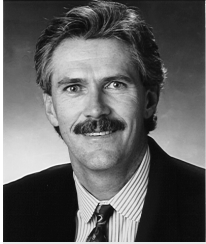


"Nothing is so well learned as that which is discovered." - Socrates

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Article by Randell Jones



Surely, any of us who have been in the business of organizational and managerial development for very long has run head first into the proverbial "change brick wall." While it is probably impossible to measure accurately, some people suggest that as many as 75% of organizational change efforts fail to reach their anticipated results. Some estimates go even higher. With so many smart people working with good intentions, why is the failure rate so high? We do not have a simple answer for this question, but we do know that any answer must incorporate both awareness of an organization's personality and the personalities of the organization's employees. Believe it or not, many elaborate change projects have addressed operational systems, work design, customer interfaces, and financial systems without regard to the organization's culture or the people who must implement and use those systems.

Twenty-five years ago we saw change initiatives that relied on TQM and continuous improvement strategies. For more than a decade the initiatives have relied on reengineering and radical change strategies. The pendulum seems to be swinging again, this time, I think, to a more balanced approach that avoids the "one size fits all" strategies of the past. If you need evidence, look over the contents of the Harvard Business Review for 2001. You see articles such as "The Business Case Against Revolution," "Revolution vs. Evolution; You Need Both," and "Radical Change the Quiet Way."

Some of the most rewarding work I have been involved with over the past few years has been associated with the Change Style Indicator. I have seen people shift from a right/wrong, good guy/bad guy approach to change (and to the people with whom they do not see eye-to-eye) to a real appreciation for the different perspectives we all bring to our jobs, especially when those jobs are undergoing unpredictable changes. Our preferences do not change overnight and an organization's culture certainly does not. Acknowledging those preferences does not extend the change process, it only ensures that commitment for change will be improved and that implementation will present fewer unanticipated surprises.

Chris Musselwhite, President

A Changing Look at Change

The Paradox

Change. You can't live with it and you can't live without it, to borrow a popular phrase. It reaches everywhere and affects everything. It is both desired and feared, sought after and avoided, encouraged and resisted. Change happens slowly and suddenly, broadly and narrowly, overwhelmingly and imperceptibly. It is the positive and the negative, the rise and the fall, the problem and the solution. Change may come in any of these forms and many, many others as well; but, change is always one thing without question—change is inevitable.

Change comes into personal lives with consequences that may affect only one or two people for better or for worse—marriage, birth of a child, job promotion, a new home, illness, retirement.

However, when change affects an industry, a market or an organization, it can have repercussions that resonate and amplify beyond expectations. The effects can be constructive or destructive. Change is essential for organizations to thrive and survive but it can also consume resources and limit growth. Not surprisingly then, leading organizations successfully through continuously changing circumstances is most often cited as the predominant challenge facing managers today.

Effective leaders are those who anticipate change, initiate change, manage change and live with change as a real part of the organizational life cycle. They also know that change is about people. These leaders are the ones who can build a broad understanding within their organizations of how to embrace change and of how to use change to the organization's strategic advantage.

"It is not change that needs managing. It is the people in the midst of change who need leading."

-Chris Musselwhite

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The Opportunity

But change as a phenomenon is not that easily understood. It has many dimensions that can potentially confuse anyone simply observing the consequences of change. Moreover, individuals respond differently to change. An event may appear to one person to be an inconsequential matter while to another it may appear to be a catastrophe. One view is not right and the other wrong; both perceptions have value. People also have different preferences for change with some welcoming each new and different thing while others cling tenaciously to the “tried and true.” Neither preference is labeled good or bad; both are useful. On top of all that, people filter their perceptions through their personalities. As a consequence, people can confuse change preference with change competence. In that case, one may judge that anyone who sees matters differently from how he or she sees them is “wrong,” not just “different.” That all-too human tendency to oppose those who see matters differently is the challenge that presents the greatest obstacle to leading an organization through change. It is not change that needs managing. It is the people in the midst of change who need leading. That realization may well be the reason that ancient Chinese created the character for “crisis” from the characters for both “danger” and “opportunity.”

Change Styles

One of the most powerful capabilities of an effective leader is the ability to view situations from multiple perspectives. That capability is critically important in the emotionally charged atmosphere of change within an organization. Fortunately, the Change Style Indicator presents a logical and powerful framework for sharing with a group the existence of different perspectives on the issue of change. It helps them locate themselves in

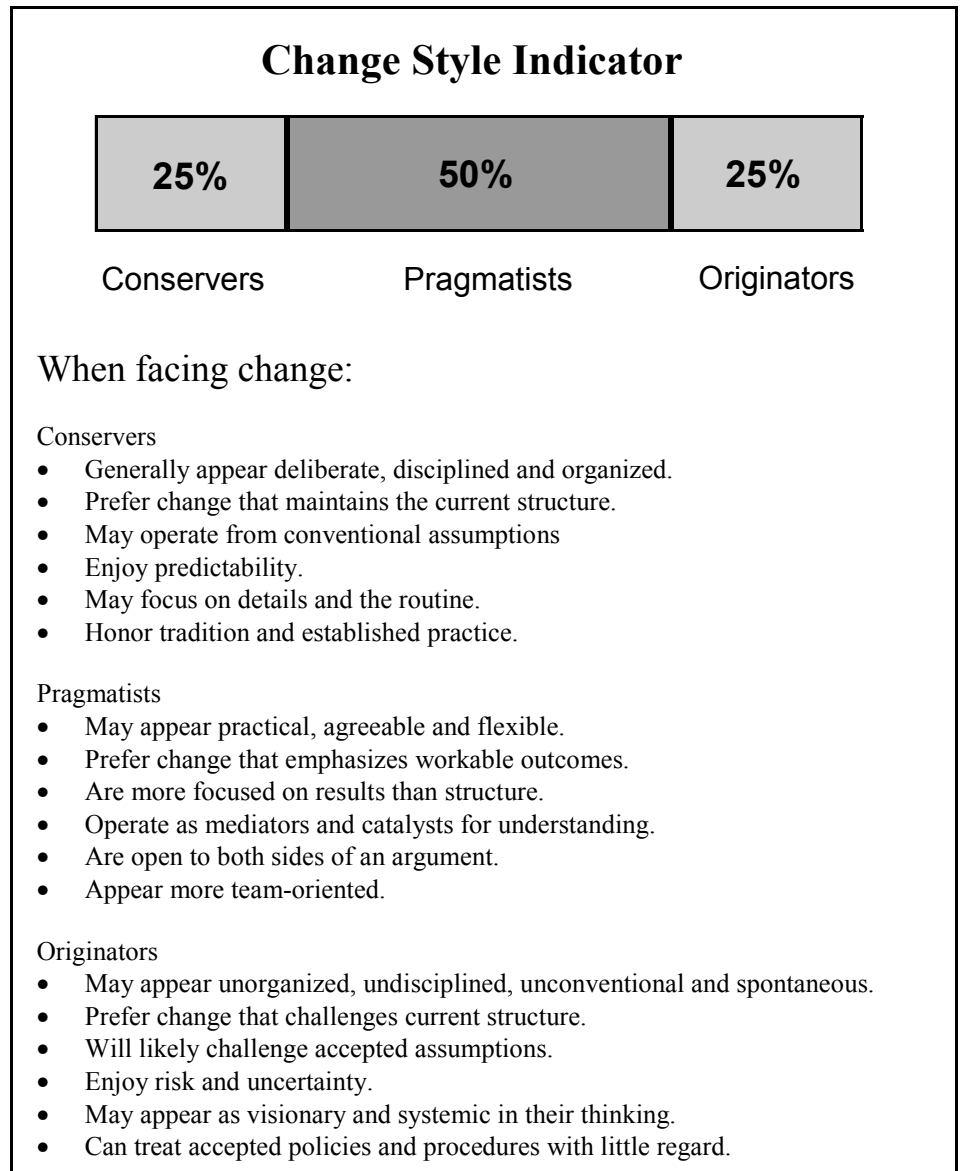


Figure 1. Change Styles

that framework and better understand the perceptual and behavioral differences they share. With that information, so much of what may previously have been interpreted as opposition between individuals can then be appreciated as valuable differences in perspective that can yield useful, powerful insights to help the organization.

Who's Who, What's What and a New Tool

The Change Style model presents a continuum along which individual preferences for change can range from extreme Conserver to extreme Originator. In the middle lies the

pure Pragmatist. With regard to the important issue of how people approach changing structure, Conservers prefer gradual, incremental changes that keep the existing system intact. They prefer making changes whose effectiveness has been demonstrated successfully. Originators, on the other hand, prefer radical changes that may completely throw out the existing system and begin anew. They like to experiment with untested solutions based on their confidence in their creativity and the envisioned outcomes. Pragmatists do not look at the structure as much as at the

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functionality of the change. They prefer changes that work to meet the defined needs without respect to keeping or dropping an existing system. (Figure 1 provides additional descriptions of the differences among these three Change Styles.) Most people exhibit combinations of these preferences to varying degrees, but overall, each person has a tendency toward either Conserver, Pragmatist or Originator preferences. The degree of this tendency is revealed with the Change Style Indicator which places individuals along the continuum. As Figure 1 reveals, in the general population, 25% are Conservers, 50% are Pragmatists and 25% are Originators.

The Challenge

After people realize the existence of a personal preference for change and understand where they fall on the continuum, they gain valuable insights into why they and others behave as they do in their interactions. Moreover, looking forward, they can accept the challenge of stretching themselves beyond their individual comfort zones in accommodating the opinions and perspectives of others. Some individuals with a Conserver preference will be challenged to live with less certainty and more chaos while those with an Originator preference may be challenged to slow down and to reflect on what others are saying. Some will be challenged to respect the successes of the past while others will be challenged to embrace the untested potential and possibilities of the future. For everyone the challenge will be to know and to understand ones' own Change Style preferences with their attendant strengths and weaknesses and to respect the preferences, perspectives and opinions of others as new ideas are considered. Overall, most people in an organization will be challenged to change how they relate to and interact with others who have differing opinions. Experienced leaders in many organizations may agree that would be the most powerful change of all.

Working with Style

A number of authors have demonstrated that people of certain temperaments gravitate to and do best in certain careers. (*Do What You Are* by Tieger and Barron-Tieger, 1995 is a good example.) Discovery Learning's own research has explored the relationship of Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and Change Styles Indicator. (See normative data at www.discoverylearning.com.) These findings support that persons of all Change Style preferences are represented in all MBTI categories; however, a noticeable correlation exists between Intuitives and Originators and between Sensors and Conservers. Also, Judgers and Conservers are noticeably correlated as are Perceivers and Originators. But as in all populations, exceptions are numerous.

Perhaps because of these relationships, Discovery Learning's own research has also shown that persons in certain careers favor different Change Styles. Most notably, as Figure 2 reveals, more consultants tend to be Originators (43%) than Conservers (11%). This is compared to all professions which have 25% Originator and 25% Conserver. This Originator preference probably serves consultants well because as Originators they want to be change agents.

In general, they like change, they like new and different arrangements and they like to make things happen. The qualities that make these individuals Originators often allow them to see challenges and opportunities that their clients may not see. Their perspective may add great capability to the client organization which might be dominated by Conservers and Pragmatists. But as many consultants will confess, this preference for change and seeing the potential in "the next new thing" may also be a problem for them in their client relationships. It can sometimes put them in the precarious position of being at odds with their clients who may have different Change Styles, different perspectives and perceptions. This has implications for implementation. Originator consultants are more likely to interpret caution on the part of others as resistance. They are also at risk for too readily discounting the opinions of others who rely on the history of the organization and established traditions. Originators acting as consultants are wise to acknowledge that one of the reasons they prefer to work outside organizations is because they are uncomfortable working inside them. Such insight can help an Originator consultant be more effective as a change agent and more successful in building a practice.

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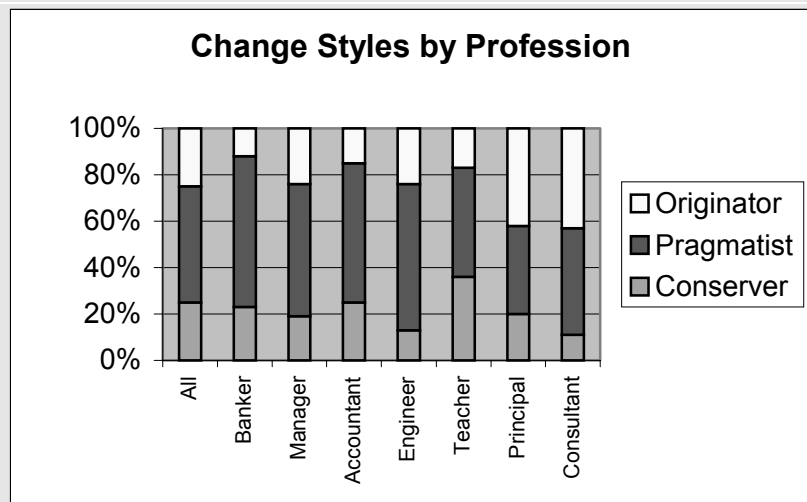


Figure 2. Change Styles by Profession

What's Happening at DLI?

We are moving!

To accommodate growth, we are relocating our office at the end of November to our new building at 431 Spring Garden St., Greensboro, NC 27401. Our address is changing, but our phone numbers, e-mail and web address remain the same.



TRAINING magazine featured Paper Planes, Inc. in its September 2001 issue. The article titled "It's Not Rocket Science" shares why businesses find no

substitute for the face-to-face, experiential learning generated by exercises like Paper Planes, Inc. You can view this article as well as another feature article entitled "Flying Over Office Politics" contributed by

INFOWORLD magazine at our website: www.discoverylearning.com

in the Simulation section.

Train the Trainer

We will be holding the first Train-the-Trainer of 2002 in our new building January 10-11. The session will cover **OurTown**, **Change Style Indicator**, **AWAKA** and **Decision Style Profile**. For a schedule of other sessions visit our website, call our office at 336-272-9530 or e-mail us at DLI@discoverylearning.com

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Another noteworthy example of potential conflicts arising from different Change Style preferences exists in the field of education. As Figure 2 also shows, teachers tend to be Conservers and Pragmatists whereas principals (and system administrators) tend to be Originators and Pragmatists. One can imagine the tensions created when one group (with authority) is continually wanting to try new approaches while the other group (subordinates) simply wants to continue doing what they know from experience works for them in their classroom situations.

Call about our Train-the-Trainer sessions:

January 10-11

*OurTown Simulation, Change Style Indicator
AWAKA Simulation and Decision Style Profile*

March 14-15

Decision Style Profile and EdgeWork®

April 18-19

PressTime Preview

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