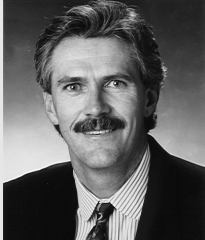


"Nothing is so well learned as that which is discovered." - Socrates

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Article by Randell Jones



Who could have anticipated last summer's energy crisis in California? The associated collapse of Wall Street-darling

Enron? The swift decline and virtual demise of a century-old, venerable accounting firm? With these events, the business world changed in a matter of months and the fall out of those unprecedented events is cascading yet today through Main Street, USA and around the world. In response, decisions will be made, plans will be laid out, actions will be taken., and as a result, change will continue.

Whether it's imposed change or planned change, it all has to be addressed. As leaders of organizations know, change is difficult; but change is not unmanageable. It can be understood and insight allows enlightened leaders to guide and direct the change process more effectively.

This issue of Excursions introduces one of Discovery Learning's latest developments, the Transitions Model. It combines some well-supported principles of change processes with the established validity of Change Style preferences to create a new and useful leadership tool. With the insight afforded by this model, leaders can more confidently pursue the business of changing their organizations and managing the change that confronts their organizations, and, as a result, continue changing the world.

Chris Musselwhite, President

Staging Change

Change is certain, but not always easy. That's why successfully leading an organization through a transition is one of the greatest challenges facing executives today. Fortunately, some 50 years or more of research into managing organizational change has converged on a few key concepts that hold strong promise for guiding today's leaders. (See sidebar.) Discovery Learning, Inc. has recently integrated these concepts into a concise, insightful, and powerful Transitions Model that along with specific, recommended leadership actions can help leaders manage organizational change more effectively.

Transitions Model

Successful organizational change passes through four stages:

- I. Acknowledging/Knowing,
- II. Reacting/Responding,
- III. Investigating/Exploring, and
- IV. Implementing/Doing.

(See Fig. 1.) An organizational transition is successfully moved through these four stages by the appropriate application of four

key leadership skills: Informing, Supporting, Encouraging and Reinforcing. Each skill is most appropriately used in one of the four different stages of the Transitions Model. Each skill also helps leaders deal most effectively with tensions created among persons of varied Change Style preferences, that is, Conservers, Pragmatists and Originators. (See EXCURSIONS, Fall 2001, *A Changing Look at Change*.) Leaders who act skillfully in concert with an understanding of Change Style preferences can rely on the Transitions Model to help guide them through a change process perhaps more successfully than ever before.

'Round and 'Round She Goes

The four sequential stages of the Transitions Model represent predictable phases of the change process. Of interest to leaders is the observation that people with different Change Styles move differently through the four stages. That complexity helps explain much of the tension and problems that organizations experience in their transitions.

"People with different Change Style preferences move differently through the four stages of the Transitions Model."

- Dr. Chris Musselwhite

(Continued on page 2)

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Stage 1. When a change is announced or revealed . . .

all three Change Styles face the same challenge of becoming consciously aware of it. Sometimes people must overcome some level of denial. Moreover, leaders sometimes struggle with what information to share at the front end of a transition cycle. But, all information is critical. It helps all members of the organization—Conservers, Pragmatists and Originators alike—to acknowledge the change as a reality.

Stage 2. When people react and respond, . . .

emotions can sometimes dominate actions. Some people are excited about new opportunities; others are anxious about facing uncertainty. Conservers are most

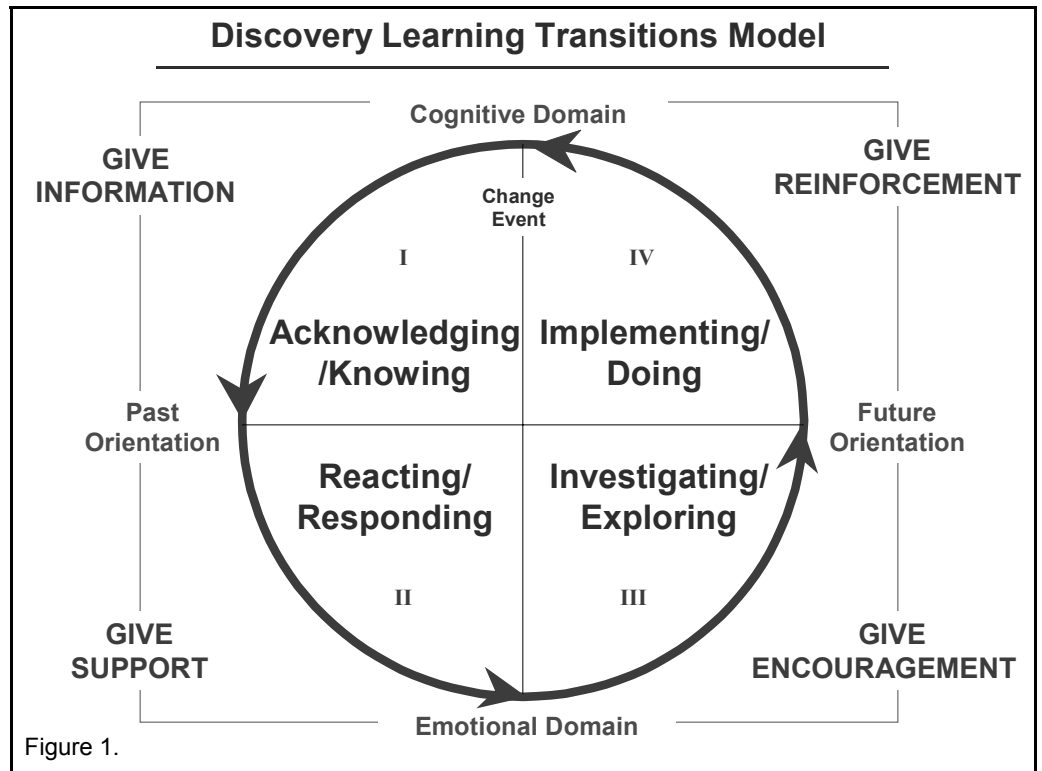


Figure 1.

Key Converging Concepts

A recent review of the literature on change processes identified four models which represent key concepts put forth over the last 50+ years. The similarities of these models suggest that theorists are converging on a relatively consistent system of factors that help explain change phenomena.

In 1947 Kurt Lewin suggested change in three stages: Unfreezing, Moving, Refreezing. In 1982, Claes Janssen, suggested four phases: Denial, Confusion, Renewal, Contentment. In 1988, Scott & Jaffe identified four stages: Denial, Resistance, Exploration, Commitment. In 1991, William Bridges proposed three phases: Letting Go, Neutral Zone, New Beginnings.

A more-detailed look at these models is provided in the text of a forthcoming book with the pre-publishing title *Re-Framing Change*, by Dr. Chris Musselwhite and Randell Jones, PE, MBA.

likely to linger in this stage the longest. They are also the ones most interested in carrying forward the best of what was working before the change. Originators, on the other hand, may skip through this stage and may move quickly into Stage 3, Investigating/Exploring, where they are most comfortable dealing with possibilities and ideas. It is, in fact, the tension created between Originators and Conservers in the movement from Stage 2 to Stage 3 that is most immediately noticeable in a changing organization.

Stage 3. When people are creating and exploring, . . .

all relevant concerns and suggestions should be considered by all stakeholders. The Conservers in Stage 2, who are reviewing and salvaging, may be seen by Originators as “resistors”; and, the Originators in Stage 3 may be seen as “zealots” by the Conservers. With the organization straddling this interface of Stages 2 and 3, effective leaders provide both Support for the Conservers and Encouragement for the Originators. The Support given for those in Stage 2 slows down the Originators’

interest in racing ahead and it keeps issues expressed by Conservers on the table for consideration. The Encouragement given for those in Stage 3 endorses the investigation and exploration of new ideas by the Originators and it encourages the Conservers to become involved in the dialogue necessary to bring about inevitable change. However, some Originators are likely to linger too long in this stage.

Stage 4. When people are implementing new ideas, . . .

new challenges arise. Moving from investigating and exploring to actual execution creates another point of tension revealed by the Transitions Model. Originators in Stage 3 are busily inventing new ideas and diverging their thinking. This is where they are most comfortable. Getting them to move into Stage 4 can be difficult because that move involves the converging actions of deciding, planning and detailing. These converging actions are the strengths of Conservers, who may be eager to put any new system into order and to return to a predictable, routine operation. Consequently, Conservers who may

have spent a long time in Stage 2, Reacting and Responding, may move quickly through Stage 3 in the interest of getting involved with implementing, testing and documenting the new system in Stage 4. Originators, however, may want to linger in Stage 3 continuing to revise ideas and coming up with new ones before actually implementing anything. They may be reluctant to leave Stage 3 because every decision to do one thing is a decision not to do all the other things they also have been considering.

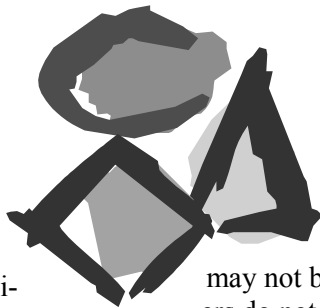
Push and Pull

The two major points of tension previously mentioned are mirror images; however, in each, different parties are doing the pushing and the pulling. In one, the Conservers may be reluctant to leave behind the tried-and-true systems. However, they may move quickly through Stage 3, Investigating/Exploring and go right into Stage 4, Implementing/Doing. In a second point of tension, Originators may move quickly from Stage 1, Acknowledging/Knowing, into Stage 3, virtually bypassing Stage 2. Because Originators feel comfortable imagining and innovating, they may be reluctant to leave Stage 3 to move into Stage 4, Implementing/Doing.

In both circumstances, leaders recognize a tension in the dialogue of the organization that is based on the Change Style preferences of individuals. Throughout the change process, executives are called upon to lead. They can best lead the organization through the transition by using specific skills in certain stages of the transition.

What's a Leader To Do?

In real estate, it's "location, location, location." In organizational change, it's "communication, communication, communication."



If they look unaware, tell them. During Stage 1, Acknowledging/Knowing, effective leaders inform. They provide information consistently and repeatedly. They focus on facts, not opinion. They understand the importance of appearing credible by being forthright and forthcoming. Full and complete disclosure can sometimes appear to overwhelm organization members, but anything less may be perceived as a breach of trust. As experienced leaders know, violating the trust of group members is no way to begin an organizational transition.

If they look as if they are resisting and reminiscing, support them. In Stage 2, Reacting/Responding, effective leaders give support. Conservers value what has been proven to work well. When a system which Conservers understand and value is changed, they want to know the details of how, what, who, when and why. For that reason, strong Conservers ask lots of probing questions in Stage 2. Strong Originators who are eagerly wanting to explore potentials and possibilities in Stage 3 can misread this interest as resisting change. That's why in Stage 2 of the Transition Model, effective leaders listen and acknowledge others' feelings and concerns. They allow time in the process for strong Conservers to express their legitimate concerns—those which raise issues that others may not be able to see. These leaders do not try to push reluctant people quickly through Stage 2 as if it were a bad place to be. Neither do they argue or attempt to convince others to hold a different opinion. The leaders provide support by creating space and time for people to react and to respond.

If they look like explorers, encourage them. Those members of the organization

who are most excited by new possibilities and who are eager to explore new systems, usually Originators, can produce a plethora of ideas. Effective leaders encourage this creativity and the diverging thinking that goes with it. This encouragement signals to those who may be lingering too long in Stage 2 that they should join in the exploration of new options and possibilities.

This stage may be dominated by the actions of divergent thinkers who

(Continued on page 4)

A Matter of Perspective

Not everyone sees the same thing. To exceptionally tall people, short people look even shorter. To exceptionally short people, tall people look even taller. The perceived distance between two people (attitudes as well as stature) is a function of their positions relative to each other and not just the absolute location of either. That's why Conservers seem to Originators to be so far removed from their own thinking and perspective. Likewise, even moderate Originators can appear to strong Conservers to be greatly at odds with the thinking of Conservers.

Of course, Pragmatists also occupy a valuable position on the continuum. From their middle position, they relate well enough to the other Change Styles to value the contributions of both Originators and Conservers. Moreover, Pragmatists know they may not be able to see matters from their balanced positions on the Change Style continuum as would a strong Conserver or a strong Originator. These extreme perspectives provide real and unique value; but, the extreme perspectives are also the ones most at risk for "getting stuck" in their own opinions. For that reason, effective leaders, regardless of one's own personal Change Style preference, serve the organization best when they operate as Pragmatists.

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prefer exploration to implementation.

When some strong Originators become zealous advocates for their favorite ideas or they fall in love with the process of planning at the expense of doing, effective leaders act with intent to move people into Stage 4. They clarify desired outcomes and reward effective performance. They support taking risks in the interest of achievement and they remind the organization of its purpose.

If they look successful, reinforce them.

Change is never easy and it's never complete. Effective leaders recognize the need for timely implementation and ongoing improvements. They get out of the way of doers, avoiding the temptation to micro-manage. These executives know they are not managing the change of an organization from one static state to another; rather, they are leading a transformation process that champions and nurtures flexibility and adaptability.

A Powerful Management Tool

The Transitions Model provides a reliable framework for understanding the challenges of managing an organizational change process. It is based on work developed over the last 50 years that has converged the thinking of researchers. Interpreting this change process model with the insight provided by Change Style preferences makes it substantially more useful. Adding to that the identification of specific skills that leaders should initiate throughout the four-stage process makes the Transitions Model a powerful management tool for today's leaders.

What's happening at DLI?

A New Face, a New Voice

Discovery Learning is pleased to welcome Justin Weik to the staff. A graduate from Greensboro College with a BS in Communication, Justin is now the Manager of Product Logistics and Outreach. Those diverse roles will have Justin working closely with Discovery Learning's clients and both its home and professional communities.

Welcome, Justin!

Train-the-Trainer

Facilitator training for Paper Planes, Inc will be held in the DLI training facilities in Greensboro on Thursday/Friday, September 19/20. Please call to register.

Book To Be Published

Atwood Publishing of Madison, WI, has accepted the manuscript for **Re-Framing Change** by Dr. Chris Musselwhite and Randell Jones, PE, MBA. The book explains, and illustrates by example, the Change Style preference concept. It also introduces the Transitions Model and explains the implications of Change Style preferences for organization change processes.

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