that it took about eight years to learn the most important lesson of 'not doing', that is, understanding that most of the time I cannot significantly affect the

course of change and am better not doing anything at all for a while but wait, listen, watch and reflect on the process.⁴ Out of that reflective process, an understanding emerges of the role I can play, and where and how I can be effective. Timing and skill then become all important. Disciplined inaction is an opportunity to cultivate the inner stillness through which we appreciate the unfolding of the implicate order and our role in it. And then we must act decisively.

Relevant knowledge

'I have or can access the knowledge required to produce the outcomes I want.' Corporate change processes demand depth of knowledge and in the area of sustainability that knowledge is often not gained easily. Sustainability cuts right across traditional disciplinary boundaries. In a particular project, for example, we may need knowledge of the political processes of the organization, technical knowledge about energy conservation, water purification and chemical pollutants, knowledge about the attitudes of key external stakeholders. It would be an unusual person who had this knowledge at the beginning of a change programme. But we don't need all the knowledge before we start; we can acquire it as we go along, in partnership with others more knowledgeable than ourselves in some of these areas, and learn as we go.

Relevant competencies and resources

'I have or can assemble the skills and resources to make it happen.' Again, we may not have the skills we need when we first take up a role as organizational change agent. Acquiring skills is a lifetime endeavour. So, we need to be realistic about the skills we have and start the change process in a way that builds on our current skill level. However, the only effective way to learn skills is through experimentation and practice. To acquire them, we take faltering steps at first but, with practice, our steps become firm and purposeful. Mentors and models help so, if we are relatively unskilled, another criterion of where to start the change process is to find others who do have the necessary skills and work with them. To begin, we need only a subset of the skills demanded by the full change programme and, if we work with others, we do not need the full repertoire of skills ourselves.

Self-esteem

'I believe I can do it.' Sometimes this one is the toughest call of all, but a passionate belief in the profound importance of the change we are initiating is a great help. Being a change agent is not for the faint hearted. Emotional resilience is a fundamental requirement. We are often called on to persist in the face of adversity, derision, contempt, anger. Changing entrenched power structures can be a career-threatening experience. But then, abandoning the cause of sustainability is a planet-threatening experience. If we choose to undergo some adversity, at least in the end we have the satisfaction of knowing that we stand for life, for hope, for a viable future for us all.

If we believed we need the five characteristics so starkly listed above without the added provisos, we would never start to try to change corporations. These are ideals to be worked towards; they set a direction for our learning – they are not the starting line we must cross to begin. They define mastery in this field and we discuss below the path to mastery – it is a long path and we learn primarily by doing. If we choose well, we also learn by apprenticeship to others more experienced and skilled than ourselves and by finding models and mentors. But definitely by doing.

We need to learn to live with ambiguity and a degree of chaos. Managing corporate change is rather like white-water rafting or surfing. The first lesson is not to try to control the environment but to move with it. Like rafting or surfing, success in change leadership comes from being willing to change our internal psychological world.

Achieving mastery

But that's only Change Leadership 101. As in any field of serious endeavour, learning of this kind is a lifetime commitment. We start as novices and may achieve mastery but that takes effort, time and commitment. Table 9.1 outlines the stages in achieving mastery as a change agent.

Mastery involves bringing all our awareness, knowledge, skills and energy to bear on the task before us; but it implies a history of disciplined learning, experimentation and practice over a significant period of time. Master potters, tennis players and ballet dancers, for example, are not

Table 9.1 Stages in achieving change agent mastery

| | |
|---|--|
| 1. Novice: learning 'the rules' | We seek clear guidelines for how to act in different situations; for example, many novices are drawn to The Natural Step programs which offer simple rules for instituting sustainable practices. We seek the codified knowledge of others who have done it. |
| 2. Advanced beginner: beyond rules to strategies | We realize that in many situations, the rules don't work. Making change is more complex than we thought. Rules become more blurred and evolve into thoughtful strategies. |
| 3. Competence: disciplined effectiveness | We develop a 'feel' for the complexity of change, select cues and respond to them on the basis of our accumulating experience. Our knowledge now is more tacit; our strategies are now evolving to include deeper levels of awareness. |
| 4. Proficiency: fluid, effortless performance | We have internalized the strategies and they are backed up with high levels of skill. Intuition now dominates and reason is secondary. |
| 5. Mastery: acting from our deepest intuition with confidence and flow | We become one with the changes we are making and are changing ourselves and our organizational world at the same time. Our inner and outer worlds are one. What we do often seems effortless and spontaneous. |

created overnight or by two-day training courses. There are no short cuts, no quick fixes. But as we achieve mastery, we often have the ability to create the reality we want because we respect and work with the change process. We are not frustrated by it but accept that what happens is what we get to work with. The path before us opens to a series of opportunities rather than problems.

Chatterjee writes eloquently of the need for change agents to develop personal mastery:

Personal mastery is a journey towards a destination we may call an *integral being*. Integral beings experience a life of oneness with themselves and their universe. They act from the wholeness of this experience. There is harmony and a unique synchronicity between their beliefs and their actions. Their bodies, minds, and senses orchestrate themselves to the effortless rhythms of the universe.⁵

Similarly Handy talks of change agents as 'alchemists' who don't react to events but shape them. He characterizes them as passionate about what they are doing because they have a conviction of its importance. He also

sees them as being able to leap beyond the rational and logical and stick with their dream, if necessary against the 'evidence'.⁶ In fact, they are changing the world as they go, building excitement and momentum. Like water finding its way down a hillside, they simply go around obstacles and dissolve resistance.

Starting with self-leadership

Being a change agent means living in and between two worlds. One is the world of inner experience, of personal meaning, of selfhood. The other is the outer world of action. The inner world is the real challenge for change agents. Paradoxically the secret to changing the world about us is only discovered within ourselves. Mahatma Gandhi had a very clear idea about where his leadership began. He said: 'I must first be the change I want to bring about in my world.'⁷ Our ability to model in our own lives – in our attitudes, words and actions – the changes we wish to bring about: this is the most powerful intervention we ever make. Our integrity is the test of the worth of what we advocate. After all, if we cannot bring about the changes within ourselves, do we have the right to ask others to make these changes? And if we cannot make the changes ourselves, what chance do we have of success in changing others?

Quinn writes of how important it is for organizational change agents to make deep change at the personal level: 'To make deep personal change is to develop a new paradigm, a new self, one that is more effectively aligned with today's realities.'⁸ He sees a vital link in our ability to make deep change within ourselves and the effective leadership of organizational change. Leaders who are prepared to make deep change within themselves, in Quinn's view, make transformative organizational change possible.

Recent research on leadership effectiveness reinforces the notion that change leadership requires particular kinds of psychological strengths. In particular, Luthans draws on developments in positive psychology – a field which emphasizes building on people's personal strengths rather than focusing on their weaknesses. He reviews research into the contribution of personal strengths to performance improvement in the workplace. He finds that these characteristics include 'realistic hope, optimism, subjective wellbeing/happiness and emotional intelligence'.⁹ These are, of course, the characteristics of mature, emotionally healthy human beings as well as effective change agents.

Through reviewing the change agent literature and discussions with change practitioners, Dunphy has identified the following as important personal characteristics for change agents:

- personal resilience and persistence;
- realistic self-esteem, self-direction and initiative;
- tolerance of ambiguity;
- flexibility and adaptability;
- clear focus;
- enthusiasm and motivation;
- ability to inspire others;
- political awareness and sensitivity;
- empathy;
- sense of humour;
- a helicopter view;
- commitment to continuous learning.¹⁰

We all fall short of this ideal, of course, but attempting change leadership is one way to acquire these characteristics.

Seeking cosmocentric consciousness

In bringing about deep change leading to sustainability, the old Newtonian worldview of a mechanistic, atomized universe doesn't help; nor does the 'objectivist' stance, so deeply inculcated by a traditional scientific worldview, based on the myth that knowledge is created by scientists who stand outside the universe they are studying.

Chatterjee draws on Indian spiritual tradition in describing the importance of meditation in helping us relinquish both our belief that the world is made up of discrete objects and the egocentricity associated with this belief. In his view, we can progress from being egocentric personalities attached to material objects to cosmocentric individuals in a harmonious relationship with nature. The egocentric person feels empowered by the objects he or she can possess. By contrast, cosmocentric consciousness frees us from the clutter of objects and possessions so that the universal consciousness that flows through the entire universe also flows through us.¹¹

Albert Einstein wrote eloquently in the same vein:

A human being is part of the whole, called by us the Universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and

feelings, as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.¹²

This mystical view is also supported by many other leading physicists who have been involved in redefining scientific views of the universe.¹³ Jaworski calls this type of awareness 'unity consciousness'. Unity consciousness releases us from the cultural boundaries we have internalized and allows us to experience the interrelatedness of the universe and to become part of its unfolding future.¹⁴

Jaworski speaks of an experience in Chartres cathedral that led him to think about two different notions of freedom. The first is 'freedom from', that is the freedom to escape oppressive circumstances. He then turns to the other kind of freedom:

But another notion of freedom was beginning to make its way into my consciousness at this time, far below the surface – the freedom to follow my life's purpose with all the commitment I could muster, while at the same time, allowing life's creative forces to move through me without my control, without 'making it happen'. As I was to learn over time, this is by far a much more powerful way of operating.¹⁵

Organizations too have their collective consciousness. Quinn writes of the change agent listening to the inner voice of the organization which calls for the realignment of internal values and external realities. He regards the inner voice of the organization as 'the most potent source of power in the organization'.¹⁶ 'Preparation, reflection, and courage are needed to hear the inner voice. The inner voice will provide direction if people have the courage to listen and the commitment to change.'¹⁷ In our view, responding to the inner voice includes voicing the unspeakable – speaking for the interpersonal underworld that exists in most organizations but fails to gain official recognition. This is the world of collective fear and despair, of latent rebellion, of long-remembered anger, of irreverent humour and cynicism. Giving voice to these aspects of the organization's life is often like pointing out that the emperor has no clothes. This is also the world of high dreams and ideals: people's hopes and yearnings for more fulfilling and meaningful work. These aspirations have often been submerged by disappointment and discouraging experiences but can rise to the surface again with compelling power.

To develop cosmocentric consciousness is to care, and caring is an important part of effective leadership. Effective change leaders are passionate about the changes they support; their actions are value driven. They care about the environment, they care about the community, they care about the individuals with whom they work.

Empathy, caring and love are not popular terms in the current managerial vocabulary. They are, however, words we can dare to speak and to live. Professor Leo Buscaglia, an outstanding academic educator, recounts how deans from other schools would call to invite him to give a visiting lecture. They would eventually ask him for the title of his lecture and, when he said 'Love', there would be an embarrassed silence on the other end of the phone, followed by a remark like: 'Could you make that Love comma As A Behavior Modifier?'.¹⁸

True knowledge of the world and of others comes from empathetic understanding, not cold objectivity. Love is the matrix from which community is born; love creates the 'we' from the 'I'. From conception to old age, maturity and health are products of supportive social relationships. Without empathy, caring, compassion, respect, tolerance and love, organizations cease to be communities, trust dissolves and all relationships become calculative. As we have discussed earlier in this book, the nature of modern organizations means that they don't operate effectively without trust. But trust does not grow automatically; in organizational life, it is built consciously, purposefully over time by those who care.

Cosmocentric consciousness, or spiritual intelligence, helps us connect to the emerging forms of the future.¹⁹ Without this kind of consciousness it is hard to find the future – with it, the future seems inescapable. The future is within us and around us. Its shape is already coalescing in our dreams, emerging from our play, emerging in the hasty decisions we make as we face overload at work. The future is forming here in our minds, already shaping the actions of our hands and moving our feet forwards. The world about us is also changing and we are connected with powerful forces that are already moving our world, and us, towards sustainability. The clues to a sustainable future are already there for us to find: in the next office, the factory up the street, the children's project at home, our own imagination. The future is a living presence now if we are prepared to respond to it.

Building or assembling the skills needed for diagnosis and action

Self-leadership is necessary, but it is not enough. As well as self-knowledge and an empathetic understanding of others, effective change leaders need skills.

First on the list are skills associated with effective diagnosis. If we are to attempt to change an organization we must first understand where the organization is on the path to sustainability and where it needs to go. Making the right diagnosis is as important in achieving organizational well-being as it is in achieving individual physical health. One of the major challenges for organizational change agents is that they usually have to make the analysis themselves and they have to do it on the run and *in situ*. It would be nice if our organizational change efforts began with a neatly packaged Harvard Business School case analysis, but unfortunately they don't.

If we work in the organization, then we are part of what we are analysing. Our viewpoint will be biased by the position we occupy – the view from below is always different, for example, from the view from above; the industrial engineer's view is different from that of the salesperson in the field. On the other hand, if we are external to the organization – for example, a consultant – we may have a more open mind; but we don't have the advantage of inside information. Whatever our role, as we start actively to find out more about the organization, looking at records, interviewing personnel and so on, we are already intervening in the ongoing system.

So forget objectivity in the traditional sense – we are inextricably part of the system we are trying to change. Forget also the models found in most management texts where managers, in particular, are assumed to be outside the system and all-powerful. This kind of model suggests that all we have to do to change organizations is to develop a plan and promulgate it throughout the organization. The rest of the organization is assumed to be rather like a piano, ready to respond with alacrity to the skilled interventions of those in authority who hold the exact script to be played out.

This is a fantasy – a pervasive fantasy, but one far from reality. The reality is that organizations are not machines but fields of political activity in which even the actions of CEOs can disappear with little trace.

Whatever our role and our authority, we are not the only centre of power

in the organization. And the organization is not waiting statically like a piano. Large organizations are more like ocean liners: they are moving with momentum on a trajectory powered by past decisions and by collective experiences embodied in a corporate culture. Change agents are intervening in an ongoing system that often has its own compelling internal logic built up over years and embodied in the programmed responses of people who have been there for years. It is also part of a larger world which at the same time is both holding it in place and pressuring it to change.

So we are studying a dynamic system of which we are part or become a part as we study it. We can't put it in a laboratory, take it apart and analyse it under a microscope. All we can do is immerse ourselves in it, understand that our own view will be biased and try to offset that by an empathetic identification with others who occupy very different positions. We can also gather data that can expand or contradict our biases. Moving around the organization helps, as does cultivating an open mind, observing and listening. The skills of action research are the most useful. In some cases we may wish to add more formal means of analysis such as surveys and financial analysis. These can help but are no substitute for being there with full awareness.

More specifically the action research and diagnostic skills we need are:

- 1 *a well developed systematic theoretical position*, a framework or multiple frameworks; that is, a model of how organizations operate which helps us select the kind of data that are useful for understanding and for future action. This model is always partial and limited and so we must be open to revising it on the basis of experience;
- 2 *a model of the ideal sustainable organization* combined with openness to others' ideal models. The future is mostly a collective creation, emerging from the active dialogue and interaction of interested parties. We need to be as clear as we can on what we want so that we can engage fully with others in that dialogue; but we need to be open to any emerging shared vision. Of course, there may be competing visions and resistance to visions in general: conflict is simply an element of the unfolding drama through which the future is defined: conflict is a signal that something important is at stake; it is a measure of progress on the path, not the end of the path;
- 3 *the ability to question and listen to others* for factual, value-based and emotive information; all three kinds of information are useful. Moving to sustainability necessarily involves values and emotions as well as facts;

- 4 *the ability to use varied data sources and methods of analysis*, to apply critical insight and make balanced judgements. If we want to make a map, it is useful to view the landscape from different viewpoints – triangulation increases accuracy;
- 5 *the ability to convey a concise diagnosis* to others in their terms. The emerging field of sustainability studies is already developing its own language – professional and technical jargon; some of this is useful as shorthand and for technical precision. But if we are to influence others, we need to be able to translate what is important into the everyday language of the workplace;
- 6 *the ability to monitor and evaluate the change process*: the process of diagnosis does not stop when the action begins. Diagnosis becomes even more crucial in checking whether we are achieving what we set out to achieve and whether we need to change the path we travel along as we reach a fuller understanding of where we need to go.

Diagnostic skills help define the path to sustainability. Moving down that path requires change agents to develop other skill sets too, particularly the skills of effective communication, of managing stakeholder relationships and project management:

- 1 *skills of effective communication*: the willingness to listen and ask skilful questions; the ability to adopt multiple viewpoints; the commitment to keep people informed and ‘in the picture’; the ability to communicate clearly and simply with others in speech and writing; the ability to use images and emotions as well as facts in communicating with others;
- 2 *skills of managing stakeholder relationships*: direction setting (visioning) and defining the scope of responsibilities for parts of the vision; influencing and networking; delegating; developing, mentoring and coaching others; performance management and monitoring; team building;
- 3 *skills of project management*: making and taking opportunities; updating technical and organizational knowledge; problem solving; resourcing.

Figure 9.1 summarizes our analysis of the skills needed to become an effective change agent. These skills will be in great demand as more organizations embrace what Hirsh and Sheldrake refer to as ‘inclusive leadership’.²⁰ Inclusive leadership, as they define it, derives from adopting the stakeholder perspective on organizations. It involves managers developing and maintaining an interactive exchange with all those who

have a stake in the organization: investors, employees, suppliers, customers, the community, and representatives of the environment and future generations. Organizations need to perform instrumental tasks and to reach financial objectives. But this is most effectively achieved by creating a wider set of outcomes that meet the needs of key stakeholders.²¹ The skills of relationship building will be particularly critical as organizations move forward on the path to sustainability.

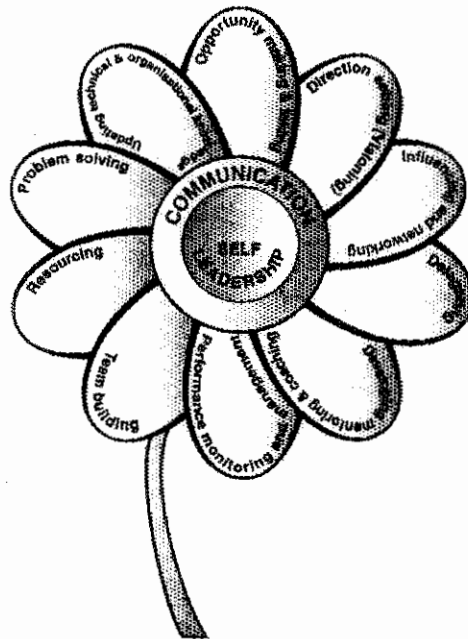


Figure 9.1 Skills of effective change agents

Creating dialogue and shared scenarios

One of the central tasks of change agents is the creation of visioning capabilities in the organization. Gratton writes that 'the capacity to create and develop a vision of the future that is compelling and engaging [is] at the very centre of creating a human approach to organizations'.²² But where does the vision come from?

Vision emerges from dialogue – both inner dialogue within ourselves and dialogue within the organization and with its external stakeholders. The task of the change agent is to work with others to create new meaning, for

new meaning creates new realities. This is the process that Weick calls 'sensemaking'.²³ Dialogue is not chatter but rather engagement at the deepest level with ourselves and with others. Dialogue begins with cultivating awareness and with listening; it continues with responsiveness and an exchange that is a catalyst for creative change.²⁴

Dialogue can change people's perceptions of themselves and of their organization. From these new perceptions a sense of collective identity and purpose emerges that can renew or transform the existing culture of the organization. If this happens, the leadership of change passes from the handful of change agents who began the change process to a much larger network within the organization. Leaders create leaders.

Leadership is about 'bringing everyone along' in a balanced way, not just in their minds so they understand it, but emotionally as well, in their hearts, so they are really energized and identify with it, and they themselves take part in the leadership.

Source: Frank Blount, former CEO, Telstra²⁵

Our own experience in working with effective change leaders at all levels of organizations is that they have a profound belief in the capability of others. This belief manifests itself through challenging others to contribute even beyond what they thought was their best and supporting them in doing this. Typically, others say of such leaders: 'You know, he (she) believed in me more than I believed in myself. Through him (her) I learned that I could accomplish much greater things than I ever thought possible.' This is true empowerment and it is part of the process of creating organizations where everyone has the opportunity to lead in developing a sustainable workplace that offers exciting and meaningful work.

However, some conflicts of interests in organizations are intractable. When this is the case, leadership becomes the art of achieving what you believe is the best possible outcome in the circumstances, even if that does not match your ideal. Negotiations and compromise may be necessary to produce small wins that can be built on later. A general rule for change agents is that if you can't go around it, over it or under it, then negotiate with it.

Identifying and dealing with resistance to change

All change agents encounter resistance to the changes they attempt to introduce. There is an extensive literature on resistance to change and how to deal with it. Much of it is written for senior executives and embodies the assumption that positive change is mainly initiated by senior executives, who encounter resistance to change from middle management or the workforce. Our own experience is that senior executives are as resistant to change as anyone else and the initiative for change often comes from elsewhere in the organization. The reality is that most people resist change when others are attempting to change them; few do when they feel that they are in charge of change.

People are particularly likely to resist change when they see it as threatening their interests and when they believe that their knowledge and skills may be made irrelevant as changes take place. As we move towards sustainability, there will be those whose interests are threatened and whose current knowledge and skills become obsolete. Not all resistance to change is irrational. As change agents we need to understand that change is a political process in which people's power and status are implicated. There will always be those whose identification with the old order is so strong that they will actively oppose or passively resist change towards the new. There can also be legitimate disagreements – value conflicts – about the best way to proceed in progressing sustainability: disagreements about priorities, about facts such as the potential danger of certain substances, about strategies and tactics for moving forward. As change agents, we need to work to create an evolving consensus among interested parties. Active engagement of those who will be affected by the changes is often the most effective way forward. However, it does not always work. There can be delays, obfuscations, sidetracks, subversions. As in all fields of endeavour, persistence is a large part of success and persistence comes from a deep commitment to a meaningful view of the future.

Learning as we go

Quinn recalls a time when he and a student were writing a case study of a company and interviewed the CEO. The CEO recounted the story of the company's first five years as if it had been the unfolding of a clear strategic plan. This didn't match Quinn's understanding of how the changes took

place and he challenged the CEO by giving his own version: Quinn saw it as a rather chaotic learning process. The CEO was somewhat taken aback by this, but then smiled and said: 'It's true, we built the bridge as we walked on it.'²⁶ Initiating and managing a change process, particularly in the area of sustainability where there are no standard models, will always mean building the bridge as we walk on it. Planning is important but it will be an evolving process and, despite our best efforts, the implementation will sometimes be disorganized and discontinuous. Learning as we go is the way we become skilled change agents.

Making it happen

The implementation of change requires relentless attention to detail. Rowledge *et al.* describe the implementation process of instituting life cycle management at Daimler Chrysler. Part of Daimler's programme to move to compliance plus involved deciding what restricted substances to track. They identified 1,700 substances of concern in their products and operations. Careful examination of regulations and scientific evidence on these substances led them to classify these substances into two groups – tier two and tier one, according to their estimate of the seriousness of the risks they posed. There were 103 tier one (high-risk) substances. For each of these substances, targets for recycling were identified and incorporated into the firm's product development strategy. Subsequently this has been used, in design and production, to select between alternative materials, parts and processes. This was simply one part of a change programme directed at achieving compliance.²⁷

Disciplined application to detail underlies successful change implementation.

Contributing to living networks

An important part of making change happen is networking with like-minded people. Change agents spend real time in building networks to provide information about the systems they are working in, to act as channels of influence and for support in what is an emotionally demanding endeavour. But where do we find like-minded people?

Values researcher Ray has identified three major groups in the USA whom he refers to as modernists, heartlanders and cultural creatives. The