

Everyone is responsible for change

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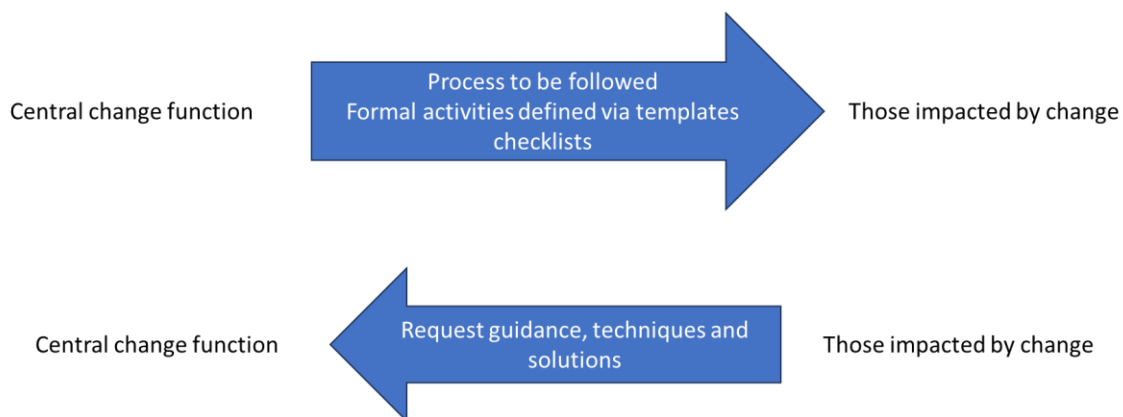
18th October 2024



Introduction

In October our discussion turned to responsibility for change. We put forward the idea that for change management professionals, there is a shift from traditional, centralised "push" models of change toward a "pull" approach that empowers broader organisational involvement and capability. Melanie introduced a career development focus within the field of change management, recognising that many participants are exploring new job opportunities. They discuss the evolving nature of change management roles, highlighting a shift from rigid process-driven approaches to a flexible, coaching-oriented model where change managers provide guidance and frameworks rather than mandates.

Push has become Pull



The session reflected on historical and current trends in change management. Traditionally, change was directed from a "centre of excellence" that pushed out activities and checklists to be used by those impacted by change.

Now, with an increasing volume of organisational changes, the trend is to enable staff and managers to lead changes by providing on-demand support. This model democratizes change management, seeing it as a shared responsibility across the Organisation, with central teams acting more as coaches or facilitators than as enforcers of a specific change management process or approach.



The discussion raises critical questions for participants, including how change management professionals can demonstrate commercial value by enabling effective change adoption and improving the experience of those impacted by change. The speaker encourages participants to consider these questions considering recent survey data, which indicates gaps in change readiness and resources across organisations.

Thinking about the survey, that we are currently running for 2024, our results in 2023 showed some alarming facts:

- 48%** **Responsibility for change is shared between staff and managers**
- 46%** **Skills for change management are known and respected**
- 32%** **We have sufficient people to manage the volume of change**

Leading us to the conclusion that there is a clear need to ensure everyone takes responsibility for change in organisations. That will mean we need to widely develop skills which may in turn lead to us having sufficient resources to enable change to happen.

What does it mean for our careers

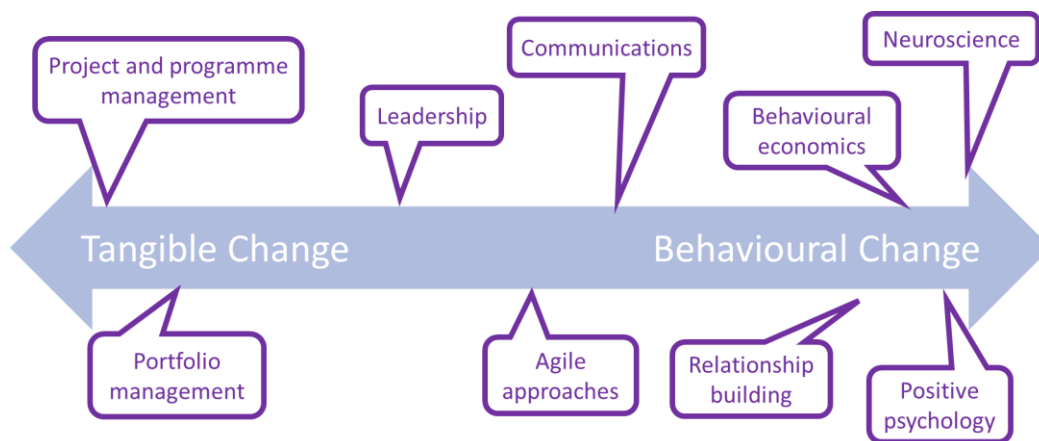
The career workshop segment highlights pathways within change management, distinguishing between early-career roles focused on executing transformation and more strategic roles for experienced professionals, who can contribute to shaping the future state of the Organisation. This transition emphasizes the importance of developing "change ability" over management, aligning with current Organisational needs.

At this point there was a discussion that explores the evolving nature and career paths within change management. Participants reflect on the fact that, historically, many came to change

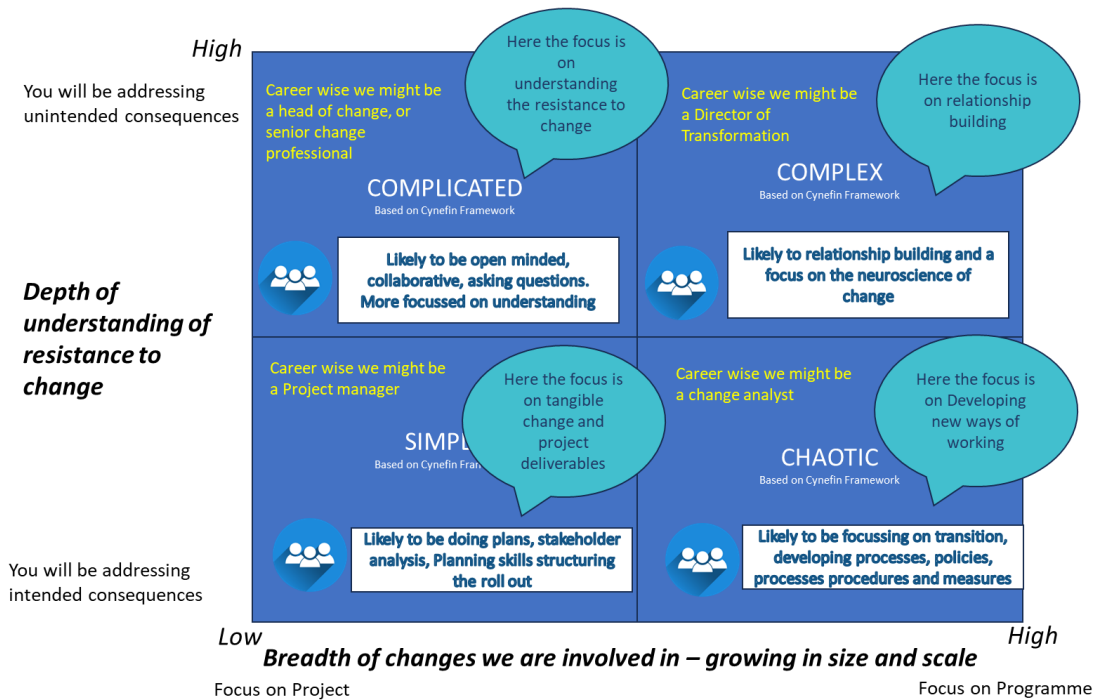
management later in their careers, often after gaining diverse professional experiences. Today, however, Organisations are increasingly creating dedicated career paths for change management, even at entry-level positions, such as recent graduates joining change teams.

The workshop further identifies a wide variety of roles within change management, which participants referred to as "different flavours." These roles range from defining new processes and fostering change engagement to measuring outcomes and crafting communications, training, and coaching services. Additionally, some roles are more focused on data and analytics, reflecting the breadth of specialization in the field. This variety raises questions about whether professionals should be generalists or specialists within specific areas they enjoy.

Another key discussion point is the ambiguity of titles like "project change analyst" or "project change manager." The term "change" in job titles can often be vague, requiring further clarification on the role's specific focus. Finally, the group distinguishes between "tangible changes" on the project side—such as meeting timelines, budget, and quality criteria—and the more nuanced aspects of change involving people, such as creating new habits, building empathy, and fostering behavioural shifts. This behavioural change aspect draws on fields like neuroscience and positive psychology, broadening the skill set required for a successful career in change management.



Melanie discussed a past workshop that explored understanding resistance to change. They presented a framework for assessing change management depth, from simple understandings of resistance to complex analyses, involving unintended consequences. The framework includes levels of understanding, from procedural tasks like project planning to advanced concepts like behavioural change, neuroscience, and empathy.



They outline a career progression from managing projects, through analysis and change management roles, to senior leadership in change. The idea is that technical skills grow along one axis (procedural to strategic program management), while interpersonal skills, such as relationship building and influence, grow along another.

Melanie acknowledges that the workshop didn't reach a conclusion but sees it as a valuable starting point for further discussion, encouraging participants to build on these ideas in breakout sessions.

Community Breakout session Findings

In the current environment, change management often faces budget cuts before other areas like training—a trend that undervalues its impact. To counter this, we need to clearly communicate the tangible benefits and positive impact of effective change management.

When it comes to driving change, the focus is on “selling” the concept—ensuring stakeholders understand the ROI of bringing end-users on board. This involves more than traditional sales; it’s about consistent behavioural change processes, empathetic listening, and relationship building. However, it’s essential to frame our work in business terms that resonate with clients, such as ROI, risk management, and governance, while avoiding softer language like “engagement.” Instead of focusing on our processes, we should emphasize outcomes, always answering the “so what?” question to demonstrate the value added.

In many ways, change management involves proving a negative: showing the value by highlighting potential issues that were prevented. This connects to the evolving career path within change management—moving from communications to engagement, co-creating change, and prioritizing well-being to protect against burnout and change fatigue. However, to truly advocate for well-being, we need to demonstrate our commercial value to the organisation.

The role of a change sponsor is also crucial, acting as the glue that integrates change into the business. An effective sponsor brings people on the journey and supports our work, especially when they understand and are committed to the role. Additionally, partnering with project managers who see the value in change management can amplify its impact on project success.

Next session

22nd November 2024 1pm GMT

Short Cuts, New Habits and Techniques for Change

<https://capabilityforchange.com/event/change-capability-community-short-cuts-new-habits-and-techniques-for-change-1300-2/>