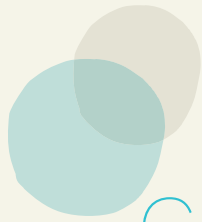


# TRANSFORMING ORGANIZATIONS

A GUIDE TO CREATING EFFECTIVE SOCIAL CHANGE ORGANIZATIONS

by Robert Gass





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*To download a PDF version of Transforming Organizations, and/or to access our toolkit of over 50 tools specifically designed to help implement the principles and practices described in this paper please visit: [www.stproject.org/resources/](http://www.stproject.org/resources/)*



# PART 1.

## An approach to creating more healthy and more effective social change organizations

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### **So you want to change the world?**

If we're serious about making a difference, we must understand that we cannot accomplish anything significant on our own. To be sure, as individuals we can share our gifts and touch the lives of those whom we meet. But meeting the great challenges of our time requires cooperative efforts.

While history books usually focus on great individuals, behind the story of each heroine or hero is a collective story of people working together. The liberation of South Africa was not achieved simply by the moral and political leadership of Nelson Mandela. The energies of millions of people inside and outside of that country were harnessed by hundreds of organizations, ranging from political parties, church groups, and NGOs to labor unions, military units, and the African National Congress.

Those of us who want to help create a more just and sustainable world need to join into collective enterprises that can marshal our

individual passions and energies into effective forces for change. We need powerful, vibrant, and effective non-profits, associations, coalitions, unions, socially responsible businesses, foundations, political parties, campaigns, cooperatives, alliances, and networks, as well as forms that are still being invented.

Over the past decades I have had the privilege of coaching, training, mentoring, and partnering with hundreds of social change leaders in our country, as well as working extensively with many of their organizations. I have learned a lot from these warriors for justice, and this paper is infused with their wisdom.

My purpose in writing this paper is to offer this collective learning to those of you who want to help build stronger social change organizations. Over the course of these pages, we will:

- ▶ Identify some of the common challenges faced by social sector organizations

- ▶ Explore what a strong and healthy social change organization looks like
- ▶ Be enriched by the stories of individual leaders and groups as they share their successes and the valuable lessons learned through their struggles
- ▶ Introduce a transformational approach to organizational change, tailored to meet the needs of social change organizations
- ▶ Contribute to the ongoing conversation about how to build and sustain more robust and effective social change organisms

## Take a moment



*Meditation practice at  
the Center for Transformative Change*

Take a moment for reflection. Think about one of the most positive experiences that you have ever had as part of a team or organization. Remember a specific time and place when you really experienced the positive potential of what people can do when we join together in a good way. What was it like? What was accomplished? As you relive this memory, remember and reflect on what's possible when people are aligned in common purpose.

*The only things that  
evolve by themselves  
in an organization are  
disorder, friction,  
and malperformance.*

PETER F. DRUCKER,  
MANAGEMENT THOUGHT LEADER

*"I will never forget being part of our last campaign. It's hard to describe the feeling. There was incredible energy on the team. We were all pulling together, like an Olympic rowing team going all out towards the finish line. I was giving it everything I had, but I also felt energized by everybody else."*

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CAMPAIGNER

Being part of a team can be uplifting. We may feel connected, part of something larger than ourselves—something meaningful. Our basic human needs for affiliation, for being seen and being valued are met. We may experience that our energies are being well used, that we're accomplishing things together that we could never do on our own. In high-performing organizations, we create synergy—where the impact of our collective work is greater than the sum of our individual efforts. It's a great feeling!

But as we well know, this is often not the case.

Now take another moment for reflection. This time remember a negative experience that you have had as part of some team or organization. Remember a specific time and place when you felt how it is when people are really not working well together. What was it like? As you relive this memory, reflect on how much precious human energy is wasted by poor organization.

At their worst, institutions can frustrate our aspirations, stultify our creativity, drain our energy, and even numb our spirits.

*“Things have been on a downward spiral. Staff doesn’t trust management. Management assumes the worst of us. We care about the work but don’t care about each other, and the work suffers. There’s a bad feeling in the office. You can feel it when you walk in the front door. It’s kind of tragic, because individually, the place is full of great people.”*

STAFF AT COMMUNITY ORGANIZING GROUP

It doesn’t have to be this way. Organizations are like gardens: to flourish, they require continual tending and ongoing investment of time, energy, and resources.

## What we need

While all organizations face challenges, the shortcomings of our social change organizations are especially poignant because their missions are critical: social, economic and racial justice, a vibrant democracy in which everyone counts, an environment in which our children and grandchildren can live healthy lives.

Our social change institutions are filled with people of incredible passion and commitment, ready to take on these great challenges and to work long hours for relatively little compensation. While we can point to many successes in the work we do, too many of our organizations are underperforming, unhealthy places to work, or both. It is painful to see our people, so committed to making a difference in the world, having their energy and dedication wasted in poorly managed work environments.

This is no one’s fault. The external challenges we face are daunting. Our Progressive groups struggle with limited resources. The needs

of the world cry out to us. It can be a difficult choice to withdraw resources from the immediate “work” at hand and focus on the seemingly less urgent task of developing the organization and its internal capabilities. And, with notable exceptions, many of the funders upon whom our organizations depend are more interested in immediate work on the issues they care about than in investing in building the capacity of organizations to produce results over time.

Our leaders are usually all too aware of the shortcomings of their own organizations. They earnestly do their best to make things better.

But leaders’ efforts are often limited by lack of resources, adequate bandwidth, and lack of training, tools, and support for building healthy, effective organizations. Very few Progressive organizations have sufficient budget, time, and resources allocated to building their human capital and organizational capacity.

While it’s no one’s fault, it’s our collective responsibility to do better. In recent years, Progressive leaders are increasingly seeking help. More professional support is becoming available, and more funders and intermediaries have been stepping forward to offer assistance in capacity building and organizational development.

A new field of practice is developing to serve these needs: a transformative approach to leadership, organizational development, and movement building. The Rockwood Leadership Institute, which I co-founded, and the Social Transformation Project, which is the current home for much of my own work, have both played significant roles in helping to develop and seed this approach.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I also want to hold up the work of some other key intermediaries and funders who are our partners in this movement for transforming organizations: Social Justice Leadership, Generative Somatics, Movement Strategy Center, Interaction Institute for Social Change, the Management Assistance Group, Roadmap, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Ford Foundation, Haas, Jr. Fund, Compton Foundation, Seasons Fund, and Hidden Leaf Foundation, among others.



# The Challenges

While our collective efforts to create a more just and sustainable society can claim some significant successes, many key social indicators are not moving in positive directions. It seems highly unlikely that simply doing what we've been doing harder and longer will be sufficient. Incremental improvements in the way our organizations do their work will be useful and important.

**In order to create the transformation we seek in society, we need to explore a more fundamental transformation in how we work together in doing the work of social change.**

In later papers, The Social Transformation Project will address transforming leadership as well as transformational movement building. But the vitality of a large organism like a social change movement depends on the robustness of its cells or member units—its organizations. Too many of our institutions are well meaning but under resourced and/or underperforming, unable to operate at the scope, scale, and impact required to actually challenge and shift the interrelated structures of society underlying our social ills.<sup>2</sup>

While the challenges faced by individual organizations may have some unique features, there are typical patterns that repeatedly show up in our sector.

## 1. Unclear mission

Most of our organizations do have mission statements, but if we look carefully at the actual day-to-day work of many of these institutions, it's not always clear exactly what they are trying to accomplish. Strategic choices may end up being driven by needs for funding, personal

priorities of key stakeholders, or random short-term opportunities.

*“Our longer goals aren't clear. We move like sheep, not clear why we're doing what we're doing...not a clear mission focus against which to prioritize. What's most urgent and most achievable become the priorities, rather than what's most important.”*

SENIOR MANAGER IN A MAJOR NATIONAL PROGRESSIVE INSTITUTION

## 2. Weak strategy

While our social change sector has some brilliant strategists, the capacity for strategic thinking in many of our organizations is insufficient to meet the complexity and rapid change of today's world. Some organizations confuse strategy with yearly planning or tactics to win a campaign or election. For those with more developed strategies, the quality of these strategies is sometimes weak due to a combination of inadequate investment of time, untested or outdated assumptions, lack of rigor and/or lack of skill, shared framework, and tools for strategic thinking.

## 3. Lack of innovation

We live in what is said to be VUCA times, characterized by Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity. Most organizations today must innovate or face decline or extinction. It requires courage to challenge basic assumptions and sacred cows. It demands boldness to place major bets on new ideas, models, and strategies. Caught up in a frenzy of short-term needs, too few of our social change organizations dedicate sufficient time and resources for reflection, experimentation or research into emerging best practices. Learning is often not a priority.

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<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that simply making our individual institutions stronger would necessarily provide us with the power to bring about all the changes we seek. Many of us in Progressive social change see the need for fundamental changes in the way our movement is organized. While bigger is not necessarily better, the current structure of so many small groups operating independently and in competition for limited resources (often from funders not necessarily aligned with deep structural change) is not likely to produce change at the scale we seek. Our movement itself is in need of transformation.

*“Why are we going at this the way we do? Because it’s the way we’ve always done things. Saul Alinsky is great, but times have changed. We desperately need to transform the way we organize, but we’re not meeting the moment.”*

ORGANIZING DIRECTOR OF A STATE-BASED SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUP

#### 4. Insufficient planning and poor coordination

All too often we see talented, committed people working hard, but their efforts are not well harnessed. Huge amounts of energy are wasted in unfocused meetings, waiting for others to complete tasks upon which they are dependent, functions or departments not pulling together, inadequate systems, lack of good processes to handle routine tasks, etc. Sometimes this is a simple lack of skill in management. Our people are typically thrown into supervisory positions with little or no training or mentoring. Whether due to lack of experience or lack of attention, many of our organizations are impeded by sub-standard systems and work processes.

#### 5. Low accountability

Many organizations suffer from lack of accountability. Work standards aren’t always clear or enforced. Deadlines may not be taken seriously. Staff may be erratic in fulfilling commitments. Performance issues are not rigorously addressed in a timely way. Individuals who chronically underperform are tolerated. Those who are by nature highly accountable feel pulled down by those who aren’t. Overall work quality and efficiency suffers. Efforts to establish accountability are often hampered by overload, poor self-management skills, or awkwardness around exercising authority and directly confronting performance issues.

*“I get frustrated about our performance. Some folks are great, but others aren’t cutting it. There doesn’t seem to be any clear standards or system for managing performance. It’s like we’re all doing our own thing. We don’t*

*take deadlines seriously. We do have yearly performance evals, but in between we let things slip. We cut each other way too much slack.”*

SENIOR STAFF OF ENVIRONMENTAL NON-PROFIT

#### 6. Ambivalence about power

Many working in social change have ambivalent feelings about power. In political work, we struggle against abuses of power, speak truth to power, and often feel like we have less power than we need. It’s hard to leave all this behind at the doors of our own organizations. Many leaders often feel awkward in the power role, hesitant to directly exercise their appropriate authority. Some staff may be mistrustful of power, bristling against feeling controlled by their leaders. This shared discomfort and confusion around power typically leads to unclear decision-making and lots of awkward, energy-wasting bumps in organizational process.

*“We challenge politicians for making decisions behind closed doors. Well, our management team makes key decisions without really taking in input early enough to influence them. Staff is usually consulted after decisions are so far along that they’ve basically been made. We go through the motions of an inclusive process, but it’s not real.”*

STAFF OF RACIAL JUSTICE ORGANIZATION

#### 7. Poor communication and low trust

In most organizations, high performance is hampered by lack of open and honest communication. Top leaders often receive highly filtered and inadequate information with which to make decisions. Failure to deal directly with issues leads to interpersonal tensions, low trust, and breakdowns in relationships. Comments like these are all too common:

- ▶ *“Our discussions have a ‘knock it down if you can’ quality that doesn’t work for me.”*
- ▶ *“You feel intimidated here. People definitely don’t have your back. You don’t feel safe.”*

- ▶ “Everyone basically tells the ED what we think she wants to hear.”
- ▶ “Our meetings are dominated by a few people competing to be the smartest person in the room.”
- ▶ “There’s fear of saying things because it might be turned against us.”
- ▶ “We don’t say in team meetings what we say to each other in the hallways.”
- ▶ “We’re very ‘nice’ here. We don’t confront each other...you might not know you’re in trouble until the first shovel of dirt hits you.”

## 8. Unaddressed issues: Inclusion and hidden bias

While most social change organizations speak about the importance of inclusion and racial and gender equity, serious issues of power and privilege, race, class, and gender persist in many of our institutions. Painful failures of past efforts have left some people gun-shy about trying to openly address these issues. Even when the commitment is there, organizations often find equity, power, and privilege challenging to skillfully address and resolve.

*“This is a boy’s club. It’s a competitive environment. I feel like the few women here have to work twice as hard and sound twice as smart to be heard. And the worst thing you can do is try to raise the issue.”*

PROJECT DIRECTOR IN POLICY NONPROFIT

## 9. Unsustainable work cultures

In the opening circles of our trainings at the Rockwood Leadership Institute, we ask participants, “What are your greatest needs for development as a leader?” Some of the most frequent responses: dealing with overwork, stress, and burnout. Research has shown high stress and long hours to be the number one reason why Executive Directors leave their jobs.<sup>3</sup>

Stress and overwork are not only lifestyle issues. As stress becomes chronic, performance goes down. A crisis mentality begins to crowd out executive judgment. What suffers is planning, capacity building, organizational learning, and investing in building the relationships that make our work flourish.

*“It’s like there’s competition to see who’s the most stressed out, as if that were some badge of commitment.”*

*“I keep telling myself it’s going to get better—after the Board meeting, after the election—but it doesn’t. I don’t know how to stop.”*

FROM INTERVIEWS WITH ACTIVISTS

## 10. Financial Challenges

Challenges in funding are endemic in our movement. At a structural level, there are basic problems in the current model for funding Progressive social change that are beyond any one organization’s ability to redress:

- ▶ There are simply too many organizations competing for too few dollars.
- ▶ The power imbalance between those who give money and those who seek it impairs real partnership.
- ▶ The current structure of funding pits organizations against each other that desperately need to collaborate to build sufficient power to win their issues.
- ▶ There is a movement-wide dearth of skilled development directors.
- ▶ Many of the foundations serving our sector are not oriented to supporting more radical, systemic change.
- ▶ Current funding focuses more often on short-term results rather than long-term building of power and long-range change strategies.

<sup>3</sup><http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-94379278.html>



- ▶ Too few funders want to invest in developing leadership and building organizational capacity.
- ▶ Most funding is by sectors or issue areas. It is difficult to obtain financial support for the critical work of building cross-sector and cross-movement work.

Addressing these larger funding challenges is beyond the scope of this paper on Organizational Transformation. However, our institutions most often do bear some of the responsibility for their own shortfalls. All of the organizational challenges that we have discussed to date may contribute to failure to successfully obtain adequate funding.

The above list of challenges is not meant to be discouraging. There are plenty of organizations in our sector that work well—some extraordinarily so. And even in many organizations with significant shortcomings, it is impressive how much good work still gets accomplished due to the sheer brilliance and dedication of their staffs and volunteers. But this paper is about overcoming these challenges to our greatness.

**This paper is dedicated to all those committed to creating stronger, more effective, and more life-affirming social change organizations.**



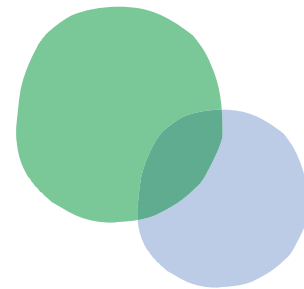
*A Harris poll of 23,000 workers showed that:*

- *Only 37% really understood what their organization was trying to accomplish and why*
- *Only 20% had any enthusiasm about their organization's goals*
- *Only 20% understood the relationship of their tasks to the organization's goals*
- *Only 17% felt there was open communication*
- *Only 13% have trusting, cooperative relationships with other departments in their own organization*

*Stephen Covey suggests that we “imagine a soccer team with 11 players.*

- *Only 4 of the 11 players on the field know which goal is theirs.*
- *Only 2 of the 11 care.*
- *Only 2 know what their position is and what they're supposed to do.*
- *And 9 of the 11 are in some way competing against their own team members rather than their opponent.*

*This is the state of most organizations.”*



# The Possibility of Transformation

In a previous paper, *What is Transformation?*, I defined “transformation” as “change that is profound, radical, and sustainable; change that fundamentally alters the very nature of something.”

The principles and practices of Organizational Transformation are not inherently wedded to any particular political ideology. But those of us committed to Progressive Social Change are dedicated to using this methodology to achieve social and economic justice, human rights, a healthy democratic system, and a sustainable environment.

**Practitioners of the transformative approach assert that there is a direct link between individual transformation and social transformation.**

What is unique and powerful about the transformative approach is the way it inspires breakthroughs in the way people think, feel, and behave while simultaneously working in an integrated way to shift the structural conditions in which they work and live.

Numbers of graduates of Rockwood Leadership Institute’s yearlong programs have been successful in initiating transformation in their organizations. For example:

## LAANE

Transformed from a small advocacy group committed to building power through community labor partnerships with significant successes under its belt, but lacking clear vision on how to take their work to a greater scale...

To an organization which tripled in size, building out to seven campaigns improving the lives of hundreds of thousands of working families and community residents, actively engaged in a national network of like-minded groups.

## Bend the Arc (formerly Jewish Funds for Justice)

Transformed from a modest foundation with a relatively low profile that made small early grants and enabled its Jewish donors to support grassroots organizing for social and economic justice...

To a full and valued partner in the broader social change movement, fully maximizing its human and financial resources to help bring the Jewish community back to the social change table, while helping to shift the culture in its sector to greater effectiveness and collaboration.

## Forest Ethics

Transformed from a tiny aggregate of forest campaigners struggling for survival, untrusting of their leader and each other and barely able to have an honest and productive conversation...

To one of our most successful corporate campaigning organizations, having secured protection agreements for more than 65 million acres, and now seen as an example of a positive work culture.

And Rockwood itself has undergone a transformation:

## Rockwood Leadership Institute

Transformed from a fledgling training organization founded by two white men serving primarily white environmental leaders...

To an inclusive, multi-racial organization, led by a woman of color and a diverse staff and board; having integrated a racial justice perspective into its approach and curriculum; serving diverse leaders, organizations and movements, and recognized as a leading force in training and development for social justice leaders.

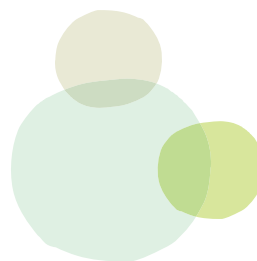
Throughout this paper, their stories, along with those of other Progressive organizations, will help bring to life the principles and practices of a transformative approach to organizational change.

# What does a transformational social change organization look like?

What does a transformational social change organization look like? The forms will vary greatly along with the missions of the organizations, but there are certain key characteristics that truly outstanding institutions will embody:

1. **Effective**
2. **Living its values**
3. **Adaptive**
4. **Sustainable**
5. **Interdependent**

We already explored what's not working in Progressive organizations. Now let's look at some groups that exemplify at least one of these five characteristics. No institution is perfect; none of our five selected organizations are necessarily strong in all five dimensions. Transformation is always a work in progress. All of the leaders interviewed were very forthcoming about their organizations' weaknesses and continued needs for development. But we can learn from what it is that they do well.



*Transformation requires constant learning and growth. A learning organization is dedicated to continually enhancing its ability to create its desired future .*

**PETER SENGE,  
THE FIFTH DISCIPLINE**





RAN member protesting Disney rainforest practices



## Effective

Each of our social change institutions has been founded to serve a meaningful purpose. A fundamental measure of an institution's greatness is its success at forwarding its mission and goals and doing so relative to its resources.

### RAINFOREST ACTION NETWORK

In October, 2012, Disney Company announced a comprehensive paper policy that maximizes use of recycled paper and completely eliminates use of paper from high conservation and climate value forests and paper associated with social conflict. It applies to all Disney assets and affiliates: movies, theme parks, cruise ships, ABC, ESPN, Marvel Comics, Pixar, etc. Disney is the largest licensor in the world, and the world's largest publisher of children's books. The strict policy covers 25,000 factories in more than 100 countries and will impact supply chains and paper use all over the globe. It will take time for a company this size to fully implement the agreement, but this is a huge win for conservation, climate change, and human rights of indigenous people.

This was not a spontaneous act of good conscience. A corporation with a market cap of \$100 billion was the target of a successful campaign by an activist organization with an annual budget of \$4 million: Rainforest Action Network (RAN).

This was far from RAN's first win. Burger King, JP Morgan Chase, Occidental Petroleum, Boise Cascade, and Home Depot are just a few of the corporate Goliaths that have given way to this small but potent group of activists.

RAN's mission is "to push companies to balance profits with principles, to show that it is possible to do well by doing good." While RAN's formula for success may not be directly applicable by other organizations, by unpacking the win at Disney we can learn from this example of a high-performing social change institution.



*Becky Tarbotton, former RAN ED<sup>4</sup>*

Winning with Disney required a very broad range of capacities:

**Scientific research:** RAN commissioned lab testing that discovered that 60 percent of children's books contained fibers from the primary rain forest of Indonesia—the last such forest being decimated for paper production. They were perhaps the first environmental group to use lab testing as the basis for an advocacy campaign.

**Non-violent direct action:** They launched their campaign in classic RAN style, hanging a banner over Disney headquarters' main gates in Burbank, California. Campaigners dressed head-to-toe in Mickey and Minnie Mouse suits and, holding chain saws, locked themselves to the front gate. It was hard hitting, but carried off in a lighthearted manner. When the police arrived to arrest Mickey and Minnie, they couldn't help themselves from literally doubling over in laughter.

**Communications:** Mickey, Minnie, and their chain saws generated lots of news. But even before launching the Disney campaign, RAN had written a sophisticated report on their research, linking paper in children's books to rainforest destruction, threats to orangutans and tiger habitats, and massive human rights violations. A targeted communications strategy effectively flooded the publishing world.

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<sup>4</sup> Becky Tarbotton died tragically in December, 2012, just a few weeks after this interview. She was a truly brilliant, extraordinary leader and a life-affirming, vital woman. She is loved and missed by many





CLEAN  
ENERGY  
FUTURE

TAR  
SANDS  
OIL



RAINFOREST  
ACTION NETWORK

**Negotiation:** Once Disney came to the table, this agreement required intensive, complicated negotiations between six Disney executives and the RAN team. They had to agree on standards and controls on a program that would impact everything from packaging for Mickey Mouse dolls in Russia to purchasing cocktail napkins for Disney's cruise chips and all the way up the supply chain.

**Patience and tenacity:** Negotiations required bi-weekly, multi-hour meetings over 18 months, not because of any foot-dragging, but because of the complexity of the task. Once Disney signed on, the company decided they wanted to set the gold standard for compliance. RAN chose to keep pushing for timelines and benchmarks, rather just walking away with great publicity without a fully-vetted agreement. RAN has learned that "real change takes time."

**Tolerance for internal differences:** RAN's negotiating team included seasoned campaigners used to making lots of compromises and young activists described as "real bulldogs." When some began to feel it was time to declare a win, others wanted to hold out for a more complete agreement. But despite real tactical differences, there was tolerance for principled internal debate, a commitment to alignment, and good processes for working things through to agreement.

**Clear decision-making:** Over the years RAN put in a lot of effort to clear up their decision-making roles and accountabilities. Becky Tarbotton, the ED, initially disagreed with the negotiating team's decision to stay the course. "My instinct was to get out... but I trusted their expertise. I wouldn't have made that decision, but I got behind it and became its top evangelist."

**Sticking to their values:** While they pushed Disney hard, in the tradition of Gandhi and King, the team never strayed from their value that, in Tarbotton's words, "People will want to do the right things given the right conditions...we didn't just hit them hard with our arms crossed...we believe in people."

**Partnership:** "Our moral authority comes from our deep relationship with communities in Indonesia whose land is being destroyed and who are being forcibly evicted from their homes...partnership is about mutual commitment. A local partner called us when bulldozers were arriving on their lands. We were able to create public uproar and put pressure on the company, and got a halt to the destruction. Without their partnership, we wouldn't know what to be asking from Disney."

As we study what organizations do well, it's important not to idealize them. Becky was open in talking about an ongoing "tension between good internal decision-making processes and being able to react when an opportunity presents itself," as well as real challenges in "learning how to grow without drifting from our core purpose." Transformational organizations must commit to continuous learning and development.

*There are many pathways to organizational effectiveness, but there are things Progressive organizations might learn from studying RAN's formula for success.*



## Values-Driven

Our Progressive institutions need to embody the values we seek to create in the world: modeling a just society where human beings are valued, where there is inclusion, equal opportunity, and mutual support; where democracy thrives and people participate in shaping their lives; and where we treat each other with caring, dignity, and respect for differences.

### THE NATIONAL DOMESTIC WORKERS ALLIANCE

An organization that lives its values:

The National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) shows a remarkable degree of commitment to bringing alive its core values in the everyday life of the organization.

One of their values is **leadership**: in particular, collective leadership by domestic, immigrant, and women of color workers. “We seek to build an organization that supports leaders from these communities, gains valuable perspective from their lived experiences, and challenges these leaders to inform and advance our goals.”

The Board is elected by the members at their membership Congress, and bylaws stipulate that each affiliate be represented by one staff and one domestic worker. While this is true of many membership organizations, at NDWA they walk the talk by investing in one of the most comprehensive and profound leadership development programs anywhere in our sector: a total of five weeks of training over two years, plus monthly calls and individual coaching. The training approach is transformative, teaching personal leadership skills as well as organizing skills. Domestic workers on staff receive coaching and participate in support groups to ensure their success. The national office re-grants to affiliates to hire workers as part-time, paid organizers. An impressive one-third of NDWA’s annual budget goes into supporting leadership development of domestic workers.

*“NDWA gives me a sense of pride and honor for being a domestic worker and for being regarded as an important component of society.”*

BHARATI RAI, ADHIKAAR



NDWA Director Ai-jen Poo and domestic workers at a rally in DC

Another value is **interdependence**. “We are intimately connected and dependent on each other and on our partners,” says Deputy Director Mariana Viturro. “This is our way. We care about each other. In our last Board election, one woman chose to step out of the running because she felt that her sister really wanted the position, and believed it would be better for the organization. Our people think about the whole.”

NDWA’S value of interdependence even extends to actively seeking common cause between the rights of domestic workers and the needs of their employers. The highest-attended workshops at the last Congress were on disability rights, as “our workers want to learn to better support those they serve.” The curriculum for NDWA’s eldercare workforce training program in New York is being developed through dialogues between seniors and domestic workers about how to create caring workplace relationships in the home. In a recent campaign, children of employers marched together with children of domestic workers. At press conferences the children of employers spoke about the impact of domestic workers in their lives. “I can talk to her about more things than anyone...She taught me how to cook...She taught me Spanish...She’s my best friend.” This is interdependence in action.

A third value is **transparency and democracy**. Real democracy is a living ethic, not simply a set of processes. “In all our decision-making we work to let each voice be heard,” says ED Ai-jen Poo. “Every step of the process for electing leaders is designed to actively engage and support members in running and assuming the responsibilities of leadership. “A group of members who are not running serve as an Election Oversight Committee to ensure fairness and wide participation. They take great care in making sure everyone understands the process and in providing an unusually thorough orientation to support candidates.”

“We also make sure there’s democratic process in doing the work. Monthly all-member calls inform members about current affairs and issues



*A daughter speaks out for the rights of her mom and other domestic workers*

that affect our work. We’ve established ways for members to actually help define the work of the organization. At Congresses, staff lay out ideas for future campaigns and priorities, but it’s members who vet the proposals in small groups and actually decide. While this is not uncommon in membership organizations, often a lack of members feeling connected and well-informed can make these processes perfunctory. The difference at NDWA is that the members really do feel connected to our work. They’re engaged. We usually have 75 percent representation from affiliates on our all-calls. They do actively share in the decisions that set our direction. Our community leaders feel proud. We strive hard to go deep and broad, to stretch, to make democracy real.”

*“NDWA empowered me. It’s made me feel alive! It lifts up my spirit to make changes in the life of domestic workers.”*

NENA JIMENO RUIZ, PILIPINO WORKERS’ CENTER

**Integrity:** “Our commitment to supporting local organizing is unwavering. Our budget really reflects our values. But it’s also our behavior.

During a recent leadership retreat there was a moment when one of the workers said something that had derogatory connotations against blacks. Rather than either glossing over it or having it take over the retreat, we leaned into it. We tried to learn as much as we could about the history, the roots of pain and oppression that create the context for these kinds of interactions. But we were able to do it without having the worker feel targeted or isolated. We're starting to build the capacity to deal with the issues that have been really hard for movements in the past."

**Strategy:** NDWA is widely applauded for its bold and innovative strategies. In the words of Ai-jen Poo: "We create strategy from a place of abundance as opposed to scarcity. We never start with limits—we start with what's actually needed. This is what birthed our Caring Across Generations campaign. We need a fundamental revaluing in the economy of what matters most. We need a whole new system to support families and workers. Given that we're this tiny grassroots alliance, how can we find the right partners and the potential to build the power

needed to move us towards that huge vision? We envision the kind of agenda that could bring together the broadest cross section of interested stakeholders connected to care: groups representing the aging, unions, women's organizations, family caregiver groups, and immigrant and disability rights."

Like all the organizations we are holding up as examples of transformed organizations, NDWA has its challenges. Even with all the investment in leadership training and support, Deputy Director Viturro acknowledges "the reality that our members continue to need a lot of development and support to be able to truly provide that leadership in an authentic and deep way." She also points to "the need for a model that develops strong and healthy organizations while building our membership at scale in a sustainable way."

But challenges notwithstanding, NDWA is a model of an organization that lives its values, which in turn helps build its capacity and power to make change.



*Domestic Workers at the NPA Conference in DC*



## Adaptive and Innovative

Success in today's world calls for organizations that can respond, adapt, and thrive in rapidly changing conditions. We need “transforming” organizations that are committed to an ongoing process of transformation, nimble and open, dedicated to learning and innovation.

### MOVEON.ORG

An adaptive organization: MoveOn.org pioneered new dimensions in online organizing and fundraising. Frustrated by all the attention focused on the Clinton impeachment, in 1998 software entrepreneurs Wes Boyd and Joan Blades started an online petition asking Congress to censure the President and to “move on” to the business of dealing with the country's challenges.

A few years later, 21-year-old Eli Pariser wanted to find some way to respond to the 9/11 attack. “I wanted to see a multi-lateral rather than unilateral response by the U.S. Though I barely knew how to write code, I put up a little website and online petition that I had come across and emailed a few friends. I really didn't think it would amount to much. But when I checked my email the next morning there were 400 messages and 50,000 people signed on in 53 countries. I was completely bewildered. It wasn't until the BBC called to report on the phenomenon that I believed it was real. I had always been interested in technology and social change. I had tried lots of things that had been disasters, but I was young or stubborn enough that I just kept messing with it.”

Wes, Joan, and Eli created a MoveOn culture that actively supports experimentation and innovation. Says Eli: “All of the great things we've done at MoveOn didn't come from grand plans—they have been the result of following energy and seeing where it leads. We received some emails from members asking us to do house parties. We weren't sure if it was a good idea, but our general attitude is, ‘Let's test it! How would we do it?’ All of a sudden there were thousands of MoveOn house parties across the country. Another example: we had only done online fundraising for candidates and general

support, but then we decided to experiment and try raising \$30,000 for an ad about the impending Iraq War. In 24 hours \$300,000 came in and our whole notion of what was possible shifted.”

Eli talks about a spirit of “let's try this” rather than long discussions about “which of these 310 things is most likely to pay off?” Everyone in the organization has information to all the same data, so everyone is free to evaluate how things are going. “It's not a shy work culture. People in all parts of the organization feel fairly free to offer creative ideas.”

Eli likes to quote Gandhi: “I am human. I make mistakes. My commitment is to truth not consistency.” At MoveOn, more than at most non-profits, people are encouraged to make mistakes and look foolish. Eli adds, “We see everything as an experiment. We make plans, but revise and change our minds often.”

“Right as Hurricane Katrina was hitting, we convened an emergency call.

**Dear MoveOn member,**

**Big news: Yesterday, the Senate voted to renew the Violence Against Women Act! [Click here to add your name to the petition demanding an immediate extension of the Violence Against Women Act...](#)**

**MoveOn.ORG**  
DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

*Excerpt of MoveOn.Org email petition*



MoveOn Board President & former ED Justin Ruben at rally to Save the American Dream

One of our staff was thinking about all the people who were fleeing. ‘I wonder if they have places to stay. We have all these members with houses. What if we put together a service for people to connect those who are fleeing with members who will take them in?’ That call was at 4:30 p.m. EST. We made a decision right on the call. Engineers worked overnight. By 9:00 a.m. it was ready to test. We decided if we thought we could place a thousand people we would go ahead. Already by 10:00 a.m. it was clear the opportunity was much greater. We sent it out to our more than three million members and ended up helping tens of thousands of people to find places to stay. We had never done anything like this. But it was a good idea, it played to our capacity, and it was timely. We never could have planned for this.”

When asked what else accounts for MoveOn’s innovative work culture, Eli responded: “At regular intervals Wes or others raise fundamental questions about the theory and assumptions about the world in which MoveOn is operating. Out-of-the-box strategic conversations that in most organizations might happen once every year or two are asked again and again, often creating agitation and frustration, but keeping innovative thinking very fresh and alive. We’re willing to throw out everything we’ve been doing if that seems right. It can be irritating to others. It may make it impossible to do some things, but it keeps us able to adapt to changing conditions.”

Eli was succeeded as ED by his number two, Justin Rubin. When asked the same question about MoveOn’s highly adaptive work culture, Justin first pointed to “the willingness of the founders to question conventional wisdom. They assumed that if we look hard enough, there is probably a way to do things much better than we currently know how. Their success in doing so helped bake the will to innovate into our culture.”

Justin went on to say, “At its heart, MoveOn has been about pioneering scalable approaches to organizing and social change—systems that could encourage and channel an explosion of energy on a campaign. Non-linearity is in our

DNA. We’re constantly looking for ways to get from zero to 1,000 and we don’t necessarily assume we have to build stepwise to get there.”

Even as these interviews were being conducted, MoveOn underwent a profound reinvention. By most measures, the organization was already doing well, having grown by three million members in the previous several years, winning some important victories, and having built significant influence with key decision-makers. I asked Justin, “Why such radical changes when so many in the movement already look to you as a great success story?”

He replied, “Given how far America is from the vision we all carry in our hearts, we need to ask ourselves every day how to dramatically transform our impact on the country. I don’t see any way for our current campaign model to increase our impact by an order of magnitude, no matter how hard we tweak it. So that’s why we’ve decided to embark on a bold new path. The old model was: MoveOn members set our direction, and then MoveOn staff decided which tactics to employ. Our reach was necessarily limited by the small size of our staff. We’re turning that model inside out. We’re turning over the keys of our technological toolset to our more than seven million members, asking them to step up and lead their own campaigns, and putting them squarely in the MoveOn driver’s seat.”

MoveOn has its challenges. It continues to have to work hard to create a diverse workplace, and its staff still grapple with overwork and personal sustainability. Justin acknowledges that “MoveOn’s way of thinking can also be a liability, because sometimes there really is no good alternative to slow and steady, and the long view pays off.”

Yet MoveOn’s ongoing inventiveness and boldness in pushing the edge of what seems possible is an inspiring example of an organization that is highly adaptive and innovative.



## Sustainable

Too often, the effectiveness of social change organizations is undermined by a constant struggle to generate the resources needed to fulfill their missions. Transformational social change organizations should have a stable base of income generation sufficient to see it through to the success of its mission—whether that involves a campaign that lasts a year or two or a structural change requiring generations. Many of our groups continually try to do much with too few resources.

But there is another dimension of sustainability: organizational ecosystems that have a quantity and pace of work sustainable for the human beings who work there. It's about creating a culture of sustainability: where goals are in right relationship to capacity and resources; where staff can work hard while also being supported to lead healthy lives and have healthy relationships.

While some Progressive organizations are economically sustainable, there are few models of this human side of sustainability. Overwork is the norm of most of our work cultures.

A survey of 148 activist Executive Directors showed that high stress and long hours were the primary cause of leaving their jobs.<sup>5</sup>

### 9T05

An organization that practices sustainability: 9t05, a National Association of Working Women, is a 40-year-old organization dedicated to building a movement to achieve economic justice by engaging directly affected women to improve working conditions. One of their organizational values is “Model our principles. Be the change we want to see.” Given their commitment to positive working conditions for women in the workplace, as much as any Progressive organization 9t05 has taken on the task of creating a sustainable work culture.

According to Executive Director Linda Meric, “Our policies are intended to help our people be their best at work and at home, so that no one has to risk their well-being or health or that of their family to keep a paycheck coming in. And no one should have to risk their paycheck or their job to care for their family.”



*ED Linda Meric (back row, third from right) with 9t05 staff*

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-94379278.html>

The gt05 staff is unionized, with a contract that includes some unusual terms such as:

*“The spirit of communication is to strive for a non-confrontational, non-adversarial relationship and to build a work culture around and in support of mutual respect.”*

The contract specifies a range of policies, no one of which is extraordinary, but that together lay the foundation for an unusually caring and sustainable workplace:

**Work from home policy:** According to Linda, “We work with folks to balance their jobs and home life, recognizing that it sometimes makes sense for people to work away from the office. Our expectation is that people are based in the office at least three days a week.”

**Family Leave Co-op:** Staff can and do generously contribute by donating extra sick leave to those who have exhausted their own available days due to personal illness or that of a family member.

**Flex and comp time:** It’s expected that staff work 40 hours a week, but people are given considerable flexibility to meet personal lifestyle needs. Guidelines for comp time help ensure, in Linda’s words, “that people like me can no longer work completely ridiculous hours and accrue ridiculous amounts of comp time.”

**Days Off:** In addition to eight core holidays, employees may declare six paid “personal observance days” such as Kwanzaa, Winter Solstice, Yom Kippur, and National Coming Out Day, as well as one “personal day” per year.

**Leaves of Absence and Sick Leave:** Their policies about sick leave, parental and other family leave would be the envy of most non-profits.

**Insurance:** gt05 offers excellent insurance including health, dental, eye glass, long term disability, and inclusion of domestic partners (same or opposite sex) and children, as well as a pension plan.

The contract also includes other unusual clauses for the benefit of employees such as:

*“The Employer will make every attempt to provide ergonomically correct chairs, footstools, anti-glare screen covers, and acoustic hoods for printers for each computer station.”*

gt05 makes every effort to offer raises every year as part of their commitment to sustainability. “We have also intentionally added additional levels of organizing, creating career ladders so that people can move up within the organization.”

Says Linda, “We get requests all the time from labor unions and other organizations about our policies to use as models.” But good policies are only one part of the equation. The study of EDs mentioned above contained this quote from an Executive Director:

*“Vacation, sick and personal leave are very generous, but I have not used any of it in three years.”*



gt05 at California Regional Conference





I AM  
STILL  
A MAN

... Employment  
Discrimination  
An estimated  
65 MILLION  
AMERICANS HAVE A  
RECORD

...ND EMPLOYMENT  
Discrimination



BAN THE  
BOX

JUSTICE  
WHE  
-Dr. King  
BOX!

9-5  
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soft

95 TO 95  
Winning Justice  
for Working Women

9to5 members at MLK parade, Atlanta

Overwork and lack of attention to physical and emotional needs are endemic in our activist cultures. Linda Meric, the Executive Director of 9to5, testifies to her own struggles with this issue, and the need to create a culture that supports sustainability:

*“I was resistant to self-care because I had been an organizer my entire adult life and the organizing culture was all about work, work, work. Sometimes the policies are there on paper, but the culture discourages, or I felt guilty using them. We’re creating a culture where people feel encouraged to use them. Recently, I had to travel four hours away to care for my critically-ill sister-in-law six times in a short period of time. What I heard from everyone was “Of course. Go! You need to take care of your family.”*

Sustainability is more than physical self-care. Says Linda, “The stress at work that contributes to a lack of sustainability also comes from when you don’t feel safe to be who you are. Our people feel like we’re committed to valuing them.

Just one example: we have monthly staff lunches where people take turns sharing information, activities, and learning about anti-oppression, to which we are deeply committed. The lunches are informal and a safe space where people are really comfortable talking and grappling with the issues. There’s no sense that people are afraid to say something wrong. It’s a really open, sharing atmosphere that takes into account that each of us has different identities and experiences, and we can all learn from each other. It helps to create the feeling of being valued—that we don’t have to leave parts of who we are at home to come to work.

The Respect Statement and Conflict Resolution tools in our contract are all about creating a workplace which brings out our best with each other. We use them, avoiding much of the office gossip and back-biting common in other workplaces.”

asked Linda about what all this looks like in action. She started rattling off story after story:

*Shortly after her hire, a staffer faced a critical issue with her daughter along with a medical condition of her own. Even though she didn’t have enough accrued time, with the help of the family leave bank, she was able to take off the time she needed to support her daughter and heal herself.*

*“Another staffer has to share caregiving responsibilities for her grandmother who lived 300 miles away, so we are supporting her in working remotely.”*

Linda received a voicemail recently from a staff member (who left to go work on an issue about which she’s really excited) that sums up how 9to5 supports its people:

*“9to5 is an organization that really walks its talk. We’re out there fighting for better working conditions for women. And when I had a medical issue, people couldn’t have been more supportive. I had to take a lot of time off, but I never felt like there would be a price to pay. There was emotional as well as financial support.”*

Like all our “model” organizations, 9to5 has its share of challenges, including financial, as several major funders have ceased grant making or shifted to other priorities.

**Does sustainability pay off?** Is sustainability just a “nice” thing for people who work at an organization, or does sustainability pay off with regard to the organization fulfilling its mission? Linda Meric is clear:

*“Absolutely. People are more productive, more invested in the organization and its success. There’s lower turnover. It makes for a happy workplace, a better quality of life, and more results.”<sup>6</sup>*

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<sup>6</sup> Linda’s experience is validated by considerable research on the relationship of worker satisfaction and productivity. Twenty-five percent of variability in job performance has been shown to be related to employee satisfaction. <http://www.astonod.com/attachments/library/researchpapers/The%20Workforce%20and%20Productivity.pdf>;

Also: <http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/apl/87/2/268/>





CHIRLA member at L.A. May Day

TRANSFORMATIONAL CHARACTERISTIC #5:

## Interdependent

While we need organizations that are successful in pursuing their own goals, the larger success of social change work increasingly depends on collaboration. A transformational organization maintains awareness of its interdependence, playing a positive role in building a larger fabric of partnership with members, other organizations, communities, coalitions, networks, political and business leaders, and hopefully even what might seem like unlikely allies.

### CHIRLA

An organization that values and lives interdependence: CHIRLA

One of the most effective groups working for immigrant justice is CHIRLA: Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles. The key to their success has been interdependence—their ability to collaborate.

Executive Director Angelica Salas says, “As an organization, by yourself you can only do so much. We can be a *chignon* (Spanish;

loose translation: ‘bad ass on your block’), but it doesn’t mean you get much done.

Our staff has sometimes pushed back against our partnership approach. ‘Why do we have to work with so many people? It would be so much easier without having to engage and consult with so many people.’

But the result is way more powerful. How does a little regional organization like CHIRLA have so much visibility and influence? It’s only because our work is connected to other peoples’ work—with labor, with a broad range of community allies and statewide and national partners. Our work has an earthquake effect; more partners equal more big ideas, more big policy issues, and a bigger scope of change. We’re able to integrate ourselves into a larger narrative and have impact at a national level.”

“There is a real cost. Sometimes we do a lot of the work and don’t get recognized. Or we’re doing a lot of work and not getting the resources.”

When asked how CHIRLA manages these common dynamics in coalitions, Angelica responded:



CHIRLA’s ED Angelica Salas (second from left) with staff



“We always keep focused on the outcome. If giving up a little visibility means a larger policy outcome or benefits more people, you feel good. It balances out. Where credit is due, credit is received. We don’t ask for more and we work to make sure our partners get the credit they need. There’s enough to go around.

Our partners also need resources to build collective power. We always end up getting enough money to keep on going. We try to look at how to build more resources for ourselves and our partners. We’re working with others, lobbying our funders for the whole immigration reform fight. There’s a healthy tension. We need enough, but we have a responsibility to get the movement what it needs. Despite the challenges of working with so many other groups, our staff is committed to the principle of interdependence. But they do ask that there be fairness in the division of labor with other groups.

Interdependence is also the way we relate to our community. They are vital to our success. **It’s not that we’re doing something for them...we’re doing something with them.** Rather than relying solely on funders, we’re also going to our community for support and increasing amounts of fee for service. For example, when the President announced his program on deferred action, we had 60 days to come up with a way to service the young people. Our funders were tapped out or weren’t ready to move. So we invited people to become members to support the program—and 2,000 new members showed up at \$25 each. We also decided to charge a nominal fee for quality legal service—way below the private market. Our community responded overwhelmingly because people trusted us and knew we fought for this victory. There were lines going around the block.

We ask our community to get involved, to be leaders in this fight. Our immigrant youth formed committees to help develop the policies that they are fighting for. Our immigrant domestic workers engaged in a coalition to actually write the California legislation. In many organizations, the policy department is set apart from the organizing department. At CHIRLA, our policy department has to engage the community, to explain and get real input and be accountable to the members. When members are so engaged, they are more committed and more effective in fighting for what they need.

A politician was supposed to be on our side in the campaign for the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights, but he hadn’t been helping to move the legislation forward. Our leaders saw him on his way to lunch and followed him to the restaurant. They confronted him about his hesitancy to support the bill.

‘I just don’t understand it. I live in your district. I walked those precincts because I believed you would stand with me. It’s unacceptable that you don’t support this.’

The legislator started prevaricating. ‘I’m kind of confused. I’m not sure how this time off for babysitters works.’

The workers didn’t buy it. ‘You entrust your kids in our care but you think we don’t have common sense to figure this out. We’re not going to let you off over some policy detail.’”

Adds Angelica, “Our connection with our leaders makes my job so easy. It’s not just paid staff, it’s a whole community.”

CHIRLA’s understanding of interdependence has also led it to work with a broad range of allies. “For many years we’ve been building relationships with business. We share a meeting ground—our interest in creating educational opportunities for immigrants, people of color, and the poor; their interest in meeting the huge need for workforce development and skilled workers. We’ve partnered with the LA Chamber of Commerce on the Cash for College program. We developed personal relationships and a collective vision of what we want to see California and this nation look like. The partnership with the Chamber was key in passing the California Dream Act—a life-changer for our young people.

The Dream Act led to a lovely recent story. For years the Chamber would give out 50 scholarships for college in a random drawing as part of a large public event and training for up to 10,000 kids. We used to meet with undocumented students in a side room, offering information about the possibilities of private scholarships and in-state tuition. After the passage of the Dream Act, for the first time we were able to let students know that the Chamber was qualifying undocumented kids

as eligible for Cash for College. They became part of the drawing along with everyone else. It was like not having to ride in the back of the bus. Our undocumented kids got 20 of the scholarships.

There's no way we could have won the Dream Act by ourselves. The win demonstrated a whole way of looking at things differently, of people working together across the lines that sometimes divide us.

We work not only locally and in our state, but we've also invested ourselves fully in the national struggle. It's a big financial investment because we're so far from DC, where decisions are made. It's taken a toll on our finances and our bodies. But immigration policy is ultimately decided at the national level. We have real life experiences and real people who can impact decision-makers in ways that are different. We have to be a part.

Nationally I believe that I have a role not just to represent my organization, but to contribute to making a stronger team that can actually win. It means not always having my CHIRLA hat on but what's in the interest of our collective success. States like California and New York have more local support like legislative allies. In national work the investment often needs to go where there's less

infrastructure, like Arizona or Alabama. We have needs, but we have to look at the whole. We send our organizers and best attorneys elsewhere because we know a little more support in that area will make a huge difference nationally.

Many times people in LA feel like it's a waste of time. Why are we focusing nationally when we have so many problems here in LA and California? I say to them, 'We have to do both. Our local problems are the consequence of failing national systems.'"

CHIRLA's current challenges? "There are peaks and valleys in the long struggle, and it's hard keeping people motivated during the valleys when things aren't looking well. There's frustration over how slowly things move. Then there's the demand. The more we win, the greater the demand. This is a huge challenge for us. Without any additional funding, how can we help thousands of people fix their problems with such limited infrastructure?"

But it was interdependence—labor, immigrant rights, and community based groups working with business and educators—that transformed California from one of the most anti-immigrant states...to now being a state in which immigrants are fundamentally respected."



CHIRLA members at Right to Dream rally in L.A.

# What does it take to create change in organizations?

In the yearlong transformational trainings run by Rockwood Leadership Institute and myself, over 90 percent of leaders come away with experiences they describe as having “had a transformative impact on my life.”<sup>7</sup> They feel more confident and skilled in their use of power, clearer on their priorities, more focused and more balanced, with greater emotional intelligence and relational skills; they report being capable of operating more consistently in their “zone” of leadership. Most then seek to apply what they have learned to transforming the organizations they lead. However, while many report successes in bringing back specific tools and practices, it has proven much more challenging to actually make significant and enduring shifts in the culture and effectiveness of their organizations.

This challenge is not limited to Progressive non-profits. Organizational development is a big business. One company alone, McKinsey & Company, has annual revenues of over \$6 billion and 94 consulting offices across 52 countries. Yet McKinsey itself reports research that 70 percent of organizational change efforts fail!<sup>8</sup>

This is a staggering statistic, given how often the attempt is made and the enormous resources and human hopes invested in trying to improve our organizations. Imagine choosing to undertake major surgery with a 70 percent rate of failure!

What makes organizational change so difficult?

Organizations are complex systems. Most change efforts focus on only one element of the system. We seek to reorganize reporting relationships, create more teamwork, build a new strategic plan, increase accountability, reorganize a department, install a new performance management system, improve communication, etc. The organization then dutifully focuses on making a shift in this dimension. But often we encounter unexpected resistance. Or, even when good progress does seem to result, all too often we see regression, an erosion of what had initially seemed like change.

**A major cause of unsuccessful change efforts is the failure to address organizations as integrated comprehensive systems.** It is the failure to address each of the significant elements that directly impact the desired change. Substantive change or transformation requires a true systems approach—an intervention in business as usual that engages all the key relevant dimensions of organizational life. Yet few Progressive institutions approach organizational change in this way, either for reasons of limited resources or very often simply not understanding what it takes to create real change.

Here are some typical examples of organizational change that fail due to a lack of an integrated, systemic strategy of transformation:

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<sup>7</sup> Independent evaluation of Rockwood’s *Leading from the Inside Out* yearlong program in 2009.

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.mckinsey.com/client-service/organization-leadership/The\\_Inconvenient\\_Truth\\_About\\_Change\\_Management.pdf](http://www.mckinsey.com/client-service/organization-leadership/The_Inconvenient_Truth_About_Change_Management.pdf)



## Case #1

There's a lack of trust in the team. People are not dealing directly with each other, and issues of inclusion and some long-simmering interpersonal tensions are threatening to boil into overt conflict. Leadership decides to take the team off-site for a retreat to resolve these issues and rebuild trust. It's a great retreat! People open up, remember their shared commitment to the work, and reconnect to each other. Colleagues experience what feel like breakthroughs in trust and make heartfelt commitments to remember the new team spirit and communicate better with each other.

Three months later, things are back to where they started. There's been little follow-through. Over the months since the retreat, people started reverting back to old patterns of not dealing directly with each other. Agreements aren't being kept. In some ways, things are now even worse, as people are feeling cynical about the retreat and untrusting of the team's ability to make change.

To be fair, people had actually been sincere at the retreat. The problem: insufficient attention had been given to changes in structure and processes that would have been needed to support the goodwill at the retreat. No organizational resources had been dedicated to enable good follow-up. No one had taken clear ownership of follow-through on many items. There was no collective process in place to support practicing the new behaviors. No work was taken off peoples' plates to make room for the new commitments, and promises of change were lost in the intense amount and pace of work.

## Case #2

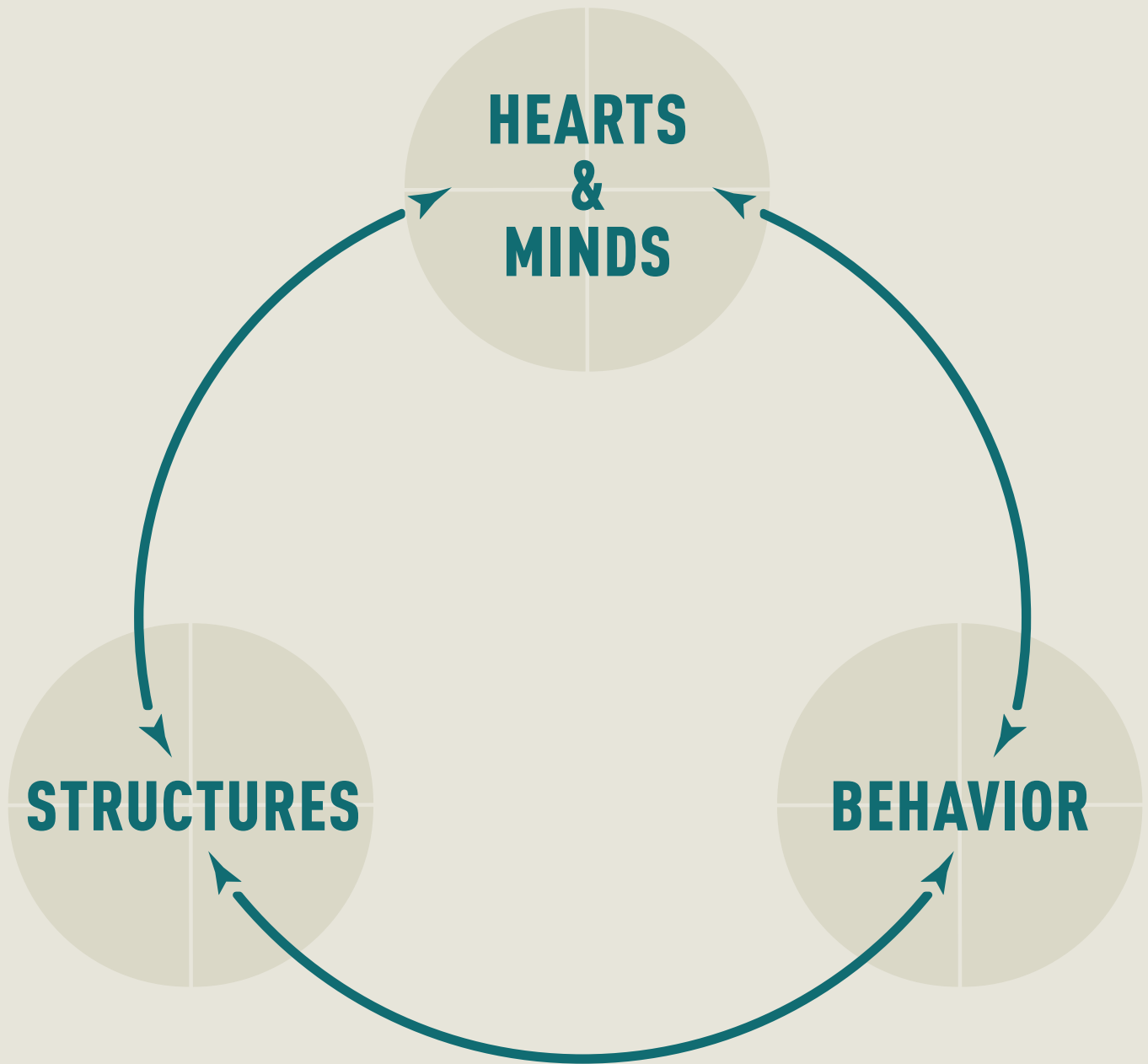
The organization is underperforming, primarily due to a lack of accountability. Plans are made, but there are few mechanisms for feedback or evaluation. Deadlines are routinely missed. There are no consequences for failure to perform. Management understandably wants to create a shift towards much higher level performance standards and accountability. The remedy they choose is to set up new a performance management system, including more formal supervision and new tools and methods of evaluation.

Staff is resistant. The scheduled trainings don't go very well. Despite significant investment of time and money, the new systems fail to achieve the desired results. The problem: lack of alignment in the organization around purpose and vision, and an historical mistrust of management by many staff. These major issues were not surfaced or dealt with before installing the performance system. As a result, there was little buy-in from staff to the new program, who mostly resisted it as an attempt by management to assert more control. The new systems looked good on paper, but there was little lasting improvement in performance.

In these examples, we see how transformation in organizations requires addressing a variety of interlocking issues, ranging from organizational structure and processes to the inner lives and everyday behavior of the people who work there.

# THE WHEEL OF CHANGE

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# The Wheel of Change

The Wheel of Change is a simple yet powerful model for transformative change. It is a useful lens on reality that helps us to quickly identify the critical elements that must be addressed for transformation to occur.

The Wheel of Change divides human systems (whether individuals, teams, organizations, networks or society) into three domains:

## 1. Hearts & Minds

The full range of what people think and feel—motivations, beliefs, emotions, perceptions, etc.

## 2. Behavior

What human beings actually do—our words and deeds, the actual choices we make to speak or not speak, to act or not to act.

## 3. Structure

The external environmental realities which impact Hearts & Minds and Behavior—the micro systems and structures that make up our individual lives: the organizational systems, structures, and processes in which we work, and the larger social and economic systems that dominate our society.

The arrows in the graphic invite us to view Hearts & Minds, Behavior, and Structure in dynamic interaction with one another—an ongoing circle of mutual influence.

The Wheel of Change is a way of looking at reality that helps us understand what is required to make profound, enduring change:

- ▶ What needs to change in the Hearts & Minds of people?
- ▶ What needs to shift in their Behavior?
- ▶ What Structures need to be changed?

The model is completely scalable and is equally instrumental in helping:

- ▶ Individuals make change in their own lives

- ▶ Teams plan and implement change in the way they work
- ▶ Organizations and coalitions undertake a fundamental change in strategy or culture

The Wheel of Change also provides a systemic framework for understanding what is required to effect social change.

For the purpose of this paper, we will focus on applying the Wheel of Change to organizations. In this context, the Wheel informs us that:

- ▶ The Behavior of people in an organization is driven by what they think and feel (Hearts & Minds) while also being impacted by the organizational Structures in which they work.
- ▶ Peoples' thoughts and feelings are strongly influenced by the Structures in which they work, while also being impacted by the Behavior of those around them.
- ▶ The collective Hearts & Minds and Behavior of staff, in turn, contribute to shaping and reshaping organizational Structures.

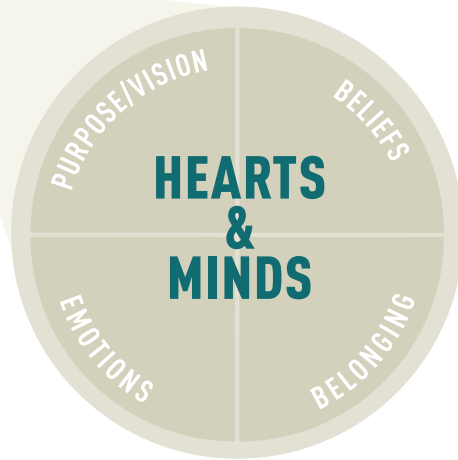
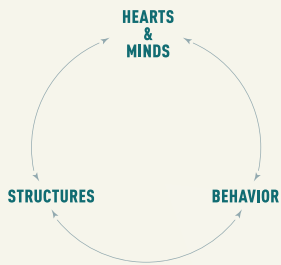
All systems tend to maintain their balance or homeostasis. When we attempt to change only one element in an organizational system, other unattended elements in the system may resist change or when change starts to occur, like a rubber band, may tend to pull the organization back towards its original condition.

The Wheel of Change helps us to:

1. Initiate transformational change by identifying and addressing the critical elements in each of the three domains of organizational life
2. Create a virtuous cycle in which changes in one domain provoke and reinforce change in the other two domains

In organizations, the transformational approach can be applied and scaled equally well to smaller, more discrete change projects, as well as renewing, reigniting or reinventing entire institutions.





## Hearts & Minds

Without people, organizations are simply a collection of buildings and machines. In my decades of consulting to organizations, I have found that people and people problems are virtually always central to both causing and resolving the issues for which I have been hired. It is my passionate belief that in most cases, the wisdom and creativity needed to solve an organization's challenges lie with the people who work there. Much of our work as organizational change agents has to do with unleashing and harnessing that collective intelligence and power.

The first management consultant is generally considered to be Frederick Taylor, who in the early 1900s sought to improve industrial efficiency through installing the first performance management systems. The Taylor approach was all about enforcement, and essentially treated workers as extensions of machines who were too "stupid" to understand what they were doing.

The profession has come a long way since then. In the last 20 years, many leaders and organizational development practitioners have come to place increasing emphasis on the profound importance of what goes on in the Hearts & Minds of the people who work there.

*"The hard stuff is easy.  
The soft stuff is hard.  
The soft stuff is more important  
than the hard stuff."*

TOM MALONE, CEO MILLIKEN COMPANY  
(Milliken named to the 2013 World's Most Ethical Companies by the Ethisphere Institute)

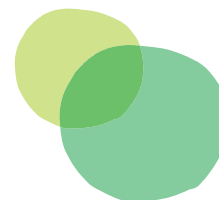
But even while leaders and theorists assert the importance of the people side, most leading consulting companies still specialize more in working with organizational systems than effectively dealing with the interior lives of the human beings that inhabit the systems.

The transformational approach, while working in an integrated way with all three domains of the Wheel of Change, brings highly refined and powerful principles, tools, and practices for working with Hearts & Minds. In this methodology, we place special focus on:

**Purpose/vision:** helping people connect with what motivates and gives meaning to our lives, giving shared focus and direction for our aspirations, thereby fueling our actions.

*The greatest challenge  
of the day is how to bring  
about a revolution of the  
heart, a revolution which  
has to start with each  
one of us.*

DOROTHY DAY







Members of Forest Ethics at No Tankers rally

## FOREST ETHICS

One of my engagements with an activist group, Forest Ethics demonstrates the power of creating breakthroughs in Hearts & Minds. As Todd Paglia, the current Executive Director recalls:

*Things were coming to a head as we set off for our all-staff retreat. There was a huge chasm between key campaigners and the Executive Director. Conflict avoidance was our strategy. Trust was nonexistent, and most of us were polishing our resumes. We were hiding in our bunkers, only coming out to lob bombs at each other.*

*Our ED had hired a facilitator (Robert Gass) but we had no trust in him, assuming that he was there to do the ED's bidding. The meeting began with us throwing hand grenades at him, but he just sat there, calmly listening without being defensive. Honestly, this impressed us. Enough so that we started participating in the exercises and using the tools that were offered. It was slow going at first. But we started having conversations about what we really wanted...the interests behind the positions that we had staked out. With some coaching, a few of us actually started showing some leadership.*

*On the last day, we had a breakthrough. In a team-building game, for the first time we experienced our true power and potential as a team. We got clarity about the organizational choices before us. We came out of our bunkers, and really saw each other with fresh eyes. We chose a way forward. Most importantly, we shared the profound experience of what it was like to live with honesty, clear communication, present, open to each other.*

*It saved the organization. Ten years later, we are healthy and growing. We actively engage in transformational practices, still learning together what it's like to be a great, transforming organization.*



*“Purpose is the motivating force for achievement. When you are doing something which serves your purpose, you are at your best. We cannot use what we learn without the fire of purpose in our hearts.”*

SUN TZU

For transformation of any scope and scale, people must feel highly motivated to make change and be aligned around a common picture of where they are going.

**Beliefs/ideas:** the conscious ways in which we think as well as the internalized, deeply-held unconscious frames through which we organize and make sense of reality, individually and collectively.

*“My greatest challenge has been to change the mindset of people. Mindsets play strange tricks on us. We see things the way our minds have instructed our eyes to see.”*

MUHAMMAD YUNUS,  
NOBEL PEACE PRIZE WINNER, 2006

For transformation of any scope and scale, people must liberate themselves from limiting assumptions about what’s possible and open their eyes and minds to creating something new.

**Emotions:** our feelings which have profound impact on the quality of our thinking, the choices we make, and our level of engagement and energy.

*“If your emotional abilities aren’t in hand, if you don’t have self-awareness, if you are not able to manage your distressing emotions, if you can’t have empathy and have effective relationships, then no matter how smart you are, you are not going to get very far.”*

DANIEL GOLEMAN,  
PSYCHOLOGIST AND EMOTIONAL  
INTELLIGENCE RESEARCHER AND AUTHOR

For transformation of any scope and scale, we must attend to the doubts, fears, and frustrations that drain energy and unleash the power of hope, caring, and passion that lies in every human heart.

**Belonging:** the degree to which individuals feel connected to each other and positively identify with the collective community; operating from trust, good will, and a commitment to serving the benefit of all.

*“We are tied together in the single garment of destiny, in an inescapable network of mutuality.”*

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

For transformation of any scope and scale, people need to come together across their differences, to find common ground and align around the intended changes.

**Organizational excellence comes from commitment, not compliance.** Unless people are truly motivated and engaged, change processes often fail. Transformational leaders and facilitators are skilled at activating and unleashing the human spirit into a collective wave of positive, creative energy to make the organization all that it can be.

Much of the power of the Transformative Approach lies in its ability to create real breakthroughs in the way people think and feel about themselves, each other, and their organization. This transformation of Hearts & Minds comes about as people at all levels in the organization:

- ▶ connect to the deeper purpose for why they do this work
- ▶ join mind, heart, and spirit in common cause around a shared and compelling vision of the future
- ▶ tell their stories and share their highest hopes and dreams
- ▶ find the courage to speak their truths
- ▶ publicly name the organizational “elephants in the room” and face down organizational “demons”
- ▶ begin to deal constructively with some of the painful differences that separate us around inclusion, privilege and power, race and gender, etc.



- ▶ cultivate mutual respect and trust
- ▶ free their creative imagination from barriers of doubt, fear, and limitation
- ▶ claim their power and take personal responsibility for the organization and its success

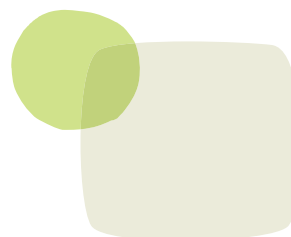
Transformation in Hearts & Minds is empowered by the introduction of *transformative practices*. Transformative practices that are being widely used in Progressive organizations include: Generative Somatics<sup>9</sup>, Mindfulness Meditation<sup>10</sup>, Forward Stance<sup>11</sup>, Jo Kata<sup>12</sup>, and the Resilience (State-shifting) practice taught in Rockwood and my own trainings<sup>13</sup>. Drawn from various wisdom, spiritual and contemplative traditions, martial arts, and humanistic psychology, these powerful technologies for individual transformation can be effectively harnessed to power Organizational Transformation.

While there are no hard and fast rules in Organizational Transformation, at least some work with Hearts & Minds is almost always required up front to help kick-start the change process.

To see how breakthroughs in Hearts & Minds help power transformative change, let's look at the transformation of the organization that I co-founded, the Rockwood Leadership Institute.

*My greatest challenge has been to change the mindset of people. Mindsets play strange tricks on us. We see things the way our minds have instructed our eyes to see.*

MUHAMMAD YUNUS,  
NOBEL PEACE PRIZE WINNER, 2006



<sup>9</sup> *Generative Somatics* is a body-centered path, methodology, and change theory by which we can embody transformation, individually and collectively. It is being widely taught to Progressive leaders and organizations through the work of Staci Haines (<http://www.generativesomatics.org>) and Ng'ethe Maina/Social Justice Leadership (<http://www.sojustlead.org>).

<sup>10</sup> Mindfulness Meditation has its roots in Buddhist practices such as Vipassana and Zen. Popularized by researchers/practitioners such as Jon Kabat-Zin, it has been actively introduced to activist circles by teachers such as Angel Kyodo Williams and centers like Spirit Rock, Stone Circles, and Vallecitos.

<sup>11</sup> *Forward Stance* is a mind-body approach utilizing the physical experience to develop, explore, and demonstrate human actions. Developed by Norma Wong and based on Zen practices, Progressive groups are being trained in Forward Stance to help shift the way in which they move in the world.

<sup>12</sup> *Jo Kata*, a practice done with a wooden staff known as a "jo," comes from traditional Japanese martial arts and is part of Aikido training. It's used for developing self-awareness and embodying new skills and qualities. <http://sojustlead.org/resources/jo-kata-videos>

<sup>13</sup> The practice of State Shifting taught in Rockwood Trainings was developed by Robert Gass and Judith Ansara. It is a four-step process specifically designed to help people effectively manage their own emotional triggering. It has been taught extensively both to leaders, organizations, and couples in committed relationships. [http://sacredunion.com/site/?page\\_id=6](http://sacredunion.com/site/?page_id=6)





Akaya Windwood with Rockwood trainers





## Hearts & Minds: THE TRANSFORMATION OF ROCKWOOD

Rockwood was co-founded in 2000 by Andre Carothers and Robert Gass with an aim to improve the leadership and effectiveness of social change organizations through transformational trainings. The primary audiences for their original programs were environmentalists, and the racial mix in those days was over 90 percent white. Today, Rockwood is a diverse, multi-cultural organization, led by African-American President/CEO Akaya Windwood as well as a truly diverse staff and board which serve the full range of Progressive sectors, including fellowship programs for Leaders of Color and LGBTQ Advocacy and a diverse alumni pool.

The transformation from a white to a multi-racial organization impacted every element of organizational life at Rockwood, but the change was driven by important shifts in Hearts & Minds.

Andre Carothers, a longtime activist, realized “within six months of our first training, that in order to be politically useful and powerful we would need to engage more diverse populations. It was not my intent to create another diversity training, but my experience had taught me that we would need to deal with power dynamics around race, class, and gender and make our approach more relevant to people of different backgrounds. Unfortunately, I didn’t know how to manage people through a process. So I deliberately reached out to leaders of color to bring them into our trainings. I actually hoped that some explosive stuff would come up and that we would get our education directly by having to deal with the conflict.”

As Andre expected, there were indeed some “bumps” in the training room. Participants raised very challenging questions about some of the framing and examples used by trainers. “I started to become aware of the profound level of nuance, detail, and care we would need to bring to everything we said and did.” Several highly skilled white trainers proved not to be the right match for

a politicized audience. Issues were raised, but for a while, not much changed.

Unlike Andre, Robert had little previous education about race and class. He had agreed with the need to make Rockwood more inclusive, but remembered the exact moment when his commitment shifted from “this would be a good thing” to “all in.” Robert says, “I was debriefing a conference I had facilitated with one of the convenors, an African-American activist/teacher named Angel Kyodo Williams. Angel looked me in the eye, saying, ‘This work you bring is really important. But we could really use you and this work to connect to the struggle for racial justice. Will you join us?’ Her words pierced my heart...a sense that I was being offered a gift...being invited to rejoin to something I had lost but forgotten... a feeling of coming home. There was huge ‘Yes’ inside.”



*Andre Carothers, Rockwood co-founder*





Andre says, “Robert came back from that conference like a house afire.”

Robert’s gifts as a transformational trainer, joined with Andre’s greater understanding of the issues, increased the momentum for change. Andre and Robert began more vigorous recruiting, drawing increasing numbers of diverse participants to the trainings. By 2003 their flagship yearlong program, *Leading from the Inside Out*, was attracting over one-third leaders of color. Andre was also finally successful in attracting several experienced, politically attuned trainers of color to join the team.

As the newly expanded team sat together at their first retreat, Roberto Vargas (one of the new trainers) asked a powerful question. “We’d like to get clear what you really want. Is this about adding some people of color to the team to help deliver what’s here? I’m okay if that’s all, because this is a great training. But if you want us to really be all in, then we would need to help recreate the curriculum so that it is most meaningful to people from our communities.” Without hesitation, Andre and Robert recognized the gift that was being offered and said, “We want you all in. What do we need to do?” That day the team did its first full review of the curriculum, and began implementing changes.

The transformation would necessitate some significant shifts in underlying beliefs on the part of Robert and other trainers. In Robert’s words, “My heart was fully there, but I had a lot to learn about race and white privilege. To make myself a really useful trainer and guide to diverse leaders, well, the next years were more a vertical line than a learning curve.”

The shifts in Hearts & Minds included:

**From:** We need to make sure to deal with race in our trainings.

*To: Race is a fundamental perspective that impacts all our individual, interpersonal, organizational, and societal realities. A racial justice analysis and perspective needs to be inextricably woven into our training methodology.*



*Robert Gass, Rockwood co-founder*

**From:** viewing racism through individual, interpersonal, and organizational lenses

*To: understanding a structural analysis of racism*

**From:** Rockwood is a place that is welcoming to people of color.

*To: Rockwood is an inclusive organization that is home to all those who have been excluded or oppressed because of race, class, ability, or gender identity.*

**From:** It’s about attracting trainers of color and tweaking our curriculum.

*To: The entire foundation, fabric, and leadership needs to evolve.*

The next breakthrough was seeded by a change in leadership. Andre had aggressively recruited Akaya as a trainer in 2004. Within several months, Robert, recognizing her many gifts, invited her to replace him as Director of Training, and in 2005, Akaya assumed his role on a part-time basis.



As a woman of color long engaged in the struggle for racial justice, Akaya appreciated the initial steps Rockwood had taken on this journey, but also knew how far it had to go. “I believed Rockwood was answering a deep need in our movements to become more heart-centered, more purpose-centered, more relational. There was a lot here, but there was a clear lack of power analysis and some aspects of the training still needed to be more accessible to different cultures. I wanted to see that happen, but there was a limit to how hard I was prepared to push. I believed the timing had to be right.”

During her first year as Training Director, Akaya continued to help forward the changes to the curriculum and reach out to new networks. But the real breakthrough came with a new program for Rockwood: training for Women Leaders in Racial Justice and Human Rights. In Akaya’s words: “Stacy Kono and I came back from that amazing training and realized we needed to make a fundamental commitment as an organization to racial and economic justice. We came to the next staff meeting and made that declaration. It wasn’t a demand and it wasn’t a proposal. We just stated what seemed to us [to be] the obvious next step. There was no struggle. We came back to an organization that was already fully aligned and ready to move forward.”

2006 was a year of accelerated change as Rockwood worked to make the declaration real. There was continued curriculum development, significantly further diversification of staff, trainers, and Board, building new networks to draw in more diverse trainees, staff training, and new programming. Emotions typically run high when dealing with issues of race, class, gender, oppression, and privilege, and open discussions often go awry. In the many conversations along the way, Rockwood staff tried with reasonable success to practice the principles taught in their trainings: open and honest communication, deep listening, respect, and taking responsibility. People were aligned on where to go, and the

process was not marked with accusations and breakdowns.

The next step was one that is often a sticking point in these journeys: the transition in top leadership. Andre knew that for Rockwood’s transformation to be complete, at some point he would need to step down as ED and be replaced by a person of color. Akaya was his choice, but the transition proved complicated.

Reflecting on the situation, Akaya says, “It started going on too long. We had lots of conversation; Andre said he was ready, but it wasn’t happening. I started getting cranky and wondering if this would be ‘same old, same old.’” But at the same time, Akaya readily confesses to her own ambivalence. She had been independent for many years, and was not so eager to take on the full-time mantle of running an organization.



*Akaya Windwood, Rockwood President & CEO*



*Rockwood board & staff*

For some months there was a duet dance of confusion. In Andre's words, "There was never a moment where I didn't want Akaya to become the President. But I couldn't read her well. I was afraid of pushing the decision and having her say no, and at the same time afraid of doing anything that would be a barrier to her saying yes. So I mostly held my breath, waiting for something to happen." Akaya misinterpreted Andre's passivity as reluctance to let go.

Frustration began to build on both sides. But then in October, 2007, Akaya had one of those flashes of deep insight, a clear knowing that, "I need to be in all the way or get out of the way. I went to Andre and asked, 'Can we talk?' I took him in my arms. I said, 'I love you... it's time for me to pick up the reins. I honor what you've brought into the world. I promise to take care and grow it.'

He said 'thank you.' Amazingly, by the next morning, he had already talked to the Board who had all signed off. Two months later I was President and CEO."

For Andre, "when Akaya walked in and said, 'I want this,' it was the most wonderful fulfillment of all I had tried to do to prepare for a transition. Within days, we became the organization I had dreamed of for years."

These transitions in power rarely go so smoothly. But the process at Rockwood was facilitated by two human beings who had been working on "being the change." Akaya describes Andre this way: "For Andre, it was always Rockwood first. He was willing to put his ego needs aside for what served Rockwood and its mission." And Akaya brought her purposeful way of being in life. "I was trusting my heart,





my intuitive sense...where we were ready to go. I was listening for when the timing was right...like a conductor sensing when to cue the violins.”

Today, Rockwood is thriving. Its trainings are widely respected throughout the Progressive world, yet the process of transformation is never complete. Like all organizations, Rockwood continues to have challenges. Desire for its services has created too many opportunities, and the organization needs to get clearer on its priorities, appropriate rate of growth, and positioning in the world. Akaya is a very strong leader, but for Rockwood to continue to thrive, the next level of leadership needs to be more strongly developed

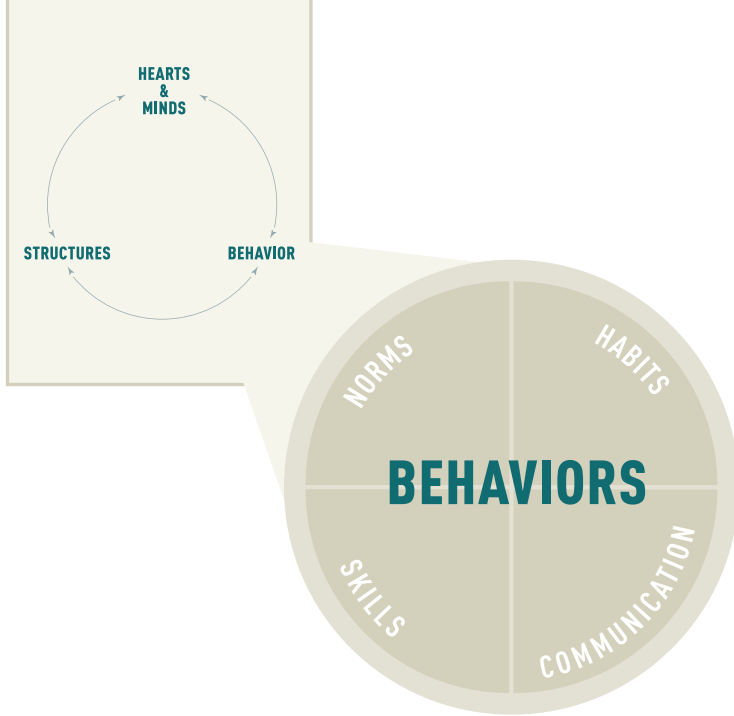
However, Rockwood has been transformed. The staff, training team, and board are over 50 percent people of color. Among its wide range of programs, there are fellowships for Leaders of Color and LGBTQ leaders. The alumni pool is 52 percent people of color—almost exactly reflecting our country’s population.

This transformation required commitment, hard work, and patience. But it was remarkably free of the painful upheavals that so often mark the transitions from a white-led to a multi-racial organization. Ongoing attention and work in the domain of Hearts & Minds played an important role. Mindsets shifted by embodying and practicing principles taught in Rockwood trainings around caring, respect, communication, emotional stability, and partnership. These practices supported people in working collaboratively across lines of color to make Rockwood what it is today.

The Rockwood story is an example of transformation: “Change that is profound, radical and sustainable; change that fundamentally alters the very nature of something.” Rockwood will continue to evolve, but it will never go back to what it was.

*We are tied together  
in the single garment  
of destiny, in an  
inescapable network  
of mutuality.*

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.**



## Behavior

Changing Hearts & Minds is necessary, but not sufficient, to transform organizations. Shifts in the mindsets of Rockwood founders were important, but they had to be translated each day into action. The living reality of an organization is created through the countless choices its members make about what they say and what they do.

*“It is not organizations that transform, but people. Transformations can be accelerated by acting to maximize the likelihood that vast numbers of individuals will make positive choices in relation to how their personal behaviors influence the desired culture.”*

CAROLYN AIKEN<sup>14</sup>

In working with the domain of Behavior, the Transformational Approach focuses on:

**Norms:** the organization’s expectations of behavior from its members—often implicit, but all too often contrary to the organization’s expressed values and performance. For transformation of any scope and scale, people need to agree on and hold themselves and each

other accountable to the new behaviors needed to drive change.

*“Most conduct is guided by norms rather than by laws. Norms are effective because they are enforced by peer pressure.”*

PAUL COLLIER,  
ECONOMIST & GLOBAL POVERTY EXPERT

**Habits:** Conscious or unconscious patterns of behavior that may or may not support organizational health and effectiveness. For transformation of any scope or scale, its members will need to consciously and collectively practice new habits.

*“Default practices are the deeply rooted behaviors that we do automatically, consistently, and unconsciously in response to any given situation. Intentional practices are those we choose to do in order to transform the way we show up in the world.”*

STACI HAINES AND NG’ETHE MAINA

**Communication:** breaking through existing barriers to direct and honest communication and free flow of information throughout the organization. For transformation of any scope and scale, people need to work hard to create a feedback-rich environment to drive learning and optimal performance.

*“Communication works for those who work at it.”*

JOHN POWELL

**Skills:** the ongoing development of new capacities needed to fulfill the organization’s purpose and vision. For transformation of any scope and scale, organizations will need to identify and create the new capacities needed to implement the change through training, education, mentoring, and/or hire and acquisitions.

<sup>14</sup> Carolyn Aiken, Scott Keller, Michael Rennie, “The Performance Culture Imperative,” McKinsey & Company, 2008.

*“The purpose of training is to tighten up the slack, toughen the body, and polish the spirit.”*

MORIHEI UESHIBA, FOUNDER OF AIKIDO<sup>15</sup>

**True transformation requires consistent changes in behavior over time.**

Unless shifts in Heart & Minds are converted into actual changes in daily behavior, energy and passion quickly fades. But unlike the almost instantaneous breakthroughs that can happen in hearts and minds, changing behavior takes time, and above all, practice.

*“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”*

ARISTOTLE

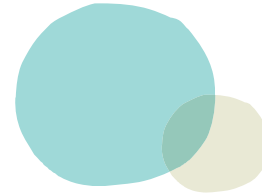
Our daily behavior is, to a large degree, habitual. We become accustomed to doing things or responding to situations in a particular way. Habits are unconscious. Over time, we no longer freshly assess these situations, look at all the options, and decide on the most advantageous behavior. We simply act in the ways we are used to acting—our habits have been years (or even a lifetime) in the making. Given that habits also have a powerful neurological basis<sup>16</sup>, it is a serious undertaking to actually change behavior.

Organizations have habits just like individuals. Collective behavior patterns are an integral part of all organizational cultures. Individuals who act outside of an organization’s expectations of behavior are subjected to overt and indirect pressure to conform.

Organizational norms help define the working culture—for better and for worse. Many unstated norms that are common in Progressive institutions are impediments to organizational excellence. For example:

*We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit*

ARISTOTLE



- ▶ It’s okay not to deliver impeccably on commitments we make.
- ▶ Be nice (i.e., avoid conflict/don’t confront directly).
- ▶ We don’t discuss issues of race openly.
- ▶ Team meetings are about trying to look good and smart.
- ▶ We don’t raise questions about \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ If you’re committed and work hard, that’s sufficient to be in your position.

Transforming an organization requires shifting whatever existing behavioral norms stand in the way of change. Transformation of Behavior happens as:

- ▶ new expectations are clearly articulated and formalized (sometimes called Team Agreements or Rules of the Road)
- ▶ people understand exactly what’s required of them
- ▶ implementing new behaviors becomes an organizational priority

<sup>15</sup> Haines, Staci and Maine, Ng’ethe, *The Transformative Power of Practice*, <http://transform.transformativechange.org/2010/06/powerofpractice/>

<sup>16</sup> For an easy-to-read overview of the what it takes to change behavior, including the biology of habits, see Duhigg, Charles, *The Power of Habit*, Random House, NY, 2012.



- ▶ leadership begins to model the new behaviors
- ▶ standards of accountability are raised and enforced
- ▶ formal and informal processes are adopted to practice and develop new habits
- ▶ there is support for developing the needed new skills through formal training, professional or peer coaching, mentoring or self-study with web-based support (both technical skills and self-management and interpersonal skills)<sup>17</sup>
- ▶ the inevitable mistakes that attend developing new habits and skills are not only tolerated, they are welcomed

Collective practice may look like a team consciously choosing to work on a set of new behaviors together.

A national advocacy organization was attempting to significantly increase accountability among staff—in particular, wanting to break old habits of not following through on commitments. They agreed to a 30-day practice period. For one month, everyone signed on to be 100 percent impeccable in keeping every agreement within the time frames promised. This was a powerful and effective group practice in which people learned:

- ▶ breaking agreements had become expected and accepted
- ▶ they were all making too many commitments
- ▶ people were saying “yes” out of not wanting to disappoint people, then seriously letting them down by failing to deliver
- ▶ a lot of energy was being wasted
- ▶ it feels better to deliver and be accountable

Through this practice, there was a fundamental shift in people delivering on their commitments to each other and the team.

All of the transformative practices mentioned earlier reinforce shifts in Behavior as well as Hearts & Minds.

*We begin all our weekly staff meetings with either sitting meditation or Jo, the aikido-based stick practice we learned from Generative Somatics. The work with Jo is a literally a way of moving together, of aligning. It translates powerfully to the way we move together as a team in all that we do.*

NG'ETHE MAINA, SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP



*Jo kata practice*

Let's see what it takes to create a transformation of Behavior in a real organization.

<sup>17</sup> We have been stressing how transforming organizations requires people to engage in their own transformation. In order to effect deep, sustainable change in organizations, our people need training in personal mastery skills such as self-responsibility and accountability, emotional balance, mental clarity, personal self-care, and time management. Training is also needed in interpersonal skills such as deep listening, giving and receiving feedback, coaching, and negotiation.

## Behavior: THE TRANSFORMATION OF LAANE

LAANE is a thriving social justice organization in Los Angeles. Over the past years it has undergone a profound transformation. While this change entailed all three domains of the Wheel of Change, its story highlights the impact of changes in Behavior. A key leader in the transformation was Roxana Tynan, then Deputy Director and now LAANE's ED.

"When I came back from my Rockwood yearlong in 2004 I was ready to transform my organization. I saw what would be possible for LAANE if I could bring back a bunch of these principles and practices. I returned with large a multi-colored chart showing all the practices I was going to introduce. It was beautifully colored."

But as we've been seeing, leading Organizational Transformation is demanding, especially when stacked on top of our other responsibilities. In Roxana's words: "The chart proved way too much. But some of the attempts actually did take root. We started a real organizational evaluation process and introduced 360 surveys for staff. It was a big deal, having a whole bunch of conversations on leadership. Previously, staff were only evaluated on technical skills. We tailored Rockwood's 360 questions and for the first time we evaluated—in addition to our hard skills—how we showed up and how we dealt with each other. I spent a lot of time working with staff on feedback and listening exercises. People enjoyed the stuff and really cared about the evals. But the learning and changes continued to be haphazard for the first couple of years.

During this period, however, we did go through a very good process of reframing our mission and goals. We took the better part of a year engaging the entire staff in what the mission should be. The discussion of what should go into the mission statement started at the ground with the organizers, the research team, and the communicators. People created a picture of what the world would look like if we won. But the real struggle was to agree on [the answers to questions such as] 'what's our theory of change?'



Roxana Tynan, LAANE ED

'What's LAANE's role in getting to that vision?' The core decision was: how independent are we from the labor movement?

There was considerable tension going into this. But we gave ourselves lots and lots of time. We talked about it and talked about it, letting the discussions unfold over a number of months. Rotating people were charged with coordinating, gathering what people were saying and circulating it, leading to another round of conversation. We built in lots of percolation time. We had many one-on-ones to make sure that we got everything out in the open—that people were able to voice what they might not feel comfortable saying in the group setting.

Things started to become clear, and we ended up with the mission statement we needed to go forward:

*We believe that building alliances among our community allies and a Progressive labor movement that serves as a social movement for economic justice is the most effective way to achieve our vision. To do this, we:*

- ▶ *Identify ways through policy and organizing campaigns to improve standards and build power in a targeted low-wage industry or region*



- ▶ *Build strong community-labor alliances around a common agenda that strengthens both the labor movement and the community*
- ▶ *Reframe the public debate about the economy, jobs, and the labor movement*

Most of us committed fully to this mission. One key staff did choose to leave saying, ‘I support you. But I don’t want that to be my goal.’”

Aligning around mission (Hearts & Minds) was foundational for the transformation of LAANE. Also important were changes in Structure, as LAANE completely reorganized along the industries in which we chose to organize, creating policies on an industry basis as a power-building strategy. But the story of the change process at LAANE is also an important story of changes in Behavior.

“Perhaps the most dramatic shift came out of my organizing our entire management team of 15 people to go through a three-and-a-half day retreat with two Rockwood trainers. I use the word “organizing” because there was a lot of resistance from half the team. They were averse to anything touchy-feely, and there were actually some fears that I was introducing a cult and that I would punish people who wouldn’t join. But there was also recognition that the innovative work we had been doing over the last two years had, in fact, contributed to the growing success of our organization.

In the retreat we focused on practices from the Rockwood methodology that had the highest value for our organization. We had courageous conversations with each other. We did leadership stands<sup>18</sup> and listening exercises. We learned about managing our emotional triggers and moving from victimhood to resilience and personal responsibility.

One of our key leaders was super smart, but had really been rubbing people the wrong way.

We all stood up to make personal commitments about what we were going to work on as leaders. He stood up and committed to ‘not to be a dick.’ Really! Then he actually did work on it and became a better teammate.

The woman who ran our budget was an immigrant who never went to college and was self-taught. She came into the retreat not connected to the heart of the organization. She was astonished when I and some other people cried. Seeing that it was okay to be vulnerable somehow really touched her, and helped her to feel connected to the team in a new way. Both Madeline (the ED) and I received some tough feedback—honest, but caring. These kinds of conversations can be hard between leaders and staff. But we listened. They felt heard. And we learned.

We came together as a team in a new way. We had liked each other, but there was a radical shift in the level of trust before and after those three days. We started holding each other accountable without people getting triggered. Directors of each campaign began feeling ownership and taking responsibility for the whole organization rather than just their campaigns.

We created clear benchmarks for every level of staff in the organization—not just the external skills, but the new internal leadership skills. We spent a lot of time arguing in a good way about how to actually measure things like self-awareness, the capacity to listen, the ability to hear feedback and act on it, the behaviors of self-responsibility or openness to learning. We radically improved our recruitment process to screen people for these capacities.

We invested a lot to make sure the new habits took hold. We hired someone to be on staff as our leadership and culture guru, to help make sure we practiced our new behaviors. It’s easy for culture

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<sup>18</sup> An exercise where each person stands before the group and gives their vision of what they will create for the organization in the next two-to-three years. Each person then receives individual feedback from the group on their leadership. See *Vision Stands*, and other visioning tools by visiting <http://www.stproject.org/resources/tools-for-transformation/visioning/>





change to go to the bottom of our to-do lists. We found we needed someone on top of this, to help make sure we were practicing regularly the new behavior. She worked with each team to create team agreements, and to make sure that work plans included our leadership development. She's currently coaching seven of our staff. One of the Rockwood trainers who led our retreat continued to coach the ED and myself. We sent numbers of staff to Rockwood for training, and had our own trainings on things like time management and working with different interpersonal styles.

All of this has helped create a better working culture. There are clearer expectations, a lot less bullshit among staff. We expect people to resolve conflicts, to manage working with their co-workers. If they don't, we're all over them. We regularly use the POP<sup>19</sup> model to focus our energies. People actually listen to each other much of the time. We have also become REALLY committed to not being workaholics. We discovered that emotional health is critical to the new culture we were creating, and that when people are over-stressed they revert back to old, unskillful behavior. Maintaining this balance is as important as any of the tools we learned. We increased our policies around vacation, personal days, maternity leaves, and sabbaticals. Supervisors are supposed to regularly check-in and help monitor work-life balance.

As a result of all this, our teams are much more functional—not just in our own team dynamics, but in the way we're doing the work. For example, some of the toughest relationships that we've had to build between union partners and community allies have been around construction jobs. Community partners have felt excluded, while those in the building trades get tired of being called racists. It's an emotionally explosive



LAANE Staff at "Workers in Action" event

situation. Our work on ourselves has paid off in being willing to really dig in with the building trades and not judge from a distance. Our team that worked on construction jobs really invested in building personal relations...really got to know the guys. When community allies would say we were fronting for those "racist assholes" we were able to manage our own defensiveness and stay in dialogue and relationship. These skills that were honed by the leadership training and culture shifts at LAANE are helping us stay focused, centered, and powerful in the challenging work that we do.

We're winning most of our campaigns:

- ▶ a huge victory with our brothers in construction re: hiring for \$12 billion of infrastructure work
- ▶ winning policies to force commercial waste haulers to meet standards for environmental regulations and workers' rights
- ▶ living wage increases and benefits at the airport and for hotel workers in Long Beach

<sup>19</sup> The POP Model, created by Leslie Jaffe and Randall Alford, is a tool for focusing teams on specific results. Before undertaking any activity, one clarifies:

What is the **Purpose** of this activity? (**P**)

What are the specific **Outcomes** we hope to achieve? (**O**)

And only then, what **Process** will we use to achieve these outcomes? (**P**)

See *The Fabulous Pop Model* and other team performance tools by visiting <http://www.stproject.org/resources/tools-for-transformation/team-performance/>



- ▶ getting to zero waste recycling goals in LA
- ▶ a Clean Trucks program dramatically improving air quality and standard of living for 16,000 truck drivers, etc.

We haven't lost a vote at City Hall in years, and each victory makes us more powerful."

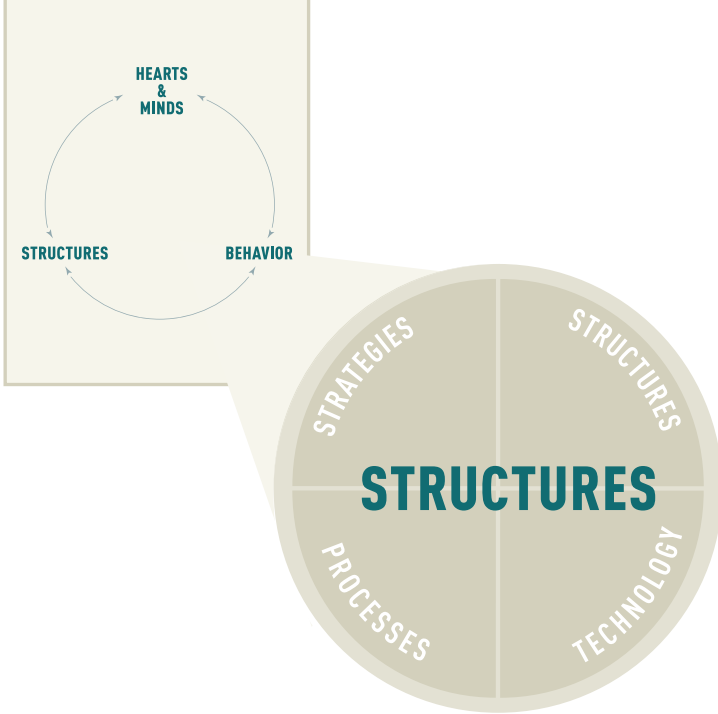
Roxanne took over as ED in February of 2012. Even with all their successes, she was quick to name some of LAANE's challenges:

"Scale is always a challenge. We set ourselves a goal by end of 2013 to organize 60,000 workers and cover 100,000 with living wages. We're not going to reach our numbers, and we needed a "come to Jesus meeting" about the scale of our organizing—how to step it up without overwhelming our organizers. I also have questions about how our campaigns in seven different industries add up to power, and at a deeper level, how does all our great work actually add up to creating what we want? Overall our culture is in a pretty good place. We've been able to institutionalize my haphazard attempts to introduce stuff. But it is an organism—it requires constant love and tending."

In Organizational Transformation, changing behavior is where the rubber meets the road. Yet, unless the structures in which people are working are also transformed, changes in Hearts & Minds and Behavior will not endure.



*LAANE members protesting opening of Walmart*



## Structures

Organizational structures are robust and persistent, and without sustained attention, will regularly defeat the good will and efforts of human beings trying to make change.

American culture has traditionally placed great emphasis on the individual and the individual's capacity to control their destiny: the "self-made man," "up by your bootstraps," today's popular emphasis on individualized self-help, etc. This frame of individualism can blind us to the enormous impact of systems and structures on our lives, in our society, and in our organizations.

Many problems in Hearts & Minds or Behavior are actually the result of policies, practices, or the way work is organized. Examples include:

- ▶ Low staff morale and a pervasive feeling of not being appreciated may stem from poor personnel policies.
- ▶ Lack of accountability may stem from a poorly designed performance management system.
- ▶ Interpersonal conflicts that may seem to be very personal often have roots in dynamics inherent in the structure of their

organizational relationship. A common example would be two department heads or teams who keep clashing due to unclear roles, fuzzy lines of authority or overlapping organizational mandates.

Organizational Transformation at any scope and scale requires that we assess and to varying degrees recreate the organizational structures in which Hearts & Minds and Behavior play out.

In working with the domain of Structure, the Transformational Approach engages more directly with the traditional territory of organizational development:

**Strategies:** the way work is planned and organized to fulfill the organizational mission.

All proposed changes must support existing organizational strategies or be consciously forging a new one. There also needs to be a rigorous and innovative strategy for the change process itself.

*Strategy is how we turn what we have into what we need to get what we want. Strategy is intentional—a pathway that we shape by making a series of choices about how to use resources in the present to achieve goals in the future.*

MARSHALL GANZ<sup>20</sup>



<sup>20</sup> Ganz, Marshall, *Why David Sometimes Wins*, Oxford University Press, USA, 2009.



**Structures:** the way work is organized to implement the strategies—the org. chart, configuration of departments and teams, reporting relationships, job descriptions, etc.

*“Do not dismantle the house, but look at each brick and replace those which no longer support the structure.”*

NEAL DOUGLAS WALSCH, AUTHOR,  
CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD

We must ensure that all elements of structure align with the desired changes.

**Processes:** the routine methods or ways things are done (planning processes, how meetings are organized and run, decision-making processes, member engagement, grant-writing processes, etc.).

*“Apple is a very disciplined company. We have great processes. Process makes you more efficient.”*

STEVE JOBS

We want to assess which work processes, if left untended, might impede transformation. And conversely, how might improvements in work process empower and advance the larger change process?

**Technology:** The tools used by organizations to organize and implement work (computers, smartphones, software, data base, website, physical equipment, workspaces, etc).

*“If you give people tools, and they use their natural ability and curiosity, they will develop things in ways that will surprise you very much beyond what you might have expected.”*

BILL GATES

*“We shape our tools and then our tools shape us.”*

MARSHALL MCLUHAN

In today’s dynamic, changing environment, change processes can often be advanced and empowered by technological improvements and innovations.

Sustainable transformation requires changes in Structures to support shifts in Hearts & Minds and new Behavior.

A transformative approach to working in the domain of Structure focuses on:

- ▶ acute attention to the human dynamics at play to ensure full engagement and ownership of the intended changes by all stakeholders
- ▶ an orientation to strategy that emphasizes:
  - + strategic thinking over fixed strategic plans
  - + planning for the unplanned
  - + innovation and breakthrough thinking; a willingness to challenge basic assumptions
- ▶ clarity and transparency re: allocation of power and decision-making



NDWA research training



Social Justice Leadership trainer presenting organizing model

- ▶ organizational design that emphasizes greater distribution of power, more nimbleness, greater adaptability, and that promotes multi-dimensional connectivity rather than top-down or static organizational structures
- ▶ creating this flexibility while not only maintaining but increasing accountability (a worthy challenge!)<sup>21</sup>
- ▶ increasing understanding and cultivation of an organization's core competencies in order to help maximize institutional advantages and maintain strategic focus
- ▶ bringing greater attention and discipline to work processes such as planning, decision-making, how meetings are run, program evaluation, hiring, member engagement, and performance management

- ▶ an orientation of continuous quality improvement to organizational functioning
- ▶ no chains of command, reporting structures, nor predetermined channels of communication—anyone can talk to anyone, anytime”

Organizational structures have profound impact on the ability of the organization to fulfill its mission, directly by impacting performance and indirectly through their impact on the Hearts & Minds and Behavior of the people who work there.

Let's look at a powerful case study of a transformation focused primarily in the domain of Structure.

<sup>21</sup> Here's a powerful example of a radical organizational Structure from a high-performing, for-profit company: W.L.Gore (which makes Gore-tex) employs 9,000 people in 30 countries. The founder created a radical, completely flat management structure with everyone sharing the same title: "Associates." In this innovative structure, conceived as a "lattice" where everyone is connected to everyone through a network of informal relationships, there are:

- + no chains of command, reporting structures, nor predetermined channels of communication—anyone can talk to anyone, anytime
- + many small, autonomous, self-organizing teams function as a web of startup companies
- + no bosses, no executives, or managers—as teams evolve, natural leaders emerge as they gain followership
- + associates choose to follow leaders rather than be assigned leaders
- + no standard job descriptions or assignments; Associates make "commitments" to their teams. You can say no, but keeping commitments is sacred at Gore & Associates.
- + Performance reviews are based on a peer-level rating system.

W.L. Gore & Associates has for 15 consecutive years been honored by Forbes Magazine as one of the 100 best companies to work for (most recently #13) and has been repeatedly lauded at the "world's most innovative company" for its creativity and excellence in product design.  
<http://www.managementexchange.com/story/innovation-democracy-wl-gores-original-management-model>



## Structure: THE TRANSFORMATION OF LA RAZA

The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) is the largest Hispanic national civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States. Several years ago, President/CEO Janet Murguia realized the organization was facing some major structural challenges.

First, she had inherited 12 “direct reports,” a contradiction in terms as no one can effectively supervise 12 people. Trying to personally oversee five separate program areas kept Janet in the weeds, with little mental bandwidth for overall organizational strategy, insufficient attention to fundraising, and unable to fully realize her role as a leading national Latino spokesperson.

An even greater structural impediment had to do with their affiliates. The org. chart showed (way below the level of the top team) a little box with one-and-a-half staff dedicated to “servicing” the 237 community-based organizations who were members of NCLR. Obviously one-and-a-half people could not possibly “service” 237 organizations. Janet strongly believed that the success of NCLR’s mission was intimately tied to the strength of their partnership with affiliates, and that the current structure could never realize that potential.

She understood that solving these two structural impediments represented a transformational change for NCLR—one that would touch everything and everyone in the organization. Janet engaged consultants from the Bridgespan Group in what proved to be a three-year process of organizational transformation.

Janet re-architected her top leadership structure by placing the five program areas under a Senior Vice President of Programs, and ultimately reduced her 12 direct reports to five, who now formed what was called “The Cabinet.” In this kind of restructuring it is often painful or demoralizing for those being removed from direct supervision by their former boss, as it limits their access to the top leader and can be seen as a



*President & CEO Janet Murguia*

demotion. Janet softened the blow by creating a new senior management team that included all 12 of her former reports. Meeting monthly, this allowed everyone both continued contact with Janet and some high level strategic engagement. To their credit, according to Janet, most impacted people took the change in a good way, understanding how the move would strengthen the organization.

The restructuring worked. Janet says, “I became more efficient and more effective. My meetings with my remaining reports became much more strategic, much more thoughtful. No longer so bogged down in the day to day, I actually had time to think strategically and focus on the real priorities of NCLR.”

To begin tackling the much greater challenges of the relationship with affiliates, Janet spent many days touring the community-based groups. “Before I put any pen to paper, I just sat there and I listened. I heard a lot of complaints. There was no clarity—about anything. Affiliates didn’t know what they wanted from National. Those that did know wanted quite different things, but didn’t know who how to get what they needed.





We were even further than I had thought from being able to unite behind a powerful national strategy. But at least the affiliates recognized that I heard them. I really took their input to heart...it was built in from the very start of the change process.

Our consultants encouraged us to focus on our theory of change, our objectives, and most importantly, the value proposition. We needed to really understand why we needed our affiliates. They needed to understand why they wanted to be a part of NCLR and what they expected from us. Everything flowed from this foundation.

The most critical moment in the entire transformation came around the question of whether affiliates would be required to re-sign up. Many of my staff were afraid to put it to the test. Our affiliate work had become, to some degree, smoke and mirrors, focusing on the number of affiliates and members creating an impression of local power to help give us national clout. What if no one wants to sign up? What if we lost half our members?

I wanted the real thing. My feeling was, 'if only 120 want to re-up, but they really want to, okay. Why do we want partners who don't see the value? If we don't have a good product, why do it?' We also actually increased dues as part of the changes, which scared our people even more. 'Oh my God. People won't sign up.' But I encouraged us to take a clear and strong position. 'If you want to be a general partner this is what you get. And we have to charge you this. If not, no hard feelings.' And you know what? We had underestimated the value of what we had. We didn't shrink—we grew! All of our affiliates signed on, and we added over 30 more.

We completely restructured the way we worked with our affiliates. We went from one-and-a-half staff to having an SVP plus 10 people working on member services, mostly located out in the affiliate regions rather than in DC. Everyone has

a designated person in their regions to relate to. All major work in the organization from its outset moves directly through affiliates, rather than the afterthought it used to be. We create strategies for each region in partnership with the local affiliates. We reorganized into four categories of work in order to meet the widely different needs of affiliates; for example, from mature, stable community groups who mostly want access to our national networks to small groups just beginning who needed technical support and money."

When asked what the most important success factors were, Janet identified:

- ▶ "We started with our theory of change, our mission, our objectives, and our value proposition. Everything flowed from that."
- ▶ "We spent a lot of time up front making sure all senior leaders were fully invested. This big a change has to be led from the top."
- ▶ "It was guided from the top, but everyone was involved in a meaningful way: Board, staff, affiliates."



*NCLR members participating in National Latino Advocacy Days.*



- ▶ “We did lots of listening. We invested in everyone in the meaningful way—staff, affiliates, and other stakeholders.”
- ▶ “We communicated again and again what we were doing. People need to understand why you’re changing what you’re changing. Then they can be an active partner in the changes.”

The result?

“It’s changed everything! DC now provides the anchor, but most of the work is happening out in the regions and the communities. All the EDs show up in regional meetings and at advocacy days. Our conferences are filled with our affiliates. It’s so reaffirming to hear them having thoughtful conversations about OUR work in capital letters. We’re engaged together in helping them build more advocacy into their work. The level of trust is completely different. One of the fears for an affiliate has historically been ‘I’m partnering with this national organization—they’ll take all our money and dribble it out to us.’ We’ve established a record of transparency where we gift those grants fully back to them out in dollars, in technical assistance, in capacity building. They

are able to see how the money is allocated. When I used to set foot in the meetings, affiliates used to complain about everything. ‘I don’t know who to call at National. Why are you working with so-and-so? Who’s getting the grants?’ That’s over. Now our meetings are all about strategy, about doing the work. It’s not perfect, but we have real relationships. We have trust. And we have the right structure to empower them.”

*While this case study primarily focused on a transformation in Structure, success at NCLR also depended on huge shifts in Hearts & Minds and Behavior. National staff had to fundamentally change the way they thought about, felt, and related to affiliates. Radical changes in Behavior were needed to operate in the new structures. Affiliates similarly had to undergo a profound change in the way they thought about, felt, and related to the national office. This process of transformation in many respects is ongoing. But it’s been working because, from the beginning, the right people have been engaged in the right way to attend to all three domains of the Wheel of Change: Heart & Minds, Behavior, and Structure.*



Janet Murguía at NCLR benefit

# The Wheel of Change in Action

How would we use the Wheel of Change and a Transformative Approach to help plan a major organizational change initiative?<sup>22</sup> Let's look at an example.

## Transforming a Board

The relatively new ED of organization XYZ has inherited an ineffectual Board. Engagement of individual Board members is erratic. A frustrated staff usually ignores the Board until just before meetings, when they rush to prepare a last-minute agenda and long reports for the Board. Unclear about its role, the Board fluctuates from being absent to sporadic bursts of inappropriate interference with staff functions. The Board Chair is well-intentioned but is working with time constraints and doesn't have a sense of how to intervene effectively. The ED wants to fix these problems but doesn't know where to start.

Undisciplined, ineffective, or interfering Boards are an all-too-common source of distress to Executive Directors, staff, and Board members. Let's do an initial scan of ways to effect such a transformation, using the lens of the Wheel of Change.

TRANSFORMING A BOARD:

### Possible examples of work in Hearts & Minds

In order to create a fundamental and sustainable change, here are some possible things we might do to impact how the staff and Board think and feel:

- ▶ reconnect Board members to their deeper purpose for serving
- ▶ work to ensure alignment around the organizational mission, not just among staff but across the Board

- ▶ learn together about the role and responsibilities of effective Boards and their Chairs
- ▶ have honest, authentic conversations within the Board about what's working and not working
- ▶ develop a shared picture of what a high-performing Board/staff partnership looks like and what it takes to create it
- ▶ help the Board clarify its role, focusing both on organizational needs and meeting Board members' desires to make a meaningful contribution
- ▶ support a clear leadership role for the Board Chair and effective working relationship between the Chair and ED
- ▶ surface and address any beliefs and expectations, held individually or collectively, that may be in the way of a successful Board/staff partnership and the Board's exercise of its responsibilities
- ▶ explore with each Board member their commitment, aspirations, needs, and barriers to engagement
- ▶ surface and resolve interpersonal and philosophical differences among individual Board members

TRANSFORMING A BOARD:

### Possible examples of work in Behavior

People will not only have to think and feel differently—their behavior needs to change. Here are some possible ways to help create the needed shifts in habits:

- ▶ establish clear expectations and ground rules for Board members' behavior with each other and with staff, both in and out of Board meetings

<sup>22</sup> See our tool the *Wheel of Change Planning Template*, and other assessment tools by visiting <http://www.stproject.org/resources/tools-for-transformation/assessment-for-organizational-transformation/>



- ▶ ED and Board Chair set priority agendas for Board meetings with clear purpose, outcomes, and processes
- ▶ create opportunities for meaningful and generative exchanges between Board and staff at Board meetings
- ▶ Board and staff evaluate each meeting to assess learning and progress
- ▶ ED and Board Chair establish a strong working partnership and ongoing authentic dialogue to support it
- ▶ training for Board members in communication and teamwork skills
- ▶ cultivate directness and accountability among Board members and between Board and staff
- ▶ facilitate Board members' self-assessment of how well they fulfill their Board responsibilities
- ▶ set clear expectations regarding board members' donations to the organization
- ▶ exit any Board members who are not willing or able to operate effectively in the emerging new paradigm
- ▶ commitments such as attendance, Committee participation, and sharing of expertise
- ▶ establish term limits for Board Members to allow for a good balance of continuity and fresh perspectives
- ▶ establish explicit criteria to shape Board composition and guide the nominations and election process
- ▶ assess and revamp Board committee structure to reflect the real needs and capacity of the organization, Board, and staff
- ▶ review and update bylaws
- ▶ clarify respective decision-making authority of Board and Management
- ▶ develop clear roles, processes, and deadlines for long term and annual strategizing, planning, and budgeting
- ▶ develop process for concise and meaningful staff reports to Board to support Board's fiduciary responsibilities and monitoring of organizational performance
- ▶ establish annual performance evaluation process of the ED by the Board
- ▶ explore new methods for communicating with the Board both between and in preparation for meetings

#### TRANSFORMING A BOARD:

### Possible examples of work in Structure

What changes are needed in structure and processes to complete the transformation? Here are some possible levers of change:

- ▶ assess the Board's understanding and alignment with existing organizational goals and strategies
- ▶ develop a written "job description" for Board members
- ▶ create written individual agreements with each Board member that confirm

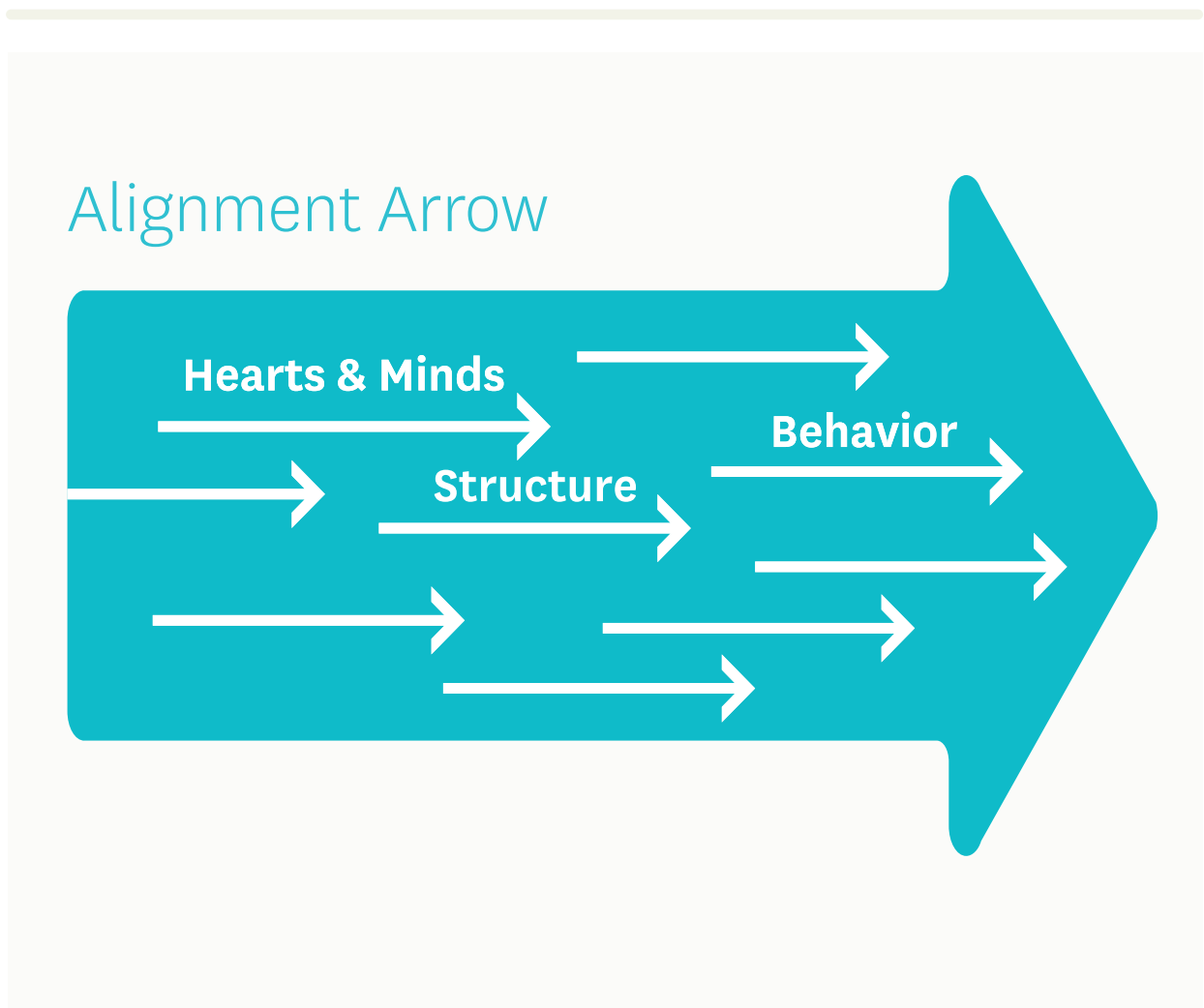
**While no one change process would likely implement all of these suggestions, looking at organizational change through the lenses of the three domains of the Wheel of Change helps ensure a systemic, transformative approach to change.**

## A Key Ingredient: Alignment

You may have noticed the word “alignment” appearing a number of times throughout this paper. Alignment is defined as “the proper adjustment of the components of an electronic circuit, machine, etc., for coordinated functioning,” or “a state of agreement or cooperation among persons.”<sup>23</sup>

*Alignment* is a fundamental transformative principle. In Organizational Transformation, we want everyone and everything moving in the same direction, all pulling together towards a common goal. We can represent this with a model called the Alignment Arrow. (*fig. 1*)

We often find that while some elements of an organizational system are in alignment with where the organization says it wants to go, others are not.



(*fig. 1*)

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.dictionary.reference.com>

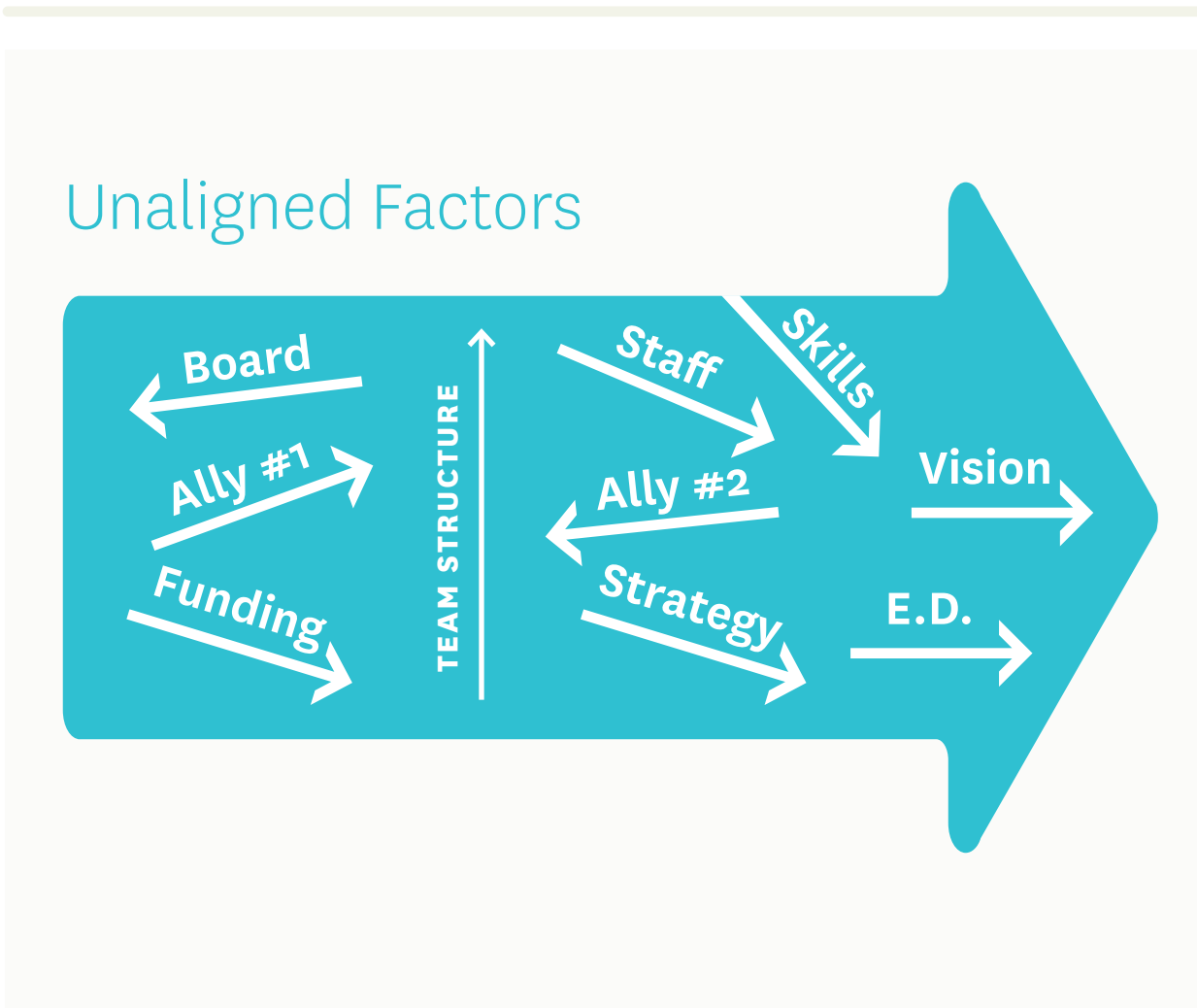
Imagine an advocacy organization that is preparing to launch a new campaign. Certain factors are aligned, primed and ready to implement:

- ▶ a clear vision of success
- ▶ a good strategy
- ▶ the ED owns the vision and strategy
- ▶ staff are on board and enthusiastic
- ▶ funding is in place
- ▶ a critical ally has committed to join forces

However, other factors are not aligned:

- ▶ Some key board members are skeptical of the new direction.
- ▶ The current structure of the campaign teams isn't the best platform for implementing the new strategy.
- ▶ Another very critical ally remains unconvinced, and may choose not to collaborate.
- ▶ The new campaign has some elements which are outside the team's experience base. It's likely that some new skills will be needed.

In the Alignment Arrow model we represent the situation like this: (fig. 2)



(fig. 2)

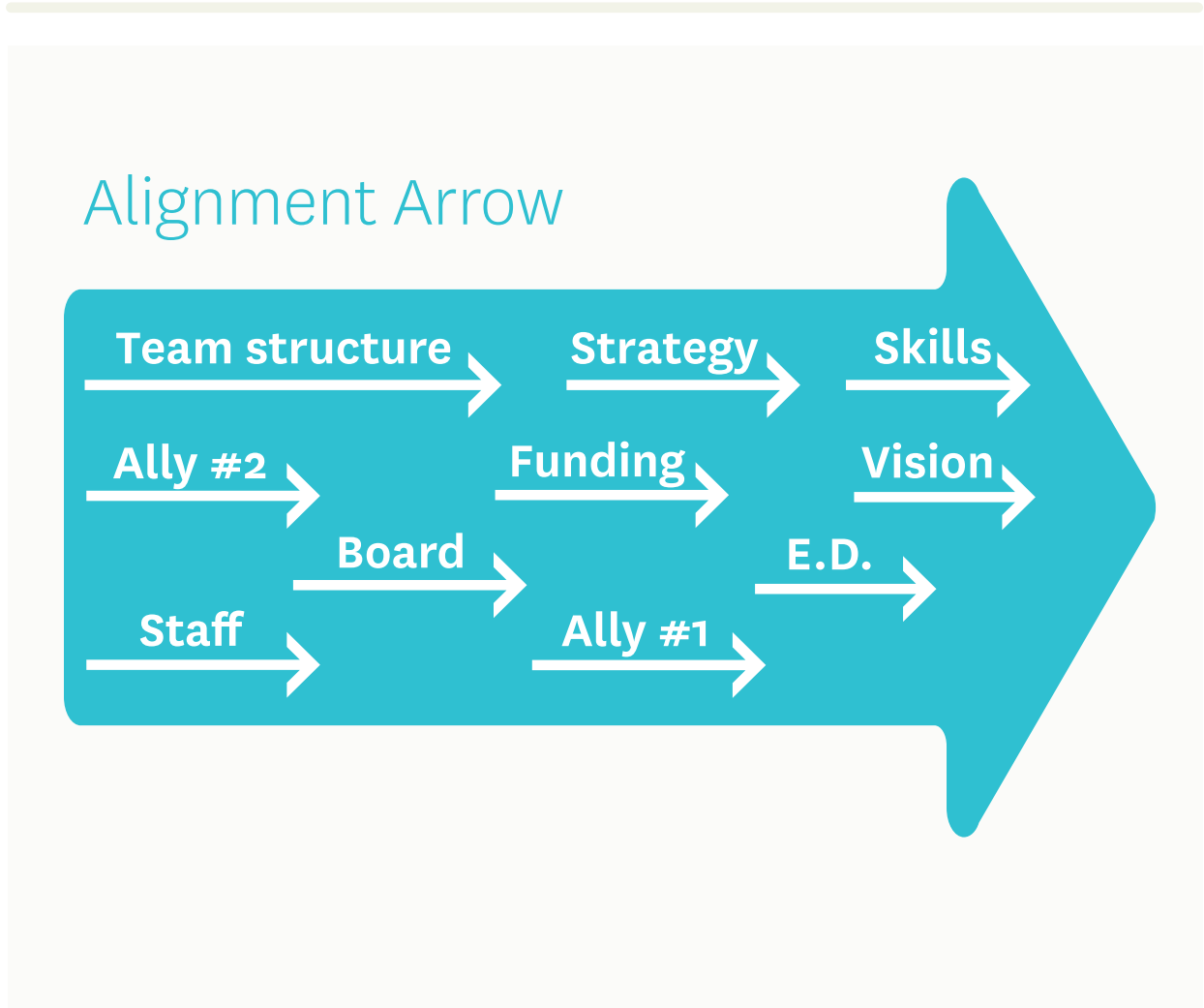
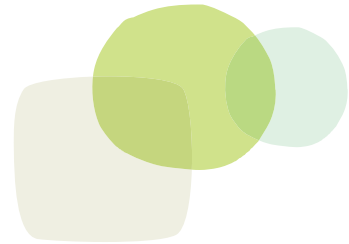


Think of each element of any organizational system as having potential energy to add to the collective power of the whole. Like individual streams joining to form a mighty river, we want all organizational energy aligned so that the full power of the organization is unleashed to fulfill its mission.

One of the fundamental tasks in Organizational Transformation is to get all the arrows moving in the direction of agreed-upon goals. (fig. 3)

*A thousand spider webs linked together can catch and hold the king of beasts.*

YORUBA PROVERB



(fig. 3)

# A Key Ingredient: Leadership

A critical ingredient in transformational change is leadership. Undertaking transformational change is risky business. It can take great courage to tell the truth about what is and isn't working in one's organization and to squarely face and address its shortcomings. There are risks in raising expectations about change and investing precious resources. Someone needs the audacity to question long-standing assumptions about the way things are and to challenge deeply-engrained habits about the way things are done. Organizational Transformation ultimately requires all stakeholders to step up and own the change. But it begins with someone having the foresight and the conviction to take a stand that change is needed—and to do this knowing that you yourself will also have to change.

To initiate systemic change, in addition to vision and courage, it's helpful to have power. It is easiest to initiate transformation from the top. If you run an organization, while your positional power alone is not sufficient to force change, your vision for change will at least be taken seriously by other stakeholders.

The primary danger of change programs led from the top is the scenario known as the leader's "pet project." We sometimes see this after leaders come back from a Rockwood program, inspired by their first exposure to transformational principles and tools. They are sometimes filled with boundless enthusiasm to do a make-over on their organization. Staff try to hide their skepticism—if not their allergic reaction to yet another "pet project" of their boss—and basically drag their feet, hoping it will soon pass so they can get back to work. Transformation requires a deep sense of ownership throughout the organization. Top leaders need to skillfully engage staff in both the need for change and an inspiring vision of what's possible. Staff must actively help shape the change process, not be at the effect of it.

It is more challenging but still possible for people other than top leaders to inspire organizational transformation. If you lack positional power, there are three basic strategies available to you:

## 1. Enroll the decision-maker(s)

Bring your ideas, your passions, and your best case for change to those who do have more power. Inspire, educate, and engage top decision-makers in a purpose- and mission-driven dialogue to embrace the need for change.

## 2. Demonstrate the value

Create interest in change by demonstrating the value of transformation in an area where you have sufficient leverage. This might look like creating change in a team or department, demonstrating to the larger organization what's possible, and then hopefully enrolling others to follow your example.

## 3. Organize

When the first two strategies fail, if you believe the need for change is truly critical to the health and success of the organization you are indeed placed in a difficult situation. When conditions are bad enough, it can become an issue of integrity. Staff in these situations may choose to leave. But there is another option: those without positional power can adopt the traditional tactics of those with less power and organize. Organize staff to create pressure to change from the ground up, or in extreme cases, go around management to the Board or members. This latter route is, of course, disruptive, has risks, and is not to be taken lightly. But to truly serve an organization's mission and stakeholders, it is sometimes necessary to actually mount "coups" against dysfunctional founders or abusive leaders.

While these three alternate strategies are sometimes successful, it is usually easier to initiate transformation with the active leadership from the top leader(s).



## CENTER FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE: a staff-inspired organizational transformation

Pamela Chiang, at that time a regional field organizer for the Center for Community Change (CCC), was a graduate of Rockwood's National Yearlong Leadership training and Robert's Art of Change professional program. Inspired by the possibilities of bringing this approach to her organization, Pamela was able to get backing for offering her own yearlong training that exposed a select group of CCC staff to transformational approaches, principles, and practices, as well as skills in purposeful writing, strategic thinking, and understanding of structural racism. The great success of this program helped inspire top leadership to engage in a full-on, multi-year process of organizational transformation that included:

- ▶ re-envisioning CCC's strategy for social change
- ▶ establishing a values-based culture with clear behavioral norms
- ▶ investing in personal leadership skills and development of staff
- ▶ clarifying decision-making throughout the organization
- ▶ reducing organizational overload



Pamela Chiang,  
CCC Director of Organizational Learning

## Do You Need Help?

Can leaders facilitate the transformation of their own organizations?

Yes, but there are good reasons why it may be wise to reach out for skilled help.

### The case for hiring consultants to assist with organizational change

#### LACK OF BANDWIDTH

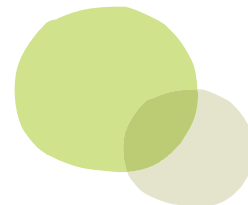
Our organizations and leaders are most often already stretched to meet their ongoing commitments. Organizational Transformation requires considerable direct leadership attention. Who will wake up each morning feeling personally responsible for moving the change process forward? External, dedicated resources can be helpful in providing consistent focus to guide and implement a major change.

#### LACK OF OBJECTIVITY

It is impossible for leaders to see their own organizations (and themselves) objectively. We are creatures of the culture we live in, and seeing our own culture is said to be like a fish trying to describe water. Also, leaders receive filtered information. External consultants will always see and hear things that will never reach the leader without a safe conduit.

*Asking for help is not  
a sign of weakness,  
but a sign of strength.*

ANON.





### THE LEADER ALSO NEEDS TO CHANGE

Organizational change virtually always requires leaders to change some long-standing ways of thinking and behaving. The old adage applies here that, “The doctor who treats herself has a fool for a patient.” We don’t know what we don’t know. Most leaders can benefit from some expert coaching and support. (Their staff would usually agree with this recommendation!)

### ISSUES IN THE DOMAIN OF HEARTS & MINDS

When trust is low; when there is a concerning lack of open and honest communication; when emotions are running high: these may be especially important times to bring in an outside consultant—one who is skilled in working with emotions and mediating conflict, and one whose neutrality and objectivity is trusted by all parties.

### NEED FOR SPECIFIC EXPERTISE

Often in a change process there will be a need for particular expert help with such things as strategy, communications, technology, fundraising, etc.

### CREATING THE BEST CHANCE OF SUCCESS

Sometimes, the right question is not “can we possibly do it ourselves?” but “what will help ensure the change the organization truly needs?” Organizational Transformation is an art, and skilled practitioners will most often help create better results.

## Leadership’s role and responsibility in managing change

Expert help can be of great assistance in transformation, but hiring consultants is far from a panacea.<sup>24</sup>

Regardless of whether or not we engage consultants, top leaders still bear final responsibility for guiding the change process and are accountable for its success. In practice,

it is very helpful for leaders to have some understanding of managing organizational change in order to most effectively engage and partner with consultants. In addition to our senior leaders knowing the basics of transformation, we need to develop more internal change specialists like Pamela Chiang, of Center for Community Change, within our larger Progressive institutions. Many corporations have HR professionals whose expertise is leading organizational change. Trained internal change staff can help skillfully manage and partner with the external resources to help ensure a successful change process.

In today’s world, we need transforming organizations that can continually adapt and thrive in changing conditions. **Managing change should be a key competency for all contemporary leaders.**



### Putting it all together

Let’s look at a Progressive organization, Jewish Fund for Justice (now called Bend the Arc) which successfully undertook a profound transformation integrating Hearts & Minds, Behavior, and Structure.

<sup>24</sup> See *Partnering with Consultants* and other tools for consultant-client engagement by visiting <http://www.stproject.org/resources/tools-for-transformation/client-engagement/>



## THE STORY OF JEWISH FUNDS FOR JUSTICE (now called BEND THE ARC)

In 2005 Jewish Funds for Justice (JFJ) embarked on a profound journey of transformation that brings to life many of the principles and practices discussed in this paper.

### Vision for Change

Even prior to beginning his tenure as President of Jewish Funds for Justice, Simon Greer had been collaborating with a group of four colleagues to help birth a vision.

“The Jewish community had lost its traditional role as an anchor of the social justice movement. Jewish institutions were out of step with most Jews. Many Progressive Jews were not connected to each other. And there was also a loss of religious and spiritual grounding within the Progressive movement.

The Jewish community had a lot of potential power and access, as well as a profound tradition imbued with deep wisdom. But not enough people were trying to pull those pieces together.”

Their vision: “To be the central address for Jewish social justice...by bringing these strands together to have Jews play a critical role in helping America fulfill its promise and pursuing justice as a core expression of Jewish values.”

This would represent a sea change for JFJ. There would be huge structural changes—mergers with three other organizations, staff growing from 12 to 40, creating management teams, and more. But as much as anything, to fulfill its new mission, a transformation was required in the hearts and minds of the people who worked there. In Simon’s words:

- ▶ “JFJ had operated in the background. Our belief was, ‘we give money so others can do.’ Staff had to make an intellectual and emotional leap to think of themselves as foreground rather than background.”
- ▶ “We funded a lot of good people doing really good work. But now we had to learn

how to operate off of a power analysis. How do our efforts actually build power? This proved to be a very difficult transition for people.”

- ▶ “We had believed that the only power we had was money. We were making a radical shift to equally embrace the power of our ideas and of organizing Jews.”
- ▶ “JFJ had had not made Judaism core to its identity. We now chose to make our Jewishness the heart and soul of our organization.”
- ▶ “JFJ shared the mentality of many traditional Progressive organizations. My collaborators and I joined JFJ right out of the Rockwood Selah<sup>25</sup> training having embraced a transformational approach. We believed that we needed to work on our own transformation



*Simon Greer, former President & CEO  
of Jewish Funds for Justice*

<sup>25</sup>An intensive leadership training for Jewish social justice leaders combining Rockwood training methodology and Jewish content, currently run by a partnership among Rockwood, Nathan Cummings, and Bend the Arc.



because who we are impacts the results we create. We shared the belief that that practices like direct feedback and caring for each other help create strong teams. But we also believed that we can't be an employment agency for good people. We're here to do something. We were all about risk-taking and being tough on performance.”

This new orientation represented nothing less than a revolution in hearts and minds. The revolution would not happen overnight—it would be a challenging, multi-year journey. Let's look at some of the things that ultimately helped create a successful transformation.

**Vision:** The new vision for JFJ was not birthed in some dramatic offsite, but evolved in conversations among Simon and his colleagues from their shared experiences in the Rockwood/Selah training. When Simon assumed the role of President of JFJ, “I asked if the four of them would come with me to JFJ. In my previous jobs, I held the vision alone and found it somewhere between difficult and futile. This vision didn't rest in me alone, and I didn't want to take it on without them.”

Soon all four were on staff or working as consultants. The group of five met regularly, honing the vision and checking on progress. It was an unusual arrangement, as Simon's cohorts were not all senior managers. In the office Simon was the President and ultimate decision-maker, but as a group they operated on consensus. Their output then had to make its way through the senior management team and formal decision-making processes. By the end of Simon's tenure six years later, all four had moved into senior management positions.

Their shared assumptions and values coming out of their transformational training helped create a foundation of trust. Although their purpose remained steady, the mission did evolve over the first years. JFJ had been a funder, but their new mission called for more than this. Early

on, one of their members, Mik Moore, walked into a meeting of the five and presented to the group the clearest articulation of their work to date:

**Alliance:** building power through connecting people

**Bank:** their traditional work of grant-making and lending

**Institute:** thought leadership and training

The pieces of this work had been floating around, but Mik's breakthrough was to put them together under one roof.

### **Hearts & Minds**

Simon says that “the whole culture changed.” And it needed to, because the existing organizational beliefs ran contrary to what was needed in order to fulfill the evolving mission.

Intensive training and education helped forge the new culture. In Simon's words:

- ▶ “We studied Judaism, went to Jewish meetings, explored Jewish involvement in the Civil Rights movement, and even observed the Orthodox Jewish calendar.”
- ▶ “We became steeped in power analysis, updating our analysis every year and using it to guide our programs.”
- ▶ “Many staff went through the Rockwood/Selah trainings to help provide a common baseline of transformational principles and practices and Jewish content.”
- ▶ “We then tried to bring Rockwood/Selah inside the organization.

JFJ developed its own internal staff trainings to develop new attitudes and skills. They invested huge amounts of organizational capital on their own transformation.”

JFJ staff worked intensively in the domain of Hearts & Minds. “All staff developed their own personal power mantras<sup>26</sup> and learned about each other's triggers and how to support each other. We understood each other's core wounds and conditioning. You could say to someone, ‘I think

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<sup>26</sup> *Power mantra:* A tool used in Rockwood's and Robert's trainings that helps leaders access inner clarity and strength.



you got triggered—were you feeling left out again, like the chubby kid on the playground?’ You can do phenomenal things if you can have those kinds of conversations so quickly and easily. Top leaders were expected to lead efforts to “be the change.” People received a clear message that to be a leader at JFJ you needed to take on some form of serious personal development, whether it be counseling, meditation, or other spiritual practice.”

**Behavior:** There was a radical shift in expectations of behavior. From the beginning, Hearts & Minds work was completely linked to an unyielding focus on results. Stosh Cotler, one of the original five, described it this way: “We kept asking again and again, ‘what is the change we’re trying to make?’ And then we pushed ourselves to get that.”

The introduction of formal goals and work plans was new to JFJ, and challenging for many staff. Stosh adds, “Some got it right away. For others, it was hard to internalize that goals aren’t an add-on, but the compass that drives the work. It was frustrating. No matter how many training and coaching sessions we had on writing SMART goals<sup>27</sup> some people never seemed to get it.” The performance bar was set high, and some struggled to meet it.

One of the most powerful levers for change was that staff at all levels learned how to give and receive honest feedback. They succeeded in creating a feedback-rich environment which included not only 360 surveys, formal feedback to colleagues, and team debriefs, but habits of exchanging regular, direct feedback to improve partnering, teamwork, and performance.

With such a radical shift in strategy, staff had to learn to operate in an environment of uncertainty and continual learning. JFJ began having major off-site gatherings two or three times each year, using these launches<sup>28</sup> to intensify the transformational process. One retreat began with Simon asking each person to share one noble failure. “You could feel the anxiety in the room

the first time we did it. ‘What? We’re going to talk about our failures right in front of each other?’” But this at first uncomfortable practice became an accepted and valued tool for learning.

Simon describes the previous culture as “scared and protecting.” The answer to new ideas was too often “no, we can’t.” The culture slowly transformed into one that is “courageous and risk-taking; from ‘can’t do’ to ‘can do.’”

Leadership from the top was instrumental to these shifts. Simon’s consistent message, delivered repeatedly to the Board, senior managers, and staff was, “We’re going to risk it all. We’re going for what is really needed. If the place crashes and burns in three years, it’s okay. Better to have risked it all and failed than not to have tried.”



*Stosh Cotler, Bend the Arc Executive Vice President*

<sup>27</sup> A widely-used model for goal-setting. SMART is an acronym standing for: Smart, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

<sup>28</sup> *Launch*: The term we use to describe intensive organizational processes (such as retreats) that are used to forward transformational change.





Simon and his informal team of five were very serious and disciplined around practice. Stosh says, “We regularly made commitments to each other about our own practice and called each other out if we failed to keep them. We were intense with each other. We felt like we were at the forefront of a revolution. We brought many behavioral practices into the organization: deep listening, courageous conversations, appreciative inquiry, stepping out of our comfort zones, thinking out of the box. We could see people before our eyes becoming smarter and better.”

**Structures:** The new strategy demanded rapid growth and new capacities. This was fueled by three mergers.<sup>29</sup> Almost every organizational structure had to be recreated. JFJ completely revamped its performance management systems. There were various incarnations of management teams. Policies and processes were retooled. A Board process paralleled the staff changes, as four organizations had to merge into one. Along with hard work on aligning expectations, the Board experimented with a number of alternative committee structures and operating procedures

**The process of transformation:** oriented organizational consultants were brought in at various points to help. But Simon and his Rockwood trainer-collaborators were able to provide much of the needed leadership, in large part due to their experience in transformational methodologies.

The rate and scope of change was breathtaking. Three years into the process, the mission took another evolutionary leap. Simon was on a hike at a second yearlong training led by Robert called the Art of Change. “I had an epiphany. I had spent the last three years building out JFJ to be the best we could be. But I realized that no matter how good we became, it wasn’t going to add up to real change if we didn’t raise the quality of the whole sector. It had been about us being exemplary, but now we would have to figure out how to help everyone else get better, too.”

This shift inspired new initiatives designed to



*Bend the Arc staff*

build the Jewish social justice sector and the field of faith-based community organizing. It also required that JFJ staff dramatically expand their sense of “we” to now include their whole sector.

Not all staff bought into these new directions. In Stosh’s words: “For some, our transformational approach was exciting. But for others, it required a level of self-examination, personal vulnerability, and connection with co-workers that was uncomfortable.” And some who wanted to stay with JFJ proved unable to operate effectively in the radically changing environment. Some chose to leave. Others were let go. Those who stayed worked hard.

This was not an easy, straight-ahead process. Transformation rarely is. Again from Stosh: “This was a long journey. There were moments where we had breakthroughs, but then would seem to fall back into old behaviors. There was even one moment when I was so frustrated that I came to Simon and said I wanted to quit. Instead, he promoted me to Executive Vice President.”

Despite obstacles and retrenchments, the new culture began to come into form. When asked for an exemplary story, Simon spoke about a pivotal

<sup>29</sup> The Sheva Fund, Spark, and the Progressive Jewish alliance.



event in a staff retreat:

“A set of junior staff basically mutinied, saying ‘we all work really hard, but we keep getting more work dumped on our plate. We don’t understand what the strategy is, why we’re always taking on new projects. We’ve had it. We need something to change.’”

Rather than crushing the mini-uprising, the senior staff threw open the rest of the retreat agenda to junior staff. “We ended up having a deep and honest dialogue. Senior staff were totally transparent. ‘Here’s what it’s like to try to raise money. We’re struggling to keep the doors open. Our funders have their own priorities, which don’t always match ours. They want us to do twice as much work but will only pay for half the personnel. We then keep pitching new programs trying to fill the gap. We know it’s too much. And the bad news is we don’t know how to change it.’ We confessed the humanity of our leadership.

Our staff told us that they wanted to know, that they wanted to be able to help us rather than just being on the receiving end. ‘We want to share the burden. We can handle the truth.’ It was a real breakthrough—finding common cause across lines of authority. As the chief fundraiser, it became clear that it was better for me not to be the only one holding all the stress, and better for staff to feel more enrolled in the challenges of the organization. Staff for the first time began to feel that they had some say in their own destiny.”

**The impact of transformation:** Simon and Stosh both credit going through the Rockwood/Selah trainings together and bringing the practices to JFJ as being fundamental to the success of the change process at JFJ.

But what about the work? Having a good work culture is fine, but was the transformation successful in helping Jewish Funds for Justice fulfill its mission and have greater impact in the world?

Simon responded to that question this way: “We

could talk about the many, many activists who have been through our stellar programs and say they have been life-changing. We could point to the increased connectivity and collective power of Jewish social justice activists, spreading out to the network of our alumni. Our field-building work had paid off to the point where everyone put their individual agendas aside to bring one unified message to the White House. If you know our community, that’s a real accomplishment!”

Stosh spoke about the impact of the Jewish Social Justice Roundtable, a thriving network of 21 Jewish social justice organizations in which JFJ played a central role. Two previous attempts to bring groups together had failed. Stosh attributed this success to the “baseline shared framework, language, and sense of trust built through many leaders having participated in the Rockwood/Selah trainings.” The Roundtable demonstrated its collective impact at a large annual conference of mainstream Jewish groups called the General Assembly. Usually two or three activist groups would attend, each jockeying for an opportunity to showcase their own work. But the Roundtable negotiated taking over a full day of the agenda to collectively raise up social justice and service learning to the center of the Jewish community.

The mission of JFJ goes beyond the Jewish community. Perhaps the vignette that really best demonstrates the social change potential of their network was the campaign to get Glenn Beck<sup>30</sup> off Fox News.

Simon describes what happened:

“At a time when some of our best leaders were being demonized on his show and people in the sights of his chalkboard<sup>31</sup> were trying to duck, we made the choice to fight. He attacked churches involved in social justice, and we seized the opportunity. We launched a Twitter storm called “Haiku Glenn Beck,” finally writing op-eds to deliberately catch his attention. We lured him into a fight.”

<sup>30</sup> *Glenn Beck:* For those who don’t know, Glenn Beck is a right wing radio and former television host for Fox known for vicious, personal attacks on liberal/Progressive leaders and causes.

<sup>31</sup> *Chalkboard:* Glenn Beck typically scribbled on a chalkboard the names of his individual and organizational targets of attack, drawing links to show purported interlocking conspiracies.



Beck lashed out at Simon: ‘Talk of the common good is what led to the death camps in Nazi Germany and Simon Greer, a Jew, should know better.’

“Well, we made him pay dearly for his vulgar blunder,” says Simon. “It was a high-risk strategy that put tremendous strain on the organization. Some donors dropped us. But we helped win the battle. Fox cancelled his national platform for spreading vitriol and lies. There is absolutely no way we could have done this without our years of investment into growing a compassionate culture that was uncompromising on results.”

Simon left JFJ in 2012 to become President of Nathan Cummings. Stosh Cotler continued as Executive Vice President under the new leadership of another Rockwood yearlong Fellow, Alan Van Capelle.

We have discussed how transformation is an ongoing process and we see that demonstrated here. Jewish Funds for Justice exemplifies the commitment to transformation as an ongoing organizational process. Under Alan’s leadership,

JFJ has been renamed Bend the Arc: A Jewish Partnership for Justice. While it is continuing down the path laid out in 2005, the organization is forging new ground, launching a C4 and a PAC, taking stronger stands on public policy issues, and strengthening their on-the-ground organizing.

The success of their transformation has brought greater impact, but also new challenges. Working locally and nationally, being multi-issue, having a C3, a C4, and a PAC, and running programs and campaigns creates a level of complexity that is challenging to manage internally and sometimes confusing for the outside world to understand. Stosh also reports that the ongoing big internal changes have created some transition fatigue.

Challenges notwithstanding, Bend the Arc is a success story of transformation: “Change that is profound, radical, and sustainable; change that fundamentally alters the very nature of something.” By working with all three domains of the Wheel of Change: Hearts & Minds, Behaviors, and Structures, it has become stronger, more potent, and a more successful force for social change.



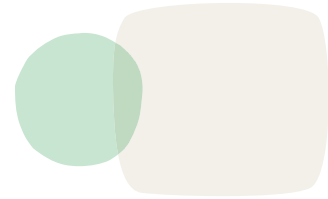
*Bend the Arc staff sounding the shofar for justice*

## Part I: In Conclusion

The effectiveness and health of our social change organizations (and our Progressive movement) would benefit greatly from a transformational approach to building organizational capacity and creating more robust work cultures. This requires a willingness to step back from the relentless pace of our social change work as well as an investment of time and resources in a better organizational future. The potential payoffs are huge.

Our social change organizations are filled with staff, board, members, volunteers, and supporters with incredible passion and commitment to making a better world. Part I of Transforming Organizations is intended to engage you in creating organizations that best channel this energy into sustainable social change.

Now that we have laid the framework for transforming organizations, how do we actually go about doing it?



*It takes courage to push yourself to places that you have never been before... to test your limits...to break through barriers. And the day came when the risk it took to remain tight inside the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.*

ANAIS NIN







## PART 2.

### Transforming Organizations: A User's Guide

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If it were easy, there wouldn't be a 70 percent rate of failure. Organizational Transformation has been likened to trying to change your tires while traveling down the road at 60 miles per hour. It would be so much simpler if we could somehow call a halt to ongoing projects while completely focusing on retooling or reinventing. But our challenge will be to do the work of change while continuing to do the work of running the organization.

We also have to contend with these complex, sometimes messy creatures called human beings. We have hopes and fears, sensitivities, and emotional triggers. Our energy waxes and wanes. Put us together in teams and organizations and we generate a multitude of interwoven, hard-to-predict relationships and dynamics.

We humans are also infinitely creative. Once the power of hearts and minds are unleashed and aligned together, anything becomes possible. This is exactly what we need for transformation. But it makes planning change "interesting."

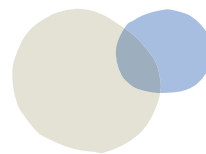
Transformation is an emergent phenomenon. We have a direction. We create conditions to liberate the human mind and spirit. We begin walking the path, but often what evolves could never have been conceived at the outset.

As a result, the organizational change process will never be neat and orderly. Leading transformation is more art than science, and doesn't allow for a formulaic approach. However, there is still much we can do to prepare to successfully lead change.

Part II is intended as a guidebook to help leaders, consultants, and others navigate the uncertainties, the challenges, and the opportunities of Organizational Transformation.

*Pathfinder, there is  
no path. You must  
make the path  
as you walk."*

ANTONIO MACHADO, SPANISH POET



# The Stages of Organizational Transformation

Before undertaking a journey, it is good to have some kind of roadmap, no matter how insufficient. While the change process will never be orderly, it is still helpful to think of Organizational Transformation as having five stages (*fig. 4*):

**Stage I: Prepare for Change**

**Stage II: Launch Change**

**Stage III: Plan the Change**

**Stage IV: Implement Change**

**Stage V: Completion**

Of course, real life is never quite this linear. A more useful representation shows Stages II-IV as a rolling cycle. (*fig. 5*)

We will walk through each of the stages in some detail, looking at principles, best practices, and tools to guide you. It's important to see how these play out in action, so throughout Part II, we will follow the case of Community Works (CW), a composite of several organizations to whom I have consulted.



## CASE STUDY: COMMUNITY WORKS

### An Organization in Need

Community Works is a successful, nationally recognized grassroots community organizing group located in one of our country's largest cities. In recent years, however, it has been struggling to adapt to a rapidly changing political landscape and demographic. Also contributing to CW's challenges is the founder/ED's waning energy and engagement.

After a long search and decision process, the Board recently hired a replacement for the retiring founder/director. The decision was a vote for change. The Board chose an external candidate over the Deputy Director who had been groomed for promotion by the founder. The new ED was charged by the Board to shake things up and to create a new strategic plan.

Community Works was traditionally organized around local issue campaigns and serving the needs of the large African-American community, but there are now almost as many Latinos as blacks in its district, along with a sizeable Asian-American minority. The Board saw the future of CW as becoming a truly multi-racial organization. Also, while committed to continuing its existing programs, the Board wanted to move towards organizing for longer-term political/electoral power. This would mean dedicating greater resources to state policy campaigns and building alliances with unions and other Progressive groups.

Tomás, the new ED, was getting the sense that implementing this new strategy might prove more challenging than it appeared when applying for the job. He had previously been the Deputy Director of a large statewide multi-issue group where they had had a good experience with organizational consultants. The consultant he had worked with at his previous job wasn't available, but recommended a colleague named Nicole.

## Stages of Organizational Transformation

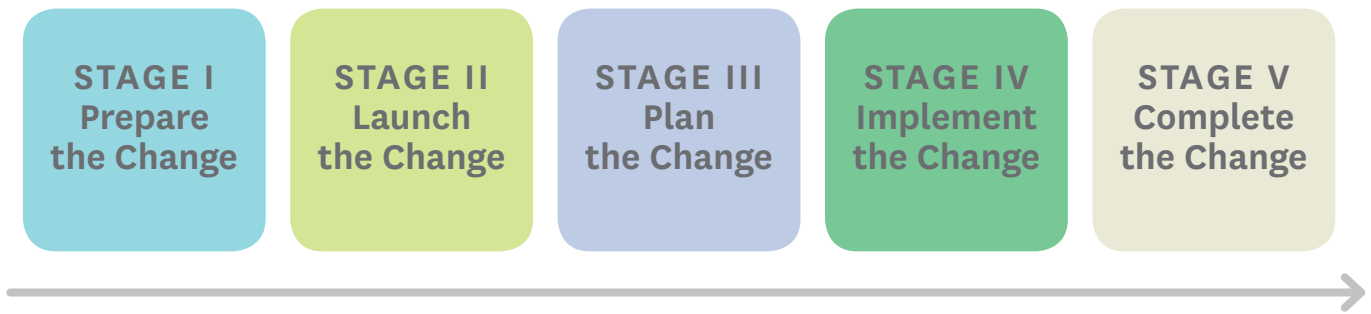


fig. 4

## Stages of Organizational Transformation (expanded)

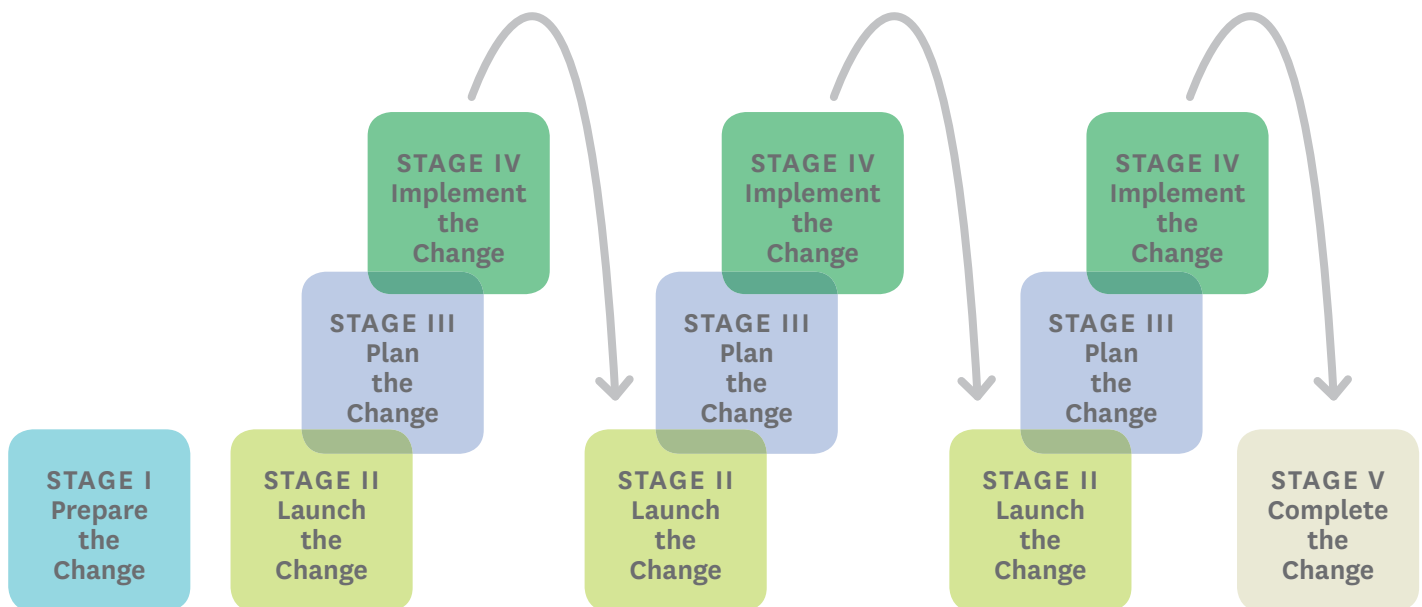


fig. 5





## STAGE I: PREPARE FOR CHANGE

*“Nourish beginnings, let us nourish beginnings. Not all things are blest, but the seeds of all things are blest. The blessing is in the seed. Let us nourish beginnings.”*

MURIEL RUKEYSER, AMERICAN POET

The success of any initiative is strongly influenced by how it’s birthed. We want to do whatever we can at the outset to lay a clear and strong foundation for the change process that will follow. Leaders and consultants need to address seven important success factors to prepare the organization for change. Depending on the conditions at a given organization, addressing these factors may be more or less relevant and more or less challenging to ensure.

### Success factors include:

1. Obtaining accurate information about the current state of the organization
2. Clarifying purpose, direction, and outcomes
3. Aligning leadership
4. Generating a felt need for change
5. Securing commitment to stay the course
6. Dedicating time and resources
7. Dealing with “rhino heads”

STAGE I: SUCCESS FACTOR #1

### Obtaining accurate information<sup>32</sup>

Just as a physician wants to establish a clear diagnosis before administering treatment, as organizational “healers”<sup>33</sup> it is critical to get a clear understanding of current organizational reality. This is more challenging than it may sound, as there are often significant barriers to doing so within many organizations:

- ▶ lack of open communication; fear of speaking honestly
- ▶ beliefs and blinders: assumptions and habitual ways of thinking
- ▶ denial: unwillingness to confront truths with potentially unsettling implications
- ▶ forest and trees: people lost in details; difficulty in seeing larger perspectives
- ▶ overwhelm: the urgency of fighting today’s battles that limits self-reflection
- ▶ defensiveness: not wanting to expose one’s shortcomings to oneself or others

***Like everything in transformational change, we want data that reflect conditions in all three domains of the Wheel of Change: Hearts & Minds, Behavior, and Structure.***

There are a number of possible ways of collecting data that can help to create a comprehensive picture of current conditions:

#### a. What those in the organization see

There is great wisdom within the hearts and minds of people who work in an organization. The key is to make it safe for people to say what they really think and feel. The only way to ensure fully honest information is either through anonymous surveys and/or confidential interviews by neutral outsiders. These methods will give leaders invaluable, if sometimes unsettling, information about the organization’s perception of itself, of its leadership and dynamics at play among its people.

#### b. Data-driven indicators of organizational performance and impact

What people inside an organization believe is one perspective on reality, but not the whole picture. Depending on the goals of the change process, organizational self-assessment may need to be balanced by reviewing more “objective” indicators, such as existing organizational performance data and/or conducting new research.

<sup>32</sup> See the *Assessment for Organizational Transformation* article, and other assessment tools by visiting: <http://www.stproject.org/resources/tools-for-transformation/assessment-for-organizational-transformation/>

<sup>33</sup> “Healing” is defined as “to make sound or whole” and “to restore to integrity.” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com>) As organizational healers, we look beyond fixing organizational problems to look at treating the whole system just as an integrative physician looks at the whole person, not just one ailing body part.

### c. Direct observation

We can often learn a lot about an organization by observing it in action. This is typically best done by experienced outsiders (e.g., consultants, colleagues from allied organizations, etc.), as organizational leaders are rarely sufficiently objective and their presence tends to alter the behavior they are trying to observe.

### d. Environmental scan

It may be important to look at our organizations in the context of their environment. The environmental scan looks at those things that impact the organization, but are not under its control. Depending on the organization, this may include factors like: economic conditions, political climate, government regulations, technological advances, changing demographics, funder priorities, and competition. The environmental scan may also include how the organization is perceived by others: allies, political opponents, potential supporters, media scans, public polling, etc.

To varying degrees, all leaders get filtered information from their staffs.

Well-executed organizational assessments virtually always contain some surprises for top leadership. By collecting quality information, we get a clearer sense of what's working and what's not, and can test the appetite for and potential resistance to change.

### ***The process of creating this picture of current reality is in itself a change process.***

Assessments can be like the legendary Pandora's Box. Once people are given the opportunity to voice their concerns, frustrations, fears, and aspirations, their hopes and expectations are raised. Leadership should not ask for input from staff unless they are prepared to really listen and actively respond to what gets raised in a meaningful way.

#### **Ask Yourself**

How might you collect the information you need on the current state of your own organization?

## CASE STUDY: COMMUNITY WORKS

### Obtaining accurate information

Tomás was clear that he didn't know what he didn't know. The internal dynamics at play at CW were quite different from his previous organization. Also, while familiar with the general terrain in which CW operated, he came from a different city and was not familiar with the local politics. He willingly agreed with Nicole's (the consultant) recommendation to begin with a thorough assessment of his new organization.

Nicole, in her 50s, was a former ED who had become an expert in Organizational Transformation and had considerable experience with social justice groups. Her cultural competence, partly shaped by her own experience as a multi-racial woman, was a good match for the complexities at CW. Together, she and Tomás created an assessment plan to help clarify the current state of Community Works. As will be true with every stage of the change process, cost was an issue. For example, while individual interviews offer more nuanced information, the number of interviews was limited in favor of less expensive (though still useful) online surveys. The assessment consisted of:

1. One on-one interviews with all seven managers, two key staff, and the Board chair
2. A confidential online survey given to all staff and Board members



3. Interviews with two key external partners
4. A survey given to a sample of community members
5. A thorough review of all financial records and accounting systems (outsourced to a financial consultant recommended by Nicole)

The assessment took somewhat longer than expected. The proposed survey of community members had to be dropped due to limited internet access and a poor response rate. Five weeks later, Nicole delivered an oral and written report to Tomás which showed the following:

#### **A lack of alignment around the new direction**

While a majority of the Board was in favor, other stakeholders were uncomfortable. The staff didn't really understand the implications of the new direction, and many felt more threatened than inspired. The new direction involved CW organizing to impact policy at a statewide level, where key budget decisions are really made. CW didn't have sufficient power on its own to affect those decisions, so success would require partnering with other Progressive groups. But some Board, staff, and community members were suspicious of other allies and were very concerned about moving away from the day-to-day core concerns of real people in their neighborhoods.

Bottom line: there was currently not sufficient alignment on mission and direction to initiate strategic planning.

***It is a common and unfortunate mistake to try to begin strategic planning when key staff are not aligned on mission.***

#### **Issues regarding race**

Black staff and some Board members were protective of CW's traditional priority on serving the interests of the African-American community and were anxious about the proposed changes, including the hiring of a Latino ED. Latinos carried a backlog of frustration at having been shut out, and were suspicious of the degree of the organization's commitment to equity for all racial groups. Given the Black-Brown tensions, the Asian-Americans and the few whites on staff generally

were trying to keep a low profile. The organization was basically avoiding dealing directly with issues of race.

#### **A critical need to deal directly with the deputy director**

The other candidate for the ED position, the Deputy Director (Malcolm), was clearly unhappy about not getting the job. He was a very talented organizer, carried important institutional memory, was widely respected in the community, and had a lot of support from staff. He was considering leaving, which would be a huge loss to the organization.

#### **A culture of intimidation**

Newer staff had difficulty with the existing work culture that formed around the founder's tough style—kind of like tough love without the love. It was an aggressive, unsupportive culture in which many people were afraid to speak up in meetings. Overall, trust among staff and between staff and board was quite low and would need to be rewoven for a major strategic transformation to succeed.

Overall, the assessment confirmed the ED's sense that his first task was not as simple as creating a strategic plan. As is frequently the case, the Board had been thinking primarily about the Structural changes that would be needed to implement a new strategy. The assessment revealed the depth of change that would be needed in the domains of Hearts & Minds and Behavior. Nicole shared her recommendations for how she could help address the challenges uncovered in the assessment. Tomás was fairly overwhelmed at the scope of suggested work. While he had found some money to pay for the assessment, there was no money budgeted for further consulting, much less at the scale Nicole was suggesting. As a brand new ED, Tomás also had concerns around optics: will bringing in a consultant so soon somehow be seen as a sign of weakness or his own lack of capacity as leader? Several rounds of discussion and some informal coaching were required before Tomás felt comfortable bringing the assessment to the Board along with his recommendation to engage Nicole to help bring change to CW.

## Clarifying purpose, direction and outcomes

There must be initial clarity on the purpose, broad direction, and goals of change process:

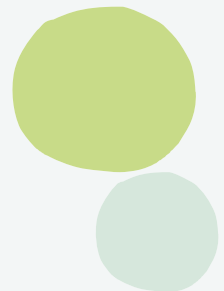
- ▶ What is the purpose of the change process?
- ▶ What are the most important outcomes for the organization?
- ▶ Are these outcomes important enough to the success of the organization's mission to make this a worthwhile investment?
- ▶ Reflect on all three domains of the Wheel of Change:
  - + What would success look like in the collective Hearts & Minds of the people?
  - + What would success look like with regard to how people Behave?
  - + What would success look like in the Structures of the organization?

### **Ask Yourself**

What would you have to do to clarify the purpose, direction, and outcomes for change in your organization?

## Clarifying purpose, direction and outcomes

The assessment set the stage for what would be needed to address all of the remaining Success Factors in Stage I. The Board and Tomás had already generally agreed on purpose, direction, and outcomes. However, before the assessment, the thinking had mostly been in the domain of Structure: what the new strategy and work needed to look like. The assessment revealed the depth of attention that would be needed to address issues in the domains of Hearts & Minds as well as Behavior.





## Aligning leadership

Key leaders with the most positional power must be aligned with the intended transformation. The end of the journey does not have to be clear at this point in the process, but top leaders need to agree on the need for change as well as the general direction and goals for the change process.

Right from the beginning, staff watches closely the attitudes and actions of top leaders. Seeing unaligned leaders undermines trust in the change process. Those key leaders clearly not on board must be:

- ▶ supported with coaching
- ▶ confronted
- ▶ reassigned to a less central position, or
- ▶ eventually exited

### ***Aligning top leaders may be a mini-change process in itself.***

In some of my consultations, I have worked with top teams for as long as six to nine months to ensure that top leadership was aligned and fully prepared to launch a major organizational transformation.

Depending on their history, trust, the degree of shared purpose and assumptions, and individual maturity and accountability, aligning the top team can be challenging—in some cases, even the hardest part of Organizational Transformation. But it is important not to engage the full organization in a change process when there is lack of alignment at the top.

Organizational leaders will often feel pressured to move quickly, but this can be a dangerous error. Lack of alignment at the top sends mixed signals throughout the organization, engendering confusion, cascading misalignment, and inviting resistance.

### ***Ask Yourself*** .....

Is there a need for deeper alignment among the leaders of your own organization? If so, how might you go about creating this?



PHOTO PROVIDED BY: SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

## Aligning leadership

The assessment revealed the extent of the lack of alignment around the new direction. It became painfully clear that it would be a mistake to engage staff in a change process until Malcolm was either committed to the new direction or exited from the organization. The ultimately successful strategy to align Malcolm included:

- ▶ a clear and credible commitment by the ED and Board to continue serving the black community
- ▶ an expanded portfolio for Malcolm, which actually gave him broader impact and visibility
- ▶ significant investment of time by Tomás to forge a personal relationship with Malcolm
- ▶ an agreement for Malcolm to continue as Deputy Director for a minimum of one year

This required a number of heart-to-heart talks and some negotiation over a six-week period before Tomás and Nicole felt confident that Malcolm was really on board. This building of personal trust proved absolutely critical. Nicole helped to facilitate conversations that reached well beyond the future of CW in which the two men shared their personal stories, their hopes and dreams, their fears and frustrations, and their deepest reasons for doing this work. There was still some work to do to align the other two key senior managers (Director of Organizing and Campaigns Director), but once Tomás and Malcolm were presenting a relatively united front, getting the other two on board was easy.

Here's an example of how it's hard to fit Organizational Transformation into neat boxes and phases: Tomás and Malcolm had to get over the initial hurdle in their relationship to even begin the process. But creating real partnership would require more time together, along with some coaching and facilitated dialogues with Nicole throughout Phases II, III, and IV. Malcolm was 38, had grown up in a rough neighborhood, and was raised by his mother after his father moved away from the family. Though Malcolm had been the first

in his family to go to college, he still carried some of the style of the tough, street-smart environment in which he came of age. Tomás was just a couple of years older, but had a very different upbringing. The grandson of Cuban immigrants, his family was relatively well-to-do and Tomás was raised in safe, comfortable surroundings. Their styles didn't jibe well. Malcolm mistook Tomás' less aggressive style as a sign of weakness, while Tomás failed to see through Malcolm's tough exterior and tough talk, judging Malcolm as not caring about people—which was far from the truth. Some months later, one night over beers they discovered that they both had been raised by their mothers, for Tomás' father had died when he was in grade school. The transformative process is full of these unpredictable occurrences. This conversation about the huge impact of having grown up without a father/male figure in their lives proved to be just the breakthrough that was needed in their relationship. After this exchange, Malcolm and Tomás still had to struggle to align their political thinking, but the growing personal trust began to shift these conversations from adversarial to increasingly generative.



## Generating a felt need for change

Change can be threatening, even painful. People need to feel the importance, even urgency, for the proposed changes. Motivation typically comes from either inspiration or threat. People can be roused out of comfort and complacency by a profound appeal to their deeper purpose and values.

*“We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community...Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own.”*

CESAR CHAVEZ

But sometimes what’s required is a calling out of danger, a confrontation with the reality that things can’t continue as they have.

*“I honestly believe it, and I’m ashamed to say it: the labor movement is on life support. Without dramatic, far-reaching and radical change, the American labor movement will become insignificant in the lives of American working families.”*

TERENCE O’SULLIVAN,  
PRESIDENT OF LABORERS’ INTERNATIONAL UNION

Leaders may at times need to highlight threats and challenges. One for-profit executive commissioned his company’s first-ever customer survey knowing that the results would be terrible, and then chose to make the findings public. This hurt stock prices and painfully jarred managers’ and staffs’ satisfied self-perceptions, but provoked the needed deep soul-searching and urgent motivation to change.

Whether by inspiration or threat, the case for change must be sufficiently compelling to create motivation for transformation.

### Ask Yourself

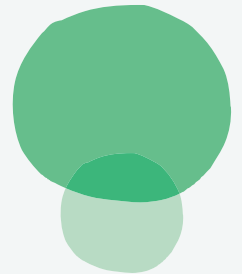
Is there a felt need for change in your own organization?

## Generating a felt need for change

A felt need for change was not a problem at CW. The assessment showed considerable frustration and even alarm at current conditions throughout the organization. Most staff agreed that change was needed. But while the Board was relatively clear on what direction to take, for the staff the issue was less about whether change was needed, but rather what kind of change.

*We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community...Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own.*

CESAR CHAVEZ



## Securing commitment to stay the course

Once we set down the road of transformation, it's hard and ill-advised to turn back. Once unexpressed concerns get named publicly, they become harder to ignore. Hopes get raised, and if there is no follow-through, people become disheartened and cynical about leadership and the possibility of change.

*"We went for an all-staff retreat. It seemed great at the time. We talked openly about long-standing problems. It felt like we were committed to really making changes. I left feeling hopeful, much more trusting of management, and excited about working here for the first time in years. But then nothing changed. It's like the Kool-Aid wore off and we were back in the same 'stuckness,' the bad patterns. I ended up feeling even more discouraged."*

INTERVIEW WITH ORGANIZER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE ORGANIZATION

**Don't open up these conversations about change unless you are committed to see it through.**

"Seeing it through" means assessing what's needed to actually address the major organizational shortcomings that are identified, and the commitment to a meaningful, robust change process integrating all three domains of the Wheel of Change.

### **Ask Yourself**

To what degree are stakeholders in your organization committed to seeing change through to completion?

## Securing commitment to stay the course

This success factor was firmly in place at CW. The Board and the Executive Director were staking the future of the organization on the change.





## Dedicating time and resources

Transformational change requires substantial amounts of time, resources, and money. It's critical not to underestimate what's required, and to make sure the organization is prepared to make the needed investments (or at least the first phase of organizational change, understanding that the full scope of work may be dependent on raising further funds.)

- ▶ What do we estimate this change process might cost?
- ▶ How will we pay for it?
- ▶ What human resources will this require? Where will we find the bandwidth?
- ▶ What is the opportunity cost or downside to focusing organizational resources on a change process? Given the chronic struggles with funding in the Progressive social change sector, finding sufficient resources for Organizational Transformation is a common challenge.

Timing is also a consideration, as there may be times in the yearly organizational cycle that are more or less favorable for launching a major new initiative.

- ▶ When should the change process be launched?
- ▶ Over what time period do we expect this change process to complete?
- ▶ How does this timing match up with other major organizational initiatives and needs?

***The work required for organizational change can't simply be piled on top of overworked staffs' existing goals. Equivalent responsibilities will need to be taken off peoples' plates.***

### Ask Yourself

In your organization, are sufficient time and resources being dedicated to the change process?

## Dedicating time and resources

Given the high priority placed by the Board on change, there was already commitment to dedicate time and resources. However, there had been a major shake-up at one of the organization's largest foundation supporters, and their funding was being cut. At the same time, the assessment indicated a much larger (and more expensive) scope of work than some of the Board had been expecting. Throughout the change process there would be constant tension between the need to invest more and limited funds. (Note: This is a common challenge in investing in organizational change in our under-resourced Progressive sector.)



NCLR staff

## Dealing with “rhino heads”

“Rhino heads” is shorthand for those obvious organizational dysfunctions that everyone knows about, but no one publicly acknowledges.

*“It’s like there’s a rhinoceros head in the middle of the office. There’s blood and guts pouring out of the open wound, and it stinks to high hell. But we all just walk about it and pretend it’s not there. No one says a thing.”*

FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH A  
FOR-PROFIT SENIOR MANAGER

Some typical examples of rhino heads include:

- ▶ a painfully and obviously inept senior manager who should have been fired long ago
- ▶ a staff person who, while skilled, frequently acts in ways that violate organizational values
- ▶ a major, long-standing personal conflict between two department heads
- ▶ an initiative that everyone knows should have been sunsetted long ago, but lingers on for fear of upsetting a key stakeholder

When trying to dream a new future, rhino heads are glaring negative symbols. Cleaning up a conspicuous rhino head sends an important and positive signal to the organization that leadership is getting serious about change.

### Ask Yourself

Are there “rhino heads” to deal with in your organization?

## Dealing with a rhino head at Community Works

Tomás did inherit one significant rhino head. The operations director, Cedric, had worked at CW since its very first year of operation and was a close friend of the founder. He was universally seen by other staff as incompetent, and his continued presence in the role was usually attributed to nepotism. Tomás intended to replace Cedric, but the situation was complicated by the outgoing founder having recently given him a new three-year contract—unprecedented by CW standards. In an ideal world, Tomás would have been able to let Cedric go quickly to send a signal to the rest of the organization. But “ideal worlds” are an illusion. The Board wanted to avoid a lawsuit and public dispute if at all possible. At the same time, being saddled for three years with an expensive and non-performing manager was unacceptable. Resolving this would prove to be a time-and energy-consuming project.



STAGE I  
Prepare  
the  
Change

STAGE II  
Launch  
the  
Change

STAGE III  
Plan  
the Change

STAGE IV  
Implement  
the  
Change

STAGE V  
Complete  
the  
Change

## STAGE II: LAUNCH THE CHANGE

**Setting the stage for change can take time and leadership courage, but it's what lays the critical pre-conditions for successful transformation.**

*“Without a revolution of the spirit, the forces which produced the old order would continue to be operative, posing a constant threat to the process of reform and regeneration.”*

AUNG SANG SUU KYI

*“The leadership systems currently in place too often look at us as our doing and they say, ‘do differently in order to change.’ But the Indian way says we’re not human doings, we’re human beings. If we want to change the doing in leadership, I need to change my being. And the way to change my being is to change my intent.”*

DON COYHIS, MOHICAN LEADER

Once the groundwork has been carefully laid, the transformational process is ready to begin in earnest with what we call a “launch.”

The launch is a symbolic, powerful event that announces and demonstrates that a major change is underway. It typically takes the form of some intensive gathering of key people in an organization: a retreat, a convention, a conference, etc.

If successful, the launch is a watershed convening where members actually experience living into new possibilities for themselves and the organization. Launch events may take on historical significance, when years later, people still talk about the event as a defining moment for the organization.

### DO YOU NEED A LAUNCH?

Slow and steady incremental work is critical to embedding change. However, there is nothing like the condensed power of a launch to create

breakthroughs in Heart & Minds. The word “launch” is descriptive of how these intensive gatherings can be likened to the powerful thrust of a rocket that propels teams or organizations out of the gravitational pull of history and habit.

The question always arises, where do you start on the Wheel of Change?

While there are no hard-and-fast-rules, early on there usually needs to be intensive work in Hearts & Minds. Until people are aligned behind the new direction and energy is unleashed for change, it's hard to advance very far in the change process. This is the fundamental reason for a launch.

It is possible to create transformation without launches. But they are such powerful tools that I always choose to use one or more launches somewhere in the transformational change process with organizations, and would likely hesitate to work with a group that was resistant to investing in a well-planned, well-timed launch.



## Launch: The Agenda

The power of the launch comes primarily from creating breakthroughs in Hearts & Minds (the ways people think and feel) and an opportunity to try on new Behavior.

Although launches can look and feel very different, elements of a successful launch typically include:

1. Aligning around purpose and vision
2. Opening communication
3. Appreciating what works
4. Reflection
5. Building community
6. Learning
7. Accomplishing something

STAGE II: ELEMENT #1

### Aligning around purpose and vision

The foundation for change in an organization is a powerful agreement around where we're going and what we're trying to create. The launch must be an emotional as well as intellectual experience of people coming together in a shared sense of purpose and commitment to a chosen direction.

Years ago, I was asked by the Executive Director of a major research and advocacy group to do strategic planning. In surveying her staff, I discovered that those engaged with advocacy felt that their contributions weren't highly valued, and believed that the primary juice in the organization was around research. Strangely enough, those in research felt the same way—somewhat under-appreciated and that the primary focus of the organization was advocacy. The ED was mystified, and handed me their vision statement that clearly stated that the unique contribution of this organization was the synergy between rigorous research and robust advocacy. But the data was clear, so we dedicated the first part of the offsite to work on vision. I led small cross-departmental teams in an experiential process

STAGE II: ELEMENT #2

### Opening communication

One of the keys to creating the conditions for transformation is to get the real conversations happening in the room. Most organizations are hindered by the lack of honest dialogue, good clear feedback, and free flow of information.

Part of a successful launch is getting people to break through into greater trust and begin to communicate more honestly and directly. Open communication is a critical foundation of Organizational Transformation, yet achieving this can be challenging. There are often long-standing norms of avoidance, and breakthroughs into greater truth-telling often require good (and sometimes courageous) facilitation. We must release the collective brain and heart power of the organization's members in order to generate their best, most creative thinking.

to create their vision of greatness for their organization. All of the teams reported back excitement about the potential for synergy between the two departments, and insisted on rewriting the vision statement. Small groups worked late into the night to redraft the document. With great passion and fanfare, the next day everyone physically signed the new vision statement. If you laid the new document side-by-side with the original statement, the changes were nuanced rather than substantial. But the experience of co-creating the vision created deep emotional ownership and bonding, releasing enormous energy for the strategic planning and organizational alignment that followed.

ROBERT GASS



## Appreciating what works

Critique of what's not working is a natural and important element of organizational change. Yet a steady diet of critique can be spirit-killing. Critique needs to be balanced by appreciating and honoring what's good about the organization, what the organization is like at its best, and how we take the best from our past as we look towards the future. There is an entire discipline of organizational development called Appreciative Inquiry based on this approach.

Appreciation helps generate the hope and positive energy needed for change.<sup>34</sup>

## Reflection

A special gift of launches is the quality of time and space that is almost impossible to find amidst the busy pace of work. Retreat allows us to step back from activity and begin to reflect, to dream new dreams and renew old ones, to reassess, recalibrate and redesign, to re-imagine and reinvent.

## Building community

Relationships are the connective tissue that make collaborative work thrive. Launches are opportunities for people to come together as people, to connect to their common dreams and values, to work and play together, to deal with past hurts and mistrust, and to renew and deepen their bonds of caring and commitment to each other.

## Learning

Whatever their past successes, in this era of rapid change, organizations need to continue to stretch and grow. An important ingredient in many launches is, therefore, the opportunity to learn new things. This might include some training, an inspiring external presenter, exposure to new ideas, research undertaken by the organization, sharing best practices, etc.

## Accomplishing something

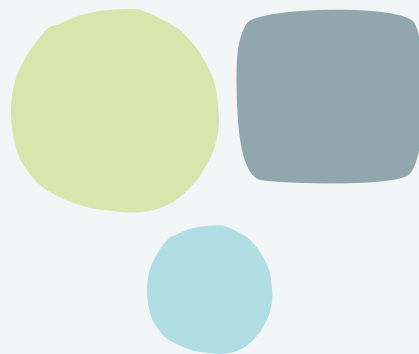
As launches represent a significant investment of organizational resources and energy, people typically feel better about the time spent if some "real" work gets done. When the launch process moves the ball forward on an organizational priority, people get to experience the tangible payoffs for investing in working on Hearts & Minds and Behavior.

### THE LAUNCH: FORMAT

The ideal is usually to engage as many significant stakeholders as possible in a multi-day retreat. Depending on the nature of the organization, in addition to staff this might include board members, key volunteers or members (e.g. community leaders), or critical allies.

The intention of the launch is to build a critical mass of energy and to create a shift in the way the organization thinks of itself and operates. Although there is often resistance to scheduling a multi-day retreat, this quantity and quality of time and space is highly recommended for initiating transformational change.

In smaller organizations, the launch might include the entire organization—everyone together in one face-to-face gathering. In large organizations, it may be more practical and/or appropriate to first bring the top level(s) of leadership through a launch process. When there is sufficient alignment at the core, the rest of the organization can be engaged in a cascading series of launch-type engagements.



<sup>34</sup> Important note: in organizations where there is built-up mistrust or resentment, people may need an opportunity to vent their frustrations before they are ready to appreciate what works. For further information on Appreciative Inquiry, go to <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>, and/or see the *Appreciative Inquiry Process* and other facilitation tools by Robert Gass by visiting: <http://www.stproject.org/resources/tools-for-transformation/facilitation/>

## The Launch: Success Factors

Launch events represent significant investments of resources, energy, and peoples' hopes. There are a number of things we can do to help ensure the likelihood of a successful launch:

1. Building ownership of the launch
2. Good planning
3. Dealing up-front with potential derailers
4. Building in follow-through
5. Skilled help

STAGE II: SUCCESS FACTOR #1

### Building ownership of the launch

It's far better to start a retreat with participants feeling like they had input into the design of the launch, versus feeling like something is being done to them. Best practices include:

- ▶ Making sure the agenda planning team is representative of key constituencies in the organization.
- ▶ Giving all participants the chance to offer input into the goals and/or agenda of the launch—in addition to direct engagement with planning, this input can be obtained through interviews, focus groups, or electronic surveys.
- ▶ Creating an agenda that demonstrably reflects the expressed needs of staff.

STAGE II: SUCCESS FACTOR #2

### Good planning<sup>35</sup>

All the good work in Stage I (Prepare for Change) can come to fruition here. Thorough pre-work produces the right agenda for the right outcomes and ensures that the time spent at the retreat will yield maximum value and return. The quality of agendas can make or break retreats. A few tips:

- ▶ Don't overstuff the agenda. It is one of the most common mistakes in agenda planning. Allocate adequate time. Real life in the room always takes longer than we think.
- ▶ Make sure there is a clear purpose and outcome(s) for each agenda item.
- ▶ Down time is important in these events. Some of the most important connections and conversations happen on breaks, at meals, or late at night after the program is complete.
- ▶ Build in lots of participation. Beware of "death by presentation." Don't have people being talked at for more than 30-45-minutes at a stretch, maximum.<sup>36</sup>
- ▶ Plan for the unplanned. Leave space and flexibility in the agenda, for what emerges can never be fully anticipated. Those guiding the launch should be prepared to adjust. What's important is achieving the outcomes, not following the plan.

STAGE II: SUCCESS FACTOR #3

### Deal up-front with potential major derailers

Your data collection in Stage I and the launch planning process should help to identify those critical flashpoints that might derail an offsite, such as:

- ▶ high degree of conflict between major players
- ▶ a key leader not on board with the change process
- ▶ conflicting visions for the offsite

While challenging issues can certainly be dealt with at a launch, some dynamics are better handled in a non-public setting. And even when conflictual issues are going to be on the agenda, very often pre-work such as one-on-ones, coaching, and some pre-negotiations, etc., can pave the way for a greater likelihood of success at the retreat.

<sup>35</sup> See the *Facilitator's Meeting Checklist* and other facilitation tools by visiting: <http://www.stproject.org/resources/tools-for-transformation/facilitation/>

<sup>36</sup> Research shows that most adult learners can stay tuned in to a lecture for no more than 20 minutes at a time, and even this long only at the beginning of a program. <http://www.ntlf.com/html/pi/9601/article1.htm>

## Building in follow-through

All too often at retreats, people, in the intoxication of the moment, make all kinds of commitments about what they will do when they return home, and then fail to follow through. This frequent phenomenon undermines trust and can be very disheartening. To ensure maximum implementation of what gets generated at a launch, best practices include:

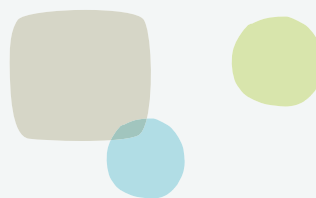
- ▶ assign people in advance to be responsible for follow-up (and make sure they have bandwidth/dedicated space in their work plan)
- ▶ be disciplined at the retreat in being realistic and sober in making commitments
- ▶ have people make key commitments publicly before those assembled
- ▶ use tools like the DARCI grid<sup>37</sup> to make sure there's an accountable person for every follow-up activity
- ▶ have clear deliverables and time frames for all commitments
- ▶ be mindful of the total number of commitments being made, and the number of commitments for which any one person is accountable
- ▶ keep a “public” record of commitments that come out of the launch
- ▶ form accountability “buddies” to check in with post-retreat re: progress and obstacles to follow-through

## Skilled help

Whether or not an organizational consultant is engaged as an ongoing partner in the overall change process, it is often a wise investment to get professional, skilled facilitator for launch events. We want to maximize the return on investment of this large output of organizational energy. Expert facilitation can make or break an important launch.

### Ask Yourself

Do you need a launch for your change process? If so, what are some key considerations for planning and implementing a successful launch?



*Without a revolution of the spirit, the forces which produced the old order would continue to be operative, posing a constant threat to the process of reform and regeneration.*

AUNG SANG SUU KYI

<sup>37</sup> The DARCI (Also known as RACI). grid is a tool for assigning accountability for team projects. See the *DARCI Model* and other team performance tools by visiting <http://www.stproject.org/resources/tools-for-transformation/team-performance/>

## The Launch

Once Tomás and Nicole felt comfortable that the top four leaders were aligned, they planned for a three-day residential launch. The Organizing Director, Helen, was tasked with taking the lead to work with Nicole on the planning, in consultation with Tomás and Malcolm.

They decided to include all 40 staff in the retreat, along with the Board chair. Nicole felt she had much of the needed input from her first round of interviews and surveys, but a brief additional survey was conducted with all staff to get specific input into the retreat agenda.

Here was the agenda for the retreat:

### Day I

- ▶ Welcome and context from ED
- ▶ Opening circle and introductions
- ▶ Review and discuss Nicole's assessment
- ▶ Sharing stories that capture the purpose and spirit of CW
- ▶ Interactive process to clarify the purpose and mission of CW
- ▶ Detailed presentation and questions re: the new direction and strategy
- ▶ Working groups: the challenges and opportunities of our new strategy
- ▶ Evening: learning about the cultural/ethnic groups that comprise CW by sharing the art and music that's most important to us

### Day II

- ▶ Clarifying the values and rules of the road by which CW will operate
- ▶ Honest discussion of the ways we are currently living and not living these behaviors
- ▶ Dialogue with leadership: a safe space for staff to raise any and all concerns with senior managers and Board chair

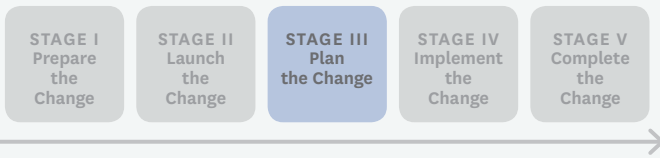
- ▶ Working groups: addressing major challenges in implementing the new strategies
- ▶ Evening:
  - + Individuals give and receive feedback with the colleagues with whom they work most closely
  - + Party—dancing

### Day III

- ▶ Workshop on structural racism
- ▶ Working groups: race and our strategy; implications for our organization
- ▶ Planning for change process going forward
- ▶ Introduce the Wheel of Change. Review work to be done in Hearts & Minds, Behavior, and Structure
  - + Assign roles and responsibilities
  - + Create Change Team to guide process
- ▶ Review of calendar for next six months; priorities
- ▶ Closing ritual

Although Tomás and Malcolm played leadership roles at the retreat, they wisely engaged Nicole to facilitate. There were many challenging dynamics to manage and some tense moments where expert facilitation made all the difference, including some tough dialogues between leadership and staff. The chief issues identified in the assessment did come out in the open. While not everything was completely resolved, considerable built-up tension in the organization was relieved and a new norm established that difficult conversations could happen in constructive ways. Most staff came away with more confidence in their new leader, relief at seeing Malcolm positive and on board, and guardedly hopeful that a new era might be dawning at CW. Perhaps most importantly, most people felt empowered to be a part of forging this new era. A lot of positive energy and good will was generated. Now, of course, the challenges of translating this good start into real change lie ahead.





## STAGE III: PLAN THE CHANGE

*“We make the road by walking.”*

MILES HORTON, EDUCATOR,  
CO-FOUNDER OF THE HIGHLANDER SCHOOL

Organizational Transformation is a unique brew of planning for change while dancing with emergent phenomena. We are attempting to alter ingrained habits and reweave outmoded organizational culture. We don’t know what we don’t know, and no plan can fully anticipate what will be discovered during the journey of transformation. Organizational Transformation is a series of informed experiments, and we truly must “make the road by walking.”

### **Having said this, you still need a good plan.**

*“In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.”*

GEN. DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

While some initial planning needs to precede the launch, comprehensive planning for change usually should wait until after the outpouring of new ideas and energy that comes when the larger organization has been engaged in the breakthrough event(s). Waiting post-launch also affords greater engagement and buy-in to the planning.

The energy and good feelings from the launch invariably fade. The purpose of Stage III is to harness and ground this energy through sustained, incremental change.

While continuing to reinforce Hearts & Minds work, we now begin to focus more on the work of changing organizational Behavior and making the changes in organizational Structure that will support and institutionalize the change process.

Here are some of the key elements to consider in Stage III:

1. Leadership
2. The Plan
3. Measurements

STAGE III: ELEMENT #1

### **Change leadership**

Given the daily fires of ongoing organizational life, committed, dedicated leadership is necessary for the change process to succeed.

1. Someone needs to wake up every morning thinking about how to advance the change process—a designated point person with sufficient organizational authority to add credibility and priority to the change process.
2. There should be a formal Change Team responsible for guiding and implementing the change. This is usually separate from the management team, though it may include some of the same leaders. The Change Team is primarily an implementation team. Members should be people who really “get” the transformation. The team should include some non-managers and be a microcosm of the organization, representing key perspectives. When people throughout the organization look at the membership of the Change Team, you want them to feel trust in the leadership of the transformational process.
3. The very top leader(s) may or may not be a formal part of the Change Team, but they have to both own and lead the change process.

#### **Ask Yourself** .....

**What kind of leadership do you need for your own change initiative?**

## Changing leadership

Helen, the Organizing Director, was chosen to be the point person for the change process (the “A” or accountable person in the DARCI model). Part of this choice came from the desire to make more visible the only female senior manager at CW. She would be accountable for results to the four-person Management Team (of which she was a member). Helen was joined by four others to form the Change Team—two middle managers and two staff. Criteria for selection included:

- ▶ All five members had real passion and energy for the change process.
- ▶ Collectively, they reflected the current racial balance at CW.
- ▶ Each was a key opinion leader in their department.
- ▶ Collectively, they had the trust of the Senior Management Team.

*In preparing for battle  
I have always found  
that plans are useless,  
but planning is  
indispensable.*

GEN. DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER



## The Plan

The plan focuses on the changes needed to bring the organization into alignment to fulfill the purpose and goals of the change process. Here are some best practices for successful change planning:

### 1. Stay focused on the end results

Everything should be focused on achieving the purpose and goals of the change. It's a common mistake for change efforts to become overly focused on a series of activities (e.g., the next offsite or the Board meeting) and lose sight of outcomes.

### 2. The Plan should address each domain of the Wheel of Change:

Hearts & Minds, Behavior, and Structure.

### 3. Greater focus on Behavior

A high priority is identifying and planning how to implement and reinforce the new Behaviors that have been identified as critical to success.

*"It is not organizations that transform, but people. Transformations can be accelerated by acting to maximize the likelihood that vast numbers of individuals will make positive choices in relation to how their personal behaviors influence the desired culture...Company transformation accelerates when a critical mass of leaders transform themselves."<sup>38</sup>*

MCKINSEY & COMPANY PUBLICATION

Plan how to support these new Behaviors with:

- ▶ ongoing conversations with staff focusing on the desired behaviors
- ▶ a process for setting individual and team goals regarding new behavior
- ▶ specific ways to practice new behaviors
- ▶ a variety of feedback loops to support individual and team accountability

- ▶ assessing success with the new behaviors in both performance check-ins and performance appraisals
- ▶ training and coaching

### 4. Greater focus on Structures

Perform a thorough institutional assessment of organizational structures, strategies, processes, etc., that may need to be aligned as part of the organizational transformation.

### 5. Reinforce the work in Hearts & Minds

While there is a greater focus in Stage III on Behavior Change and Structure Change, it is important to continue reinforcing the shifts in Hearts & Minds generated in the launch. Some examples:

- ▶ dialogues on how to implement vision and values in daily organizational life
- ▶ staff training in personal mastery skills<sup>39</sup>
- ▶ individual and group practices (see pg. 105)
- ▶ regular team check-ins on progress and how people are doing
- ▶ celebrating individual, team, and organizational successes

### 6. Be mindful of organizational bandwidth

This is critical. Our people are usually already overloaded. Things will need to come off peoples' plates to make room for the change process. Where possible, the plan should dovetail with existing organizational priorities, rather than adding on work to already busy schedules. Space must specifically be allocated in work plans to account for organizational change initiatives.

### 7. Training and capacity building

Plan to provide adequate training. Organizational Transformation asks a lot of people. Anxiety around not knowing how to succeed in the new culture is a major cause of resistance. While all staff will likely need some training, especially invest in those critical to the change

<sup>38</sup> T Aiken, Carolyn; Keller, Scott; Rennie, Michael, [The Performance Culture Imperative](#), McKinsey & Co., 2007.

<sup>39</sup> *Personal mastery skills* covers a range of individual leadership capacities such as the ability to stay calm and clear in challenging situations, maintaining focus and priorities amidst torrents of incoming agendas, effective public speaking, ability to listen deeply and create rapport with others, etc.

process with training in capabilities like organization transformational leadership skills, facilitation, emotional intelligence, and change management.

### 8. Beware of “internal focus”

Mission critical work must continue unimpeded during the process of organizational change. While adequate time and resources must be allocated to change-related activities, whenever possible, the change activities should be integrated into the ongoing work of the organization. Examples:

- ▶ use upcoming campaign activities as a way to practice new behavior
- ▶ use next community engagement meetings to deepen understanding and application of the new organizational values

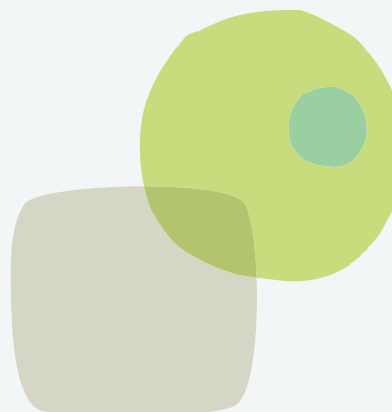
### 9. The plan cannot not be mechanistic

Remember that transformation is emergent. As long as people share the same vision and commitment, there must be considerable flexibility for individuals and departments to create their own experiments and pathways to success.

### 10. Plan for easy victories:

- ▶ Look for easy and quick successes that can help motivate and strengthen people’s belief in the possibility of change.
- ▶ What steps can be taken successfully in a matter of weeks?
- ▶ Take big goals and break them down into achievable milestones.

Each success deepens confidence and commitment, generating energy for the next milestone.



#### **Ask Yourself** .....

How can you apply the best practices for planning change to your plan for change in your organization?



## Measurements

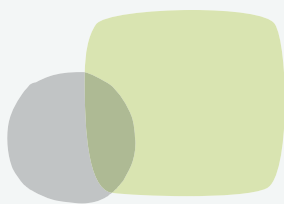
As with any well-done plan, the change plan must include a way to measure success.

### 1. Focus on those specific results most important to the success of your change plan.

At the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, where the change effort focused primarily on creating a strong leadership team to deal with the transition of the charismatic founder, the key metrics were:

1. The structure and effectiveness of leadership team meetings
2. The quality of relationships among the Leadership team members
3. Individual and team collaboration
4. Communication effectiveness among team members and within the organization
5. Leadership team empowerment
6. Leadership team effectiveness

### 2. Make sure the metrics are actually meaningful to your people—that they understand their relevance and can get juiced about achieving them.



*Measure what is measurable, and make measurable what is not so.*

GALILEO GALILEI



Ella Baker Center staff

### 3. Measure the important intangibles in the domain of Hearts & Minds, as well as tangibles in Behavior and Structural work.

- ▶ Use anonymous surveys to measure attitudes, beliefs, etc., prior to the onset of the change process.
- ▶ Repeat the same surveys at several points in the change process to measure progress.
- ▶ Be creative in finding quantitative measures to track progress in Hearts & Minds. One excellent example:

*SCOPE, a social justice group in Los Angeles, used the following metric to track how connected community leaders are feeling to the organization. Someone literally tracked the number of times leaders used either “we” or “you all” to refer to SCOPE in community meetings—the notion being that the choice of pronouns is a good indicator of whether or not someone feels connected to the organization.*

**4. Provide measurable milestones that provide ongoing feedback to your people to help them monitor and stimulate their own performance.**

Organizational Transformation consultant Michael Bell used metrics throughout an engagement with a management team at a major U.S. foundation. The team self-scored on key measures designed to track progress on the goals of the change process:

1. How would you rate overall team effectiveness in fulfilling its mission?
2. To what degree is information shared across departments/ projects?
3. To what degree has the team been operating proactively rather than reactively?
4. To what degree are you clear about your role and responsibility within the team?
5. To what degree has the team established an aligned strategy across the state?
6. To what degree is the team in alignment regarding racial equity in your work together internally and externally?
7. To what degree has the team been operating proactively rather than reactively?

8. To what degree has the team been giving balanced (positive and negative) feedback to team members?

Data was collected prior to the launch of the engagement, once again at six months and finally in 12 months at the end of the intervention. The metrics were actively used to help direct both consultants and team members on where to place their focus over the course of the engagement. The final evaluation—which showed significant progress on almost every measure—contributed to the team’s feeling of success and confidence in their capacity.

**5. Build sufficient time into the plan for reflection and evaluation.**

What worked? What didn’t? How can we do this better going forward?

**Ask Yourself**

How will you use metrics to drive your change program?



PHOTO PROVIDED BY: SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

## The Change Plan

It was clear by this point that the needed changes touched many aspects of organizational life.

With consulting from Nicole and input from the Management Team, the Change Team broke the work into the following five streams:

### 1. Strategic Planning

Implementing the new direction set out by the Board and affirmed at the Launch

### 2. Living the Rules of the Road

Operationalizing the five behaviors identified at the Launch as key to creating the new culture at CW; Intensive training to support the individual transformation needed for organizational change

### 3. Racial Unity and Racial Justice

Bringing harmony to the historical racial divisions among staff as well as forging a deeper shared analysis of structural racism<sup>40</sup> to craft effective strategies and ensure the success of CW's mission

### 4. Restructuring

A reassessment of key organizational structures and processes in light of the new strategy

### 5. Funding transformation

Addressing the chronic organizational challenges in raising sufficient funds

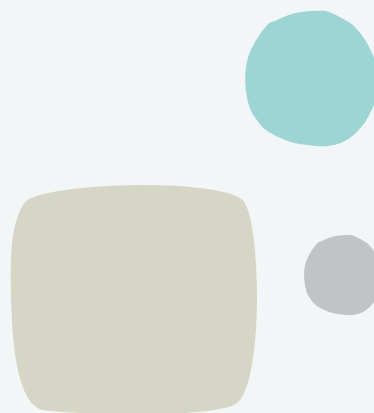
Each member of the Change Team took on chairing a separate cross-functional team. To begin, each team laid out its plan independently including:

- ▶ Goals/specs of end product
- ▶ Major milestones
- ▶ Key measures—even for intangibles like the 5 Rules of the Road
- ▶ Anticipated challenges in all three domains of the Wheel of Change and how to meet them
- ▶ Roles and responsibilities

- ▶ Resources required

- ▶ Timeline/calendar

When the five teams brought their plans together, a major challenge became obvious. The teams had done some excellent work. They had diligently applied the framework of three domains of the Wheel of Change, and their plans were appropriately systems-oriented and transformational. However, there was no way the organization could implement these five plans concurrently at the scope and scale proposed by the five teams. There simply wasn't the organizational bandwidth. By this point, each of the five teams was quite invested in the criticality of its stream of work to the overall success of the organizational transformation. The Change Team had a hard time resolving the competing priorities. Eventually Tomás and Malcolm had to step in and make some tough calls about which streams of work to prioritize, and where to cut back on various teams' proposals. Additionally, the individual calendars had to be coordinated both with each other and with major events in the annual cycle of ongoing organizational work—most notably a special municipal election. While most of the individual plans had presented a one-year target date for completion, the final integrated plan had a two-year horizon with some changes pushed back to year two.



<sup>40</sup>Structural racism: "The overarching system of racial hierarchy and inequality that routinely privileges whites and disadvantages people of color." From the Compact for Racial Justice, <http://www.arc.org/content/view/594/1/>

STAGE I  
Prepare  
the  
Change

STAGE II  
Launch  
the  
Change

STAGE III  
Plan  
the  
Change

STAGE IV  
Implement  
the  
Change

STAGE V  
Complete  
the  
Change

## STAGE IV: IMPLEMENT THE CHANGE

The previous four stages are important, but transformational change ultimately succeeds or fails during the implementation stage. Many change initiatives have powerful launches and fine plans set in place, but fail to alter the DNA of their institutions. The positive feelings, hopes, and plans fade away through organizational inertia, lack of sustained focus on the change process amidst competing demands, and the force of old habits.

Based on the change plan set forth in Stage III, the Implementation stage needs to:

- ▶ reinforce the work in Hearts & Minds begun in the launch
- ▶ focus on practicing the Behavioral changes critical to transformation
- ▶ create the Structural changes needed to realize the goals of the change process

There are at least nine keys to successful implementation:

1. Be the change
2. Keeping focus
3. Communicate, communicate, communicate
4. Organizing
5. Dealing with resistance
6. Practices, Rituals, and Support
7. Additional launches to maintain momentum
8. Feedback and assessment
9. Test fast, fail fast, adjust fast.

STAGE IV: KEY #1

### Be the change

As suggested by the now-famous quote from Gandhi, a key to transformation is that we must “be the change” we want to see happen in the world. The process of implementation must model the desired state. If the

organization is seeking better planning and evaluation, the change process itself becomes the laboratory to experiment with new and better ways of planning and evaluation. If the intent is to create a more inclusive and participatory culture, the change process must be a living demonstration of engagement. Whatever values have been affirmed—accountability, respect, inclusion, etc.,—must be cultivated and practiced throughout.

People will be watching carefully to see if top leaders are on board with the program and whether they are modeling the changes others are being asked to make. None of us is perfect. Where there are shortcomings or mistakes in leadership behavior or the change process, these need to be openly acknowledged, modeling the values of learning, accountability, risk-taking, and transparency.

#### Ask Yourself

Are you prepared to “be the change” in your organization? What will this look like?



CHIRLA organizer at United Workers Congress event



## Being the change

Modeling the new behaviors was easier for Tomás than for the three existing members of the Management Team. Tomás had come from 10 years in an organizational culture that was much more representative of CW's new Rules of the Road. While his behavior was, of course, not perfect, he did mostly model the new cultural norms. Staff responded positively to the combination of Tomás' transparency, directness, and emotional intelligence, along with his sufficient toughness and decisiveness. The majority of staff came to trust his leadership fairly early on in the change process.

Adapting to the new Rules of the Road was, to varying degrees, more challenging to the other three directors. It required much more change in their behavior, including some behaviors that had been part of their success in the old paradigm. Fortunately, the rapprochement with Malcolm seemed to stick, and although he had some struggles to adapt to the new paradigm, on balance he was a positive force in the change process. All three directors were on board and committed to change, but old habits die hard. Nicole provided ongoing coaching and also sent them to Rockwood's Art of Leadership transformational training.<sup>41</sup>



*NDWA staff and members*



<sup>41</sup> <http://rockwoodleadership.org/section.php?id=9>

## Keeping focus

It's all too easy for the change process to get lost in the ongoing rush of organizational activities. Members of the Change Team must have sufficient time allotted in their work plans to maintain focus. Transformational change is all about energy, and the change process needs to be fed regularly to maintain momentum. This can be done through:

- ▶ achieving milestones (which is why we emphasize going for a series of quick, short wins)
- ▶ celebrating successes
- ▶ events that renew and raise group energy—launch-type events are like a booster rocket, and can be used occasionally throughout the change process when energy needs to be renewed
- ▶ ongoing internal organizing and communications strategies
- ▶ cross-functional teams who are responsible for critical results of the change process
- ▶ making sure that change-related responsibilities are integrated into individual work plans with clear results for which staff are accountable

### Ask Yourself

What will you do to help maintain focus on the transformational process in your organization?

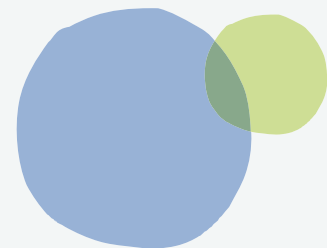
## Keeping Focus

Leadership did a fairly good job of keeping the change process front and center.

The tech person created a user-friendly dashboard to track all of the goals of the five working groups related to the change process. There was now one place to quickly see progress (or lack thereof) in each of the key initiatives. Every other week, the first half hour of the all-staff meeting was devoted to the change process: what's working, what's not, and what can be done to further the transformation. Every staff person had individual goals related to the change, and all supervisors were charged with having change goals be part of all performance check-ins. The office began ending work 20 minutes early on Fridays for a brief up-beat acknowledgement of the week's successes accompanied by refreshments. (A robust debate between cupcake lovers and health food devotees ended with an agreement to alternate cuisine.)

*I don't care how much power, brilliance, or energy you have, if you don't harness it and focus it on a specific target and hold it there, you're never going to accomplish as much as your ability warrants.*

ZIG ZIGLAR



## Communicate, communicate, communicate

- ▶ As in any campaign, we must communicate, communicate, and then communicate. The communications strategy should be designed to raise energy and sustain momentum, to reach out and include, to educate, and to stimulate thinking and conversations that move the work forward.
- ▶ Communications should engage hearts as well as minds by sharing stories and successes, noting progress towards the goals, and reminding people of the vision.
- ▶ Communications must also be real. Honestly address disappointments, struggles, and setbacks. This builds credibility that information (and leadership) in the organization is worthy of trust.

*“Hide nothing from the masses of our people. Tell no lies. Expose lies whenever they are told... Mask no difficulties, mistakes, failures.”*

AMILCAR CABRAL, AFRICAN FREEDOM FIGHTER

### Ask Yourself

What are some strengths and issues you foresee in using communications to drive the process of transformation?

## Communications

Tomás proved to be an excellent communicator, naturally finding the sweet spot between celebrating progress, being tough where things weren't moving fast enough, and dealing transparently with failures, including his own. The Campaigns and Communications Directors teamed up to create a communications campaign in support of the transformation. The change process became known as Community Works 2.0. When you entered headquarters people were greeted with a large collage depicting the new vision of CW. Tech support programmed a series of cute, graphic inspirational messages that would occasionally flash across people's computers and PDAs. The communications strategy often relied on humor to inoculate against possible cynical reactions to too much “rah-rah” energy.



## Organizing

An organizational change program is much like organizing a campaign. Plan to invest significant energy into talking it up, enrolling, listening to concerns, answering questions, getting input, and keeping energy mobilized and moving towards the desired change. Much of this happens outside formal meetings: one-to-one, in the hallways, around coffee makers and water coolers, face-to-face, and in cyberspace.

Identify and invest in key opinion leaders—those formal and informal leaders who are key influencers. You want to nurture a cadre of change champions who “get” the transformation and are able to not only spread the word, but model the new, emerging organizational culture. These key opinion leaders need to come from all levels and functions of the organization. Best practice would be to provide some training for these change leaders in influence skills, coaching skills, and the Wheel of Change.

Organizing is not simply trying to sell people on the program. Yes, this stage is about trying to move the organization to implement a vision of change. But the power and success of the transformational process ultimately depends on peoples’ level of commitment. Organizing requires a dynamic process of honest dialogue. At this stage, we go out of our way to actively surface questions, concerns, fears, and disagreements that arise regarding the change process. Engaged dialogues not only help align people to the change—they are the incubator for the group’s collective intelligence to help guide and evolve the change process.

In the beginning stages of most change processes, usually one-third of the people are early adopters who really get behind the change. In some cases as many as one-third of people exhibit varying degrees of non-engagement or more active resistance. The remaining people tend to go whichever way the tide turns.

This suggests a general organizing strategy:

- ▶ Keep investing in the one-third who are ready to help lead the charge

- ▶ Their energy and momentum will help engage the middle one-third
- ▶ Even though your attention will naturally be drawn to the more resistant group, invest somewhat less energy in this group. Generally one of three things will happen to these people:
  1. They will get on board.
  2. They will choose to leave.
  3. You will eventually choose for them to leave.

### Ask Yourself

How might you apply the principles of organizing to your organizational change effort?

#### CASE STUDY: COMMUNITY WORKS

### Organizing

Helen, a very talented organizer, was quickly able to translate her skill working with communities to organizing her own staff. She proved to be a gifted sparkplug to the change effort. Every day she came into the office fired up, thinking about how to move things forward. Her energy was contagious. She and the Change Team went about organizing in a methodical way. They actually created a chart of all staff, ranking them one to five as to their engagement with the change process, and selected key influencers as “targets” on whom to focus enrollment. Having so many staff involved in the Change Team also really helped to create ownership and add momentum to the change process.



## Dealing with Resistance

Change is often threatening to people. It is natural and to be expected that people throughout the organization may resist change initiatives.

Why people resist:

- ▶ threat to an individual's power, influence, status, or resources
- ▶ threat to the power, influence, or resources of a class of people or group within the organization
- ▶ possible threat to job security
- ▶ mistrust of those leading the change
- ▶ fear of the unknown/loss of control/being pushed out of one's comfort zone and habits
- ▶ feeling connected to other people who identify with the old way
- ▶ not understanding or feeling the need for change
- ▶ immunity to change (a term coined by consultants/authors Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey to describe unconscious individual beliefs and collective mindsets that run contrary to the stated goals for change<sup>42</sup>)
- ▶ lack of information or misunderstanding about the change process
- ▶ fear of lacking the competence or capacity to succeed in the new environment
- ▶ fear of increased workload or loss of quality of life (e.g., more travel)
- ▶ overwhelm
- ▶ healthy skepticism
- ▶ genuinely believe it's a bad idea



Much of what we call “resistance” comes about in response to the inattention or unskillful actions of those leading change.

ROBERT GASS

<sup>42</sup> Kegan, Robert & Lahey, Lisa, *Immunity to Change*. Harvard Business School Press, Cambridge, 2009.

Do not regard all resistance as threats to the change process that must be repressed. Remember the response of Simon Greer and his management team to the pushback from staff around new projects. Resistance may be coming from people who see real shortcomings or problems not evident to change champions.

While we don't want all our energy to become focused on resisters, it is equally important not to ignore or allow ongoing resistance. As we've stated before, organizational excellence requires commitment, not compliance. We want to meet resistance skillfully with a variety of responses, depending on its source.

How to respond to resistance:

1. Education: making sure people have the information and understanding they need of the change process and its implications
2. Listening & dialogue: really hearing peoples' concerns
3. Coaching: helping people deal with their concerns, fears, and competing beliefs or assumptions that may be in the way of commitment to change
4. Adjustments: adapting the pace or nature of change to meet peoples' concerns
5. Confrontation: making it clear that people need to get on or off the bus

***It is a prime responsibility of those leading change to always be clear about what's on or off the table for discussion.***

For example, early in the change process everything may be open to question except the broad direction. Later, the direction and chief strategies may be set, but input is still welcome on the implementation. In later stages, we seek evaluation, learning, and innovation.

Senior managers need to be not only on the bus—they need to help drive. Mixed messages from the top will cascade and multiply through the organization, generating confusion and encouraging resistance. By the time we're in the Implementation stage, dissension at the top cannot be allowed to continue. Those with significant positional power must align with the change, be moved into positions where they can't do harm, or moved out of the organization.

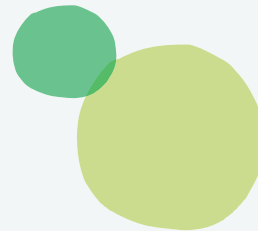
### **Ask Yourself** .....

Who among your leaders might have difficulty getting "on the bus," and how will you respond? Where do you anticipate resistance to transformation, and how might you deal with it?



*Hide nothing from the masses of our people. Tell no lies. Expose lies whenever they are told... Mask no difficulties, mistakes, failures.*

**AMILCAR CABRAL,  
AFRICAN FREEDOM FIGHTER**



## Resistance

Lest things sound too rosy, there were indeed problems of resistance to the change process. Cedric, the non-performing Operations Director, continued to be an energetic sinkhole in the office. There were a series of difficult negotiations around his three-year contract. Tomás became so frustrated that the Board Chair had to step into complete the process. In order to exit him, CW finally had to agree to pay Cedric 18 months of salary and “honor” him for his years of service. Tomás needed a bit of “motivational coaching” from Nicole to manage giving a speech at Cedric’s farewell community dinner.

There were two long-time organizers and three other staff—all African-American—who continued to seem like potential holdouts. It was obvious which way the wind was blowing, so resistance was rarely overt. But their lack of enthusiasm for the new direction was noticeable, and they were somewhat dismissive of the new cultural norms as being too “soft.” Collectively, these five “resisters” represented the heart of CW’s connection to their historical base in the African-American community. Neither ignoring their concerns nor pushing them out of CW were acceptable options.

Several months post-Launch, Tomás, Malcolm, and Nicole had a four-hour ‘mini-summit’ to talk about this situation. In the meeting, Tomás expressed disappointment about Malcolm’s lack of leadership in engaging this group of African-American staff. Malcolm confessed that he had been reluctant to push hard on the holdouts. As well as having trained most of these staff, he had been a key player in creating the old strategy and the old “culture of intimidation.” While Malcolm was sincerely working on transforming his own leadership behavior, he also felt protective of these people that he had recruited and mentored, and was sympathetic to their concerns. He was also understandably reluctant to make himself a target of hostility not only of African-American staff, but potentially the larger local black community who were very concerned about the new direction at CW.

The authentic conversations and deeper listening at the mini-summit helped clear the air. Although Tomás had been aware of Malcolm’s concerns about the place of the African-American community in CW’s agenda, Tomás was able to understand for the first time the degree of awkwardness of Malcolm’s position in the organization as well as the community. With the help of some confrontational feedback and coaching from Nicole, Tomás realized that his own uneasiness in confronting the existing Brown-Black mistrust had caused him to also hold back from taking leadership, thereby placing all the burden of dealing with disaffected African-American staff on Malcolm. Tomás committed to step up and take greater responsibility (though still wanting more from Malcolm). For his part, Malcolm agreed to step past his discomfort into greater leadership. Nicole helped them strategize ways to deal more skillfully with the resistance. Tomás and Malcolm met several times with two of the black staff who seemed somewhat more open to the new direction. The two staff were deeply concerned about the potential impact of the reduced focus on serving the local African-American community. Although the Board and Tomás had talked about continuing CW’s long-term commitment to this community, some initial decisions had generated mistrust about whether or not the resources would be there to back up the words. While the listening sessions were useful, what really helped alleviate their concerns was a Management Team decision to move additional resources into outreach to the African-American community. As these two began to come on board with the change process, the momentum began to shift among the remaining holdouts. Eventually, there was only one staff member (in addition to exiting Cedric) who had to be given the ultimatum of “get on or off the bus.”

## Practices, Rituals, and Support

Even while moving into the more Structural work of Stage IV, we want to continue to reinforce and integrate the Hearts & Minds work of the launch, as well support the ongoing work of Behavior change.

### PRACTICES

Both individuals and groups can benefit from working with structures and processes that promote and support consistent repetition of new behavior until new patterns are established. Practices are critical to changing Behavior and establishing new habits.

#### An example of individual practice:

Each person creates a personal, short phrase that connects them to their purpose and inner power: a potent reminder of why they do this work. Over the next weeks, people commit to pause before each significant act of leadership. You silently repeat your phrase of power three times, making this personal connection to your deepest sense of purpose and of power. Finally, you take a moment, from this clear and powerful place, to reflect on the immediate task ahead. Individuals find that the practice creates oases of reflection and clarity amidst the daily blur of unending activity. This is not only a refreshing mental pause—people report significantly better results. (It is a foundational practice in the Rockwood Yearlong Leadership Trainings.)

#### An example of group practice:

For organizations committed to a change process of greater Diversity and Inclusion, “Ouch and Educate” is a powerful tool which, in a safe and supportive way, helps to raise awareness about the unconscious misinformation all of us carry about people from diverse cultures and other social identity groups, helping people to gain deeper understanding of where others are “coming from.” When team members feel misunderstood, slighted, or hurt by words or behavior related to their social identity they express their “ouch” in a non-blaming way. Ground rules are established that create a relatively guilt-free and shame-free zone where people can make mistakes and learn together to take responsibility for issues of inclusion and social justice in their own workplaces.<sup>43</sup>

### Ask Yourself

What practices might be helpful in implementing change in your organization?



*Generative Somatics training*



*Rockwood staff, board & trainer retreat*

<sup>43</sup> Thanks to Joan Lester, Leslie C. Aguilar, and Yeshi Neumann for their various roles in birthing and popularizing this wonderful practice. You can learn more about *Ouch and Educate* and other tools for equity and inclusion by visiting <http://www.stproject.org/resources/tools-for-transformation/equity-inclusion/>



## RITUALS

In every culture, rituals are used to bring people together in heart and spirit. Most of our organizations are filled with diverse peoples who do not share a common cultural background, so we must create new rituals that speak to our deeper human needs in forms that are appropriate and user-friendly. Some typical examples of organizational rituals include:

- ▶ beginning staff meetings with a few minutes of silence
- ▶ beginning meetings with personal check-ins
- ▶ pizza after work on Friday
- ▶ sitting in a circle and using a talking object to promote deeper self-reflection and listening
- ▶ dancing, singing, or any other physical activity that builds collective energy
- ▶ weekly or monthly rituals for celebrating successes

### Ask Yourself

What rituals are used in your organization that can be leveraged in this transformation? Are there new rituals that need to be developed?

## SUPPORT

We've talked considerably about the challenges of learning new habits of behavior. Throughout the Implementation Stage, leaders must ensure that people are adequately supported. It is critical that top leaders:

- ▶ be visible and actively offer inspiration, respond to questions, speak to concerns and offer support and encouragement
- ▶ create contexts in which staff can support each other:
  - ✦ create space in staff meetings for personal sharing about successes and struggles in the change process
  - ✦ set up peer coaches or a buddy system to provide one-on-one support
- ▶ offer professional coaching when appropriate
- ▶ provide the training needed to implement new behavior and skills

### Ask Yourself

What kinds of support will be needed to support the change process?

Spitfire Strategies is a communications firm serving the non-profit and philanthropic sector. Every two weeks at staff meetings the "Frog Paddle" is awarded to someone who has triumphed in providing excellent client service in the face of very challenging circumstances. The prize is a ball and paddle toy in the shape of a frog which has significance to the organization—it celebrates a hallmark story about the challenges of trying to make change:

*A group wanted to stop a proposed expansion of the San Francisco airport in order to protect the habitat of a rare species of frog which was endangered by the plan. The group asked communicators for help, who then went out and asked the community what concerned them about the airport expansion. The most common response: "Traffic—*

*the 101 will get more clogged than it already is." The communicators went back to the group and said, "If you want to stop the expansion and save the frog, you need to talk about traffic." The group thought about it for all of ten seconds then rejected our suggestion. They wanted the community to oppose the expansion for the "right" reason—the frog, not the traffic.*

The story reminds Spitfire staff that their job is to find ways to help clients understand how to make good communication decisions even when this is a monumental task. Today, this simple ritual both reminds people of the purpose and mission of Spitfire and provides a fun occasion for honoring staff achievements.

## Support

In addition to professional coaching for the members of the Management Team, Nicole guided CW in setting up peer coaching pairs for the six months post-launch. The explicit purpose of the peer coaching program was to support the changes required by individual staff needed to implement the new strategy and create the new culture. Participation was voluntary, though highly recommended. Participants had some say in the selection of peer coaches. Nicole provided context and some training of peer coaches to initiate the program. Over 80 percent of the staff initially signed up. It was recommended that participants meet with their peer coaches for an hour every other week. Overall, about 60 percent of the people who signed up actually did regular coaching, if not always at the recommended intervals. All those who regularly engaged in the peer coaching rated it “very helpful” or “helpful” to adapting to the transformation at CW. Not surprisingly, those who didn’t meet found it “less helpful.”

A number of staff became interested in Mindfulness Meditation after receiving initial instruction from a guest teacher at a staff meeting. Some on the Management Team felt that establishing this as a group practice would be highly beneficial for bringing people together. However, there was push back from a number of staff who didn’t feel it was appropriate to mandate a spiritual practice.

A compromise was reached in which a 15-minute time was set aside in the workplace for optional sitting meditation, and weekly staff meetings began with a few minutes of silence. Once the pressure was removed, over time, most of the staff found the shared sitting practice to be a welcome support for calming the mind and relaxing the body amidst the stress of their work days. The few who continued to choose not to participate made their peace with the situation (with occasional friendly teasing of the “navel-gazers”).

The racial justice team engaged the Applied Research Center (ARC)<sup>44</sup> to provide training in structural racism and ongoing support in addressing strategic and intra-organizational issues around racial justice. Pivoting from an inter-racial approach to embracing a structural racism perspective provided a powerful and positive assist in helping to ease racial tensions and craft more effective strategies for their state policy work. People from all racial groups, including the few white staff, found common cause in understanding the impact of structural racism on all their lives and communities. The Change Team also invited several pairs of Latino and Black leaders who had successfully created Black-Brown Alliances to share their experiences and best practices. It also helped for the organization to clarify racial justice as not only an ethical imperative, but a political requirement to the success of their mission.



<sup>44</sup> ARC (Applied Research Center) is an excellent racial justice think tank, the publisher of Colorlines, and home for media and activism. <http://www.arc.org>

## Additional “launches” to maintain momentum

These convenings are one of the most powerful tools in driving a change process. In addition to the original launch, launch-like events can be used any time during the first four stages to:

- ▶ infuse the organization with renewed energy for the change process
- ▶ evaluate progress, celebrate successes, and make important mid-course corrections
- ▶ get a lot of work done in short periods of time
- ▶ deepen the bonds of connection among people in the organization
- ▶ provide training in critical skills

In large organizations with staff in remote locations, road shows are often part of the rollout. They are typically co-led by senior leaders and local managers, making sure that the events are both meaningful to the change process and relevant for local offices.

Launches do require a large investment of time, money, and organizational energy. We therefore want to utilize them wisely.

- ▶ Save launches for strategic moments in a change program.
- ▶ Don't use retreats as a substitute for the critical day-to-day work of implementing the change.
- ▶ Make sure the needed prep work is put in so that the full potential value of the launch can be realized.
- ▶ Retreats subsequent to the initial launch should still have elements that address Hearts & Minds and Behavior, but compared to the initial launch, these agendas will typically have a greater emphasis on moving forward key tangible organizational priorities.

- ▶ Continue to use excellent facilitators. The quality of agenda design and managing the flow can make or break critical meetings.

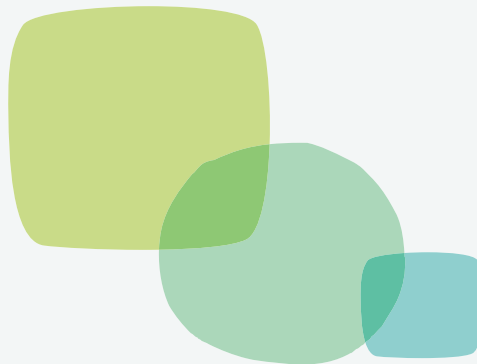
***While we want to make good use of the experience and skills of consultants, we also want to be looking at how to cultivate critical organizational skills such as facilitation.***

### Ask Yourself

How can you be alert to the need for additional launches?



CHIRLA Staff



## Additional launches

There were additional retreats four months and nine months after the initial launch.

The Change Team decided to have them be non-residential, both to save costs and also to meet the concerns of a number of staff with young children who found it a hardship to take nights away from home.

Like booster rockets, the retreats were successful in re-energizing people about where CW was going and helping them embrace the challenges of transformation. The agendas included innovation labs on several gnarly organizational challenges:

- ▶ the as yet unclear relationship between historical local organizing and the new emphasis on statewide work

- ▶ how to restructure departments and reporting relationships to best implement the new strategy

- ▶ greater clarity and transparency around decision-making

There were also several training modules on topics such as online organizing and personal self-care. The retreats were successful in generally helping people feel more connected to each other and the transformative process.

While Nicole played a key role in designing the retreats, with an eye towards building organizational capacity she also mentored and supported several staff in facilitating parts of the launches.





## Feedback and Assessment

Organizational Transformation is an ever-evolving work in progress and requires a feedback-rich environment for ongoing course correction. The Change Plan must build in time for reflection. Agreed-upon measures should be rigorously applied, along with cultivating a spirit of curiosity about what's working, what's not working, and what can be learned. Senior leaders and the Change Team must make themselves accessible to receive input. Structured feedback processes are an important part of transforming organizations. They help to establish new norms of open and honest communication between individuals and within teams.

Two examples:

**Group-on-one feedback:** The team sits in a circle and offers each member 10 minutes of feedback regarding the positive contributions the person makes to the team, and how this person could improve their contribution going forward.<sup>45</sup>

**Team Agreement tune-ups:** After each significant team meeting, members evaluate the team's behavior in the meeting against each of the team agreements—looking both at positive examples of living the agreement and how the meeting could have been more productive.

Given how challenging it can be to give honest feedback to those with more positional power, anonymous surveys are almost always a useful addition.

### Ask Yourself

What kinds of feedback mechanisms will you set up to ensure learning?

## “Test fast, fail fast, adjust fast”

This quote from change management pioneer Tom Peters captures the essence of the ninth key.

Our change plan hopefully aligned and pointed us in the right direction. But transformation is a dynamic process that requires openness and flexibility. Something new is coming into being, and like any birth, will at times be messy. In choosing the path of transformation, we must not only tolerate but embrace a degree of chaos. It is in the unknown that true magic and innovation often occurs.

There are certain attitudes and behaviors that can help us navigate the tumultuous yet highly creative waters of Organizational Transformation.

### CHALLENGING MENTAL MODELS

Transformation demands that we free our minds from existing mental models. “Beginner’s mind” is a well-known Buddhist concept<sup>46</sup> that invites us to view the world free of expectations, of our pre-determined pictures of reality; to look at life with fresh eyes, like that of a child.

*“Not knowing is true knowing. One knows truly only when one has the wisdom of emptiness. Wisdom is then limitless.”*

MASTER SHENG-YEN

For example, what do you think of when you read the word “fundraising?” How about the words “build power?” Or “organize?” A whole set of past experiences are triggered when we start to think about something like “fundraising.” The synthesis of these experiences becomes beliefs and assumptions that, left unchallenged, limit our ability to innovate. In Organizational Transformation, we strive to create conditions that push us past the boundaries of the known into new paradigms.

<sup>45</sup> See our tool *Team Feedback Toolkit* and other feedback tools by visiting: <http://www.stproject.org/resources/tools-for-transformation/feedback/>

<sup>46</sup> Shoshin (初心) is a concept in *Zen Buddhism* meaning Beginner’s Mind. It refers to having an attitude of openness, eagerness, and lack of preconceptions when studying a subject, even when studying at an advanced level, just as a beginner in that subject would. The phrase was popularized in the West by Suzuki Roshi, who used it in the title of his classic book, *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind*. “In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, in the expert’s mind there are few.” - Shunryu Suzuki

## Challenging mental models

Similar to many social justice organizations, fundraising was an ongoing struggle. There were too many groups competing for too few dollars. Prodigious amounts of organizational energy was being consumed in raising money. And grants often came with conditions not necessarily well-aligned with real organizational priorities.

The funding transformation team challenged itself and CW to really think outside the box. In their discussions, they uncovered an important limiting belief: a pervasive feeling of helplessness among staff when it came to money. Most people came from familial backgrounds where there was not a lot of money. The prevailing attitude was, “we can’t create wealth. Our only option is go, hat in hand, to individual donors and foundations who do have the money.”

The team began looking at social revolutions in Latin America, which are funded almost totally by raising money from poor and working class supporters. In our own country, lower income families give proportionately more money to charity than families with greater wealth.<sup>47</sup>

Determined to find ways out of the funding trap, they came up with a number of possibilities:

- ▶ Grassroots fundraising events, particularly ones that highlight the many cultures of the base of the organization, could serve to strengthen the membership.
- ▶ Well-organized raffles with large gifts (like a car) can raise \$10,000-30,000+.
- ▶ CW has pioneered a nationally-known method for engaging and training community leaders. They believe that community organizers from around the country would pay to attend training seminars.

- ▶ The outgoing founder is a revered elder in this field and remains very committed to the success of CW. Support him in writing a book and actively promote it through online campaign. He would likely be willing to go out on national speaking tours at universities (which typically pay well for lecturers) as well as house parties / fundraisers around the country.
- ▶ Discount purchasing offered to membership base for car insurance, back-to-school supplies, etc., with a percentage going to the organization.

Feasibility and cost-benefit of these possibilities was yet to be determined, but engaging the whole organization in creative ways to generate income already represented a paradigm shift from fundraising being the sole responsibility of the ED and development team.



*Not knowing is true knowing. One knows truly only when one has the wisdom of emptiness. Wisdom is then limitless.*

MASTER SHENG-YEN



<sup>47</sup>For example, Independent Sector, a nonprofit organization focused on charitable giving, found that “households earning less than \$25,000 a year gave away an average of 4.2 percent of their incomes; those with earnings of more than \$75,000 gave away 2.7 percent.”  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/22/magazine/22FOB-wwln-t.html>

## THE COURAGE TO BE WRONG

Leadership needs to help create an environment in which risk-taking is encouraged, and making mistakes in the service of innovation is not just tolerated but applauded. Senior leaders can help model this by being willing to share their own glorious failures.

*“Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly.”*

ROBERT F. KENNEDY

Some of the assumptions underlying our change process may prove to be false. Some of our noble experiments may fail. Some of our investments of time, money, and energy may not pan out. We want the courage to acknowledge what’s so, even when it might be inconvenient, embarrassing, or disheartening.

## SELF-HUMOR ABOUT THE PROCESS

There really is so much that’s beyond our control. We do our best to shape the course of events, but it’s helpful to remember this old Jewish proverb:

*“(Wo)man plans and God laughs.”*

There is a well-known story about a time Gandhi had spent months organizing thousands of supporters for a campaign. The evening before its launch, sensing that it might turn violent, he called together his lieutenants and said, “The campaign must be called off.” His leaders were appalled and protested that they had worked so hard to organize this; that so many people were all gathered and ready to march. Gandhi replied, “I am a human being. My commitment is to truth, not consistency.”

### **Ask Yourself** .....

How can you encourage the practice of “Test fast, fail fast, adjust fast?”



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY: SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

STAGE I  
Prepare  
the  
Change

STAGE II  
Launch  
the  
Change

STAGE III  
Plan  
the Change

STAGE IV  
Implement  
the Change

STAGE V  
Complete  
the Change

## STAGE V: COMPLETION

Organizational Transformation is a concentrated period of profound change where an unusual amount of organizational energy is dedicated to a change process. This period might last a number of months, a year, or even several years. But it must have an end. And it is important that the end be defined and acknowledged. While the changes will likely continue to need reinforcement, there comes a right time to declare “success” or “we’ve taken it as far as we can.”

“Completion” signals a significant reduction in organizational focus. One way of determining Completion is when the changes have become institutionalized and habitual, so that they no longer require extraordinary organizational attention. The Change Team, external consultants, and other structures put in place to focus the change process can be released.

There should always be a thorough evaluation of the change process. It is a time for serious and honest reflection and to harvest the lessons learned—both from what worked and what did not

It’s important that intensive organizational initiatives not just dissipate at the end. Completion of an organizational transformation deserves to be marked, like its launch, with some kind of public event. Ideally, there would always be some kind of celebration, with acknowledging and honoring of contributions, even if the efforts were not totally successful.

### **Ask Yourself**

How might you plan to celebrate the completion of your transformational process?





## Completion

Eighteen months after the initial launch of the change process, Tomás and the Executive Team felt it was time to declare an end to the formal change process.

The entire organization went on a two-day retreat to evaluate where things stood and to refocus on the next 12 months.

It had proven very challenging to maintain consistent focus on the change process. Budgetary constraints meant they were unable to book as much of Nicole's time as desired. Because of CW's inability to ensure consistent use of Nicole, she was sometimes unavailable when needed due to other client commitments. Staff was chronically overloaded, and it was hard to know what to cut from ongoing work to make space for the added work of organizational transformation.

Despite these challenges, the organization was on a path to successfully shifting the organization towards the new direction first laid out by the Board.

- ▶ Staff and other key stakeholders were now well-aligned.
- ▶ There was significant improvement in organizational capacity and competence for state-based work.
- ▶ Some new, key strategic state partnerships had been forged.
- ▶ Their shift to state work was also strengthened by applying the structural racism analysis to help craft strategies for meaningful policy change.
- ▶ A number of structural changes had been successfully implemented to support the new strategy. Departments and reporting relationships had undergone a major reorganization. There were also some highly impactful innovations in work processes.

- ▶ Nicole resurveyed the staff using the same questions in her original assessment. The culture and climate of the organization had made a demonstrably major, positive shift: more trust, better communication, more positive energy, and hope for the future of CW.
- ▶ Racial tensions in CW were noticeably diminished as staff aligned around a common structural racism analysis and shared commitment to racial justice as a foundational principle.

There was also some lack of success in certain areas, and a number of remaining challenges. It proved very challenging to create meaningful connections between local organizing and statewide work. Local organizers still tended to feel dissatisfied and believe that the real juice of the organization was now focused on state work. Several long-time staff members left. The new funding initiatives did bring in some new sources of revenue, but not enough to cover the shortfall from the withdrawal of their lead foundation funder. Low funding contributed to organizational overload and stress as too few people were trying to do too much.

Malcolm ended up leaving after his 12-month initial commitment to take an ED position at another organization. He actually did end up engaging with the change process in a positive way, and his departure was on excellent terms. It was simply time for him to run his own organization.

Organizational transformation at Community Works would continue to be a work in progress. However, Tomás, the Board, and staff could now step back and view the change effort with some degree of accomplishment. It was time to declare victory, thank Nicole for her work, and release the Change Team and all of the work teams, except for Funding Transformation, which would continue to meet.

## Transformation

We defined transformative change as “change that is profound, radical, and sustainable; change that fundamentally alters the very nature of something.”

Community Works underwent a change process over 18 months. Some of the problems that were present at the outset remained as problems. And there was now a new set of challenges to face. Yet this case does exemplify what we mean by Organizational Transformation. Something in the DNA of this organization changed. Expanding into statewide work involved more than simply working at a larger scale. Community Works had become Community Works 2.0. Changes included:

### Hearts & Minds:

- ▶ an expanded sense of who they are and who they serve: multiracial; identifying with state as well as local community; working in partnership with other groups
- ▶ a significant shift in the feeling, tone, and climate: more respectful, caring and upbeat
- ▶ greater trust

### Behavior:

- ▶ more open and honest communication
- ▶ greater accountability
- ▶ higher standards and delivery around performance
- ▶ increased ability to partner with other organizations

### Structure:

- ▶ new strategy
- ▶ new tools and processes for statewide campaigning
- ▶ new departmental and reporting structures

Collectively, these changes were transformative. Community Works will continue to evolve. It may someday merge or cease to exist. But it will not go back to what it was. While Community Works still has challenges and shortcomings, it has been transformed.



*Bend the Arc: Selah Leadership Program*

# The Transforming Organization

Community Works brought closure to its transformative process with a final retreat. On Day One of the retreat, there was some real celebration of the roles everyone had played in meeting the many challenges of the transformational journey.

And Day Two?

It was already time to turn towards a whole set of new challenges and opportunities.

*“I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb...I can rest only a moment...for my long walk is not yet ended.”*

NELSON MANDELA

At the end of a successful Completion, we might be able to say that our strategy, or our fundraising department, or even our organization has been transformed. But it might be a mistake to say that we are a transformed organization. It is better to embrace the vision of being a transforming organization.

*“If you realize that all things change, there is nothing to hold onto.”*

TAO TE CHING

To be a great organization today means that we not only deal with change—we must actually embrace change. A transforming organization is a learning organization, dedicated to an ongoing process of listening to its environment, willing to let go of what no longer serves, adapt to changing conditions, and boldly help forge a new future.

We invite those of you dedicated to helping birth a more just and sustainable world to study the principles and practices of Organizational Transformation.

There is a growing field of leaders, intermediaries, and individual practitioners dedicated to bringing this work to serve social change teams, organizations, and coalitions. Join with us in this vision:

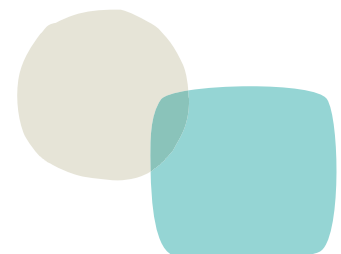
To create a substantive shift in the effectiveness and well-being of those people and organizations working for justice and sustainability:

- ▶ From fear and anger to hope and positive vision
- ▶ From inefficiency and activity to disciplined performance and results
- ▶ From burnout to sustainable activism
- ▶ From piecemeal efforts to systemic change

We envision social change organizations that are vibrant working and learning communities that care for their people and effectively maximize resources and opportunities, working together to effect the social, economic, political, and spiritual changes necessary for a just society and sustainable environment.

*I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb...I can rest only a moment...for my long walk is not yet ended.*

NELSON MANDELA





## ROBERT GASS, ED.D

is known for pioneering work in leadership development and organizational change for over 30 years. Holding a doctorate in Organizational Psychology from Harvard, his work synthesizes a diverse background in social change, humanistic psychology, organizational behavior, the arts and spiritual studies. The former President of ARC International, a global consulting company specializing in transformational change with corporations such as Chase Bank, General Motors and The Gap, Robert served for many years as executive coach to well-known business, non-profit, spiritual and political leaders. For the last 10 years Robert has worked exclusively with Progressive social change leaders and organizations including the NAACP, Sierra Club, United Auto Workers, Moms Rising, La Raza, Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Reform Immigration for America the Democracy Alliance, Greenpeace, Center for Community Change (CCC), Gore's Alliance for Climate Protection, National Congress of American Indians,, MoveOn.org, leaders in the Obama Administration, and the U.S. Senate Chiefs of Staff. His vision is to help create a transformative shift in the power, effectiveness, health and sustainability of the Progressive social change movement. He is the founder of the Social Transformation Project and co-founder of the Rockwood Leadership Institute.

Robert and his wife and life partner of 40+ years, Judith Ansara, have for many years led retreats for committed couples throughout North America. He is also a recording artist and performing musician. Robert is passionately committed to supporting those working for social and racial justice, human rights, sustainability and preservation of our natural environment.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many colleagues, clients and friends have helped to shape the ideas and practices offered in this paper.

I would like to especially thank my primary readers who gave substantive feedback and input to what you have read:

Judith Ansara (my beloved life partner of 44+ years), Karie Brown, Amy Fox, Simon Greer, Leslie Sholl Jaffe, Idelisse Malave and Gihan Perera.

I also want to acknowledge those who gave important input to particular sections of the paper: Michael Bell, Deepak Bhargava, Gillian Caldwell, Helen Kim, Ai-jen Poo and Linda Wood.

This paper would not be possible without the partnership and support of our incredible team at the Social Transformation Project: our Director, Jodie Tonita; Senior Advisor, Idelisse Malave; and our project staff Leila Talore, Esti Giordani and Bernie Schlotfeldt.

I am also grateful for the ongoing partnership and friendship of the Rockwood Leadership Institute trainers with whom I have worked most closely: Jose Acevedo, Michael Bell, Maria Ramos Chertok, Suzanne Hawkes, Toby Lynn Herzlich, Leslie Sholl Jaffe, Helen Kim, Yeshi Neumann, John Poore, and Roberto Vargas. They are a powerful force in bringing transformation to our movement.

Thanks also to the Rockwood staff, with a special shout-out to those with whom I have worked most directly: Tyson Casey, Pia Infante, Stacy Kono, Adrienne Torf and Sharon Price. I am especially grateful for the deep partnering of Akaya Windwood, whose leadership has brought Rockwood to a new level of impact in the world.

Our funding partners include: Nathan Cummings Foundation, Ford Foundation, Hidden Leaf Foundation, Compton Foundation, Seasons Fund for Social Transformation and the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund.





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