LEADING CHANGE AT EVERY LEVEL
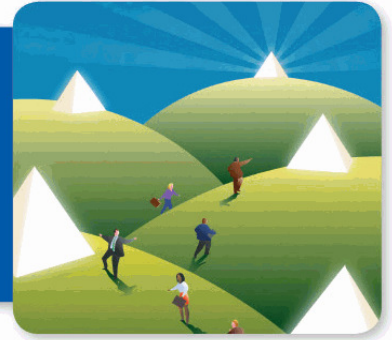
REPORT PREPARED FOR: A Sample
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Change is here to stay. As a result, one's ability to lead change is becoming a key factor in determining job success. This assessment will help you identify skills you may already have that can help to make you more effective at leading change, whether the change is one you have chosen to initiate or one you have been asked to implement.

Contents

Why More People Must Lead Change

In today's marketplace, companies are expected to continually deliver better service, higher quality, and faster turnaround. Meeting these demands generally requires that significant changes be implemented.

In the past only top managers would have been charged with the task of leading those changes. But as organizations have streamlined their structures and empowered their employees, the responsibility for leading change has become more evenly distributed. What was once the role of senior management is now increasingly the day-to-day job of middle managers, team leaders, first-line supervisors, and departmental specialists.

Leading change is a challenge at any level. Even the highest ranking executive cannot rely on position alone to implement a change. You simply cannot order others to change. They might pretend to go along with you at first, but in the long run you will not have their genuine support.

The good news is that there are very specific ways you can lead change *without* exercising formal authority. *Leading Change at Every Level* has been designed to measure your performance on five behavioral dimensions that we have identified as being critical in any change process.

The Five Dimensions of Leading Change

We have identified five dimensions of leading change which are listed below. Each dimension is equally important for a successful change effort. Your **Effectiveness at Leading Change Profile** and **Overall Effectiveness Scores** will help you to develop an understanding of the skills you use (or don't use) most frequently when leading change.
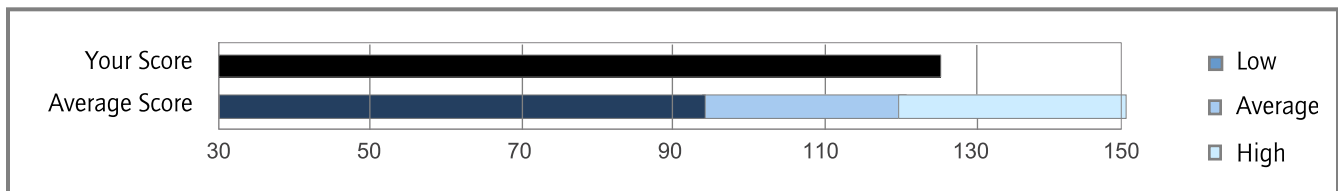

Dimensions of Leading Change

➢ **Modeling the Change**
➢ **Communicating the Change**
➢ **Involving Others in the Change**
➢ **Helping Others Break from the Past**
➢ **Creating a Supportive Learning Environment**

Your Effectiveness at Leading Change Profile

Your Effectiveness at Leading Change Profile
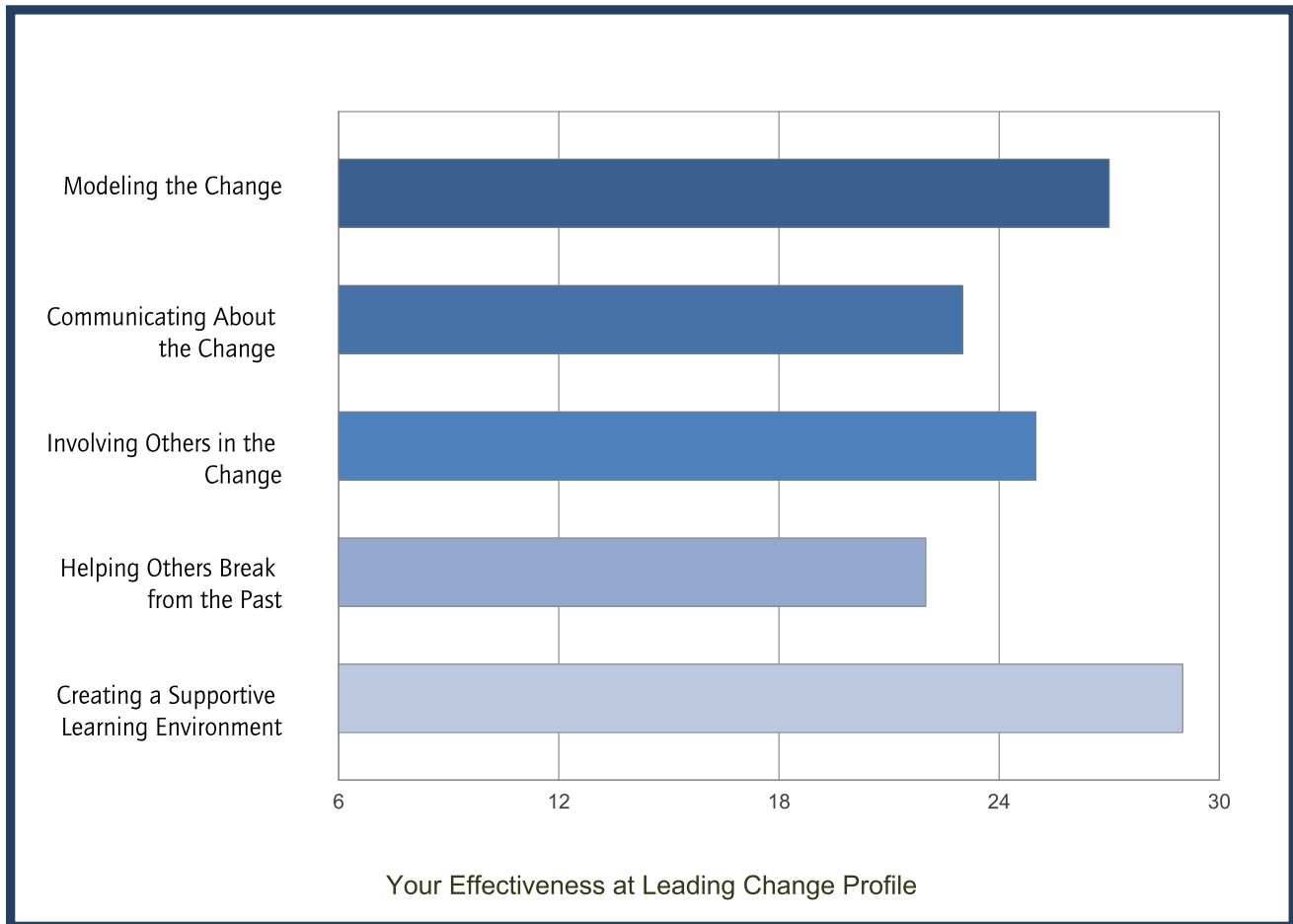
Your Overall Effectiveness at Leading Change Score

**Your Overall Effectiveness Score can range from a low of 30 to a high of 150.** Your score of 126 falls above the average range in comparison to others who have taken the assessment.

Keep your scores in mind as you read the following interpretation of the five dimensions of leading change. Please note that your scores are simply benchmarks to help you consider what you may wish to change or improve in your work behavior.

1. Modeling the Change

To lead change you must be able to show others what it means to change. Douglas Smith (1996) calls it "the courage to live the change" and perceptively points out that leaders, by the very nature of their role, must be the ones to go first.

Your Score on this dimension: 27
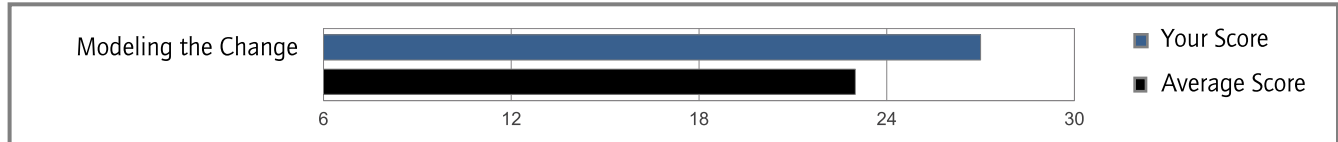
Your score indicates that you regularly demonstrate the change through your behavior. You may routinely check your behavior for consistency with the change or you may be very skilled at self-monitoring. Either way, you tend to correct behavior that would be contrary to the change before you act.

The Challenge of Modeling the Change
While it may seem obvious that leaders should demonstrate the change they are asking others to adopt, being the first to try something new can still be a stressful proposition. Add to that the glare of attention focused on your fledgling efforts as a result of your role model status, and it can be even more difficult.

Some Approaches to Modeling the Change
Modeling the Change involves walking the talk, which requires a high degree of self-awareness. You must be able to "step outside of yourself" and see your actions as others do. It also requires an awareness of others.

You need to be alert to subtle cues from others that suggest you have done something contrary to the change. You should be comfortable receiving direct, constructive feedback about your behavior related to the change.

Finally, if you slip back or fall short of modeling the change ideal, you will need the humility and self-confidence to correct yourself in front of others, either immediately or after the fact.

To effectively model change:
- Map the change objectives to your daily responsibilities
- Think before you act
- Audit your past actions
- Monitor and correct yourself
- Be alert to subtle cues from others about your behavior

Benefits of Modeling the Change

You may not win support overnight by modeling the change. But, by consistently doing yourself what you are asking others to do, you will eventually:

- Develop others' trust in you
- Build credibility for the change
- Provide evidence that the change is real, not just another fad that will pass with time
- Establish a bank of goodwill on which to draw if you ever need to ask others to make sacrifices now for potential gain at a later date

2. Communicating about the Change

To lead change you must reach everyone who will be affected by it. This could mean getting your message across to a few people down the hall or spreading the word to hundreds of people here and abroad. Whatever the case, your target audience probably will be diverse, so you should be comfortable communicating with people from a broad cross-section of age, experience, and organizational levels.

Your Score on this dimension: 23

	Your Score
Communicating the Change	■ Average Score
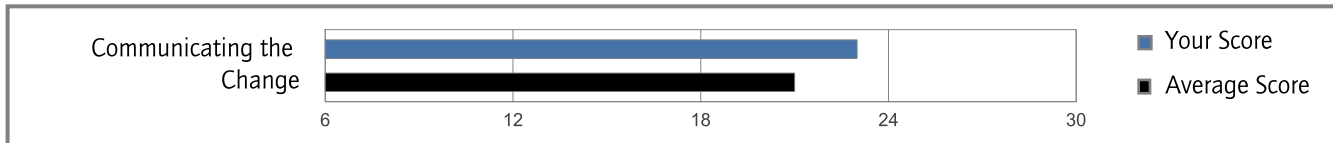
Your score indicates that you enjoy communicating in general. You are good at anticipating how others will feel about the change and are not fatigued or frustrated by the need to repeat the same message in order for it to take hold. Your understanding of the change is so well developed that putting it in everyday terms and emphasizing its positive aspects is easy for you.

The Challenge of Communicating about the Change
While the benefits of communicating about a change are clear, information voids still persist in most change efforts. This is because leaders often put off communicating anything about a change until they know for sure what is going to happen.

Some Approaches to Communicating about the Change
Communicating about the change involves reaching all of the people, even those who may have only a seemingly minor connection with it, in terms that are relevant and accessible for the receiver.

You may need to rely solely on written communication, one-on-one conversations, or group discussions. More likely, you'll be using a combination of these approaches because communicating about change generally requires repeated communication. Selecting the most appropriate way to get your message across and possessing the versatility to use various mediums are key skills.

However you communicate, your language should be simple and free of excessive industry jargon, management buzz words, or academic terminology. It also will be easier to make the change meaningful if you have a rich repertoire of metaphors, analogies, and stories from which to draw.

If you can put yourself in others' shoes, you will be better at anticipating how they will respond to the change and be able to craft a message that will address their most pressing concerns. It will also help to identify ways that the change can be positive for others.

Finally, you need to be comfortable communicating even when you aren't sure what is going to happen. There is very little certainty surrounding a change effort, but people still need to have information about it - even if the best you can provide is the admission that you are not sure what is going to happen.

> **To effectively communicate change:**
> - Communicate using a variety of methods
> - Communicate with a wide audience
> - Share possible outcomes and their estimated likelihood
> - Don't dictate the way people should feel

Effects of Failing to Communicate about the Change:

- Employees starting or sustaining inaccurate and negative rumors because timely and accurate information was not available.
- Employees outraged about first learning of planned changes from outsiders because internal communication was delayed or nonexistent.
- Leaders relying on communication mediums that are not rich enough to convey information as complex as organizational change (Clement, 1994, p. 36)

3. Involving Others in the Change

To be an effective change leader you must first possess the mindset that change is a process in which all affected parties participate rather than a deed that is done to others. A change leader must also show a strong sense of empathy with those whose work, and quite possibly personal lives, will be affected by the change. Together, these attitudes set the stage for a collaborative experience in which a leader strives to build ownership by soliciting input from and listening to those affected.

Your Score on this dimension: 25
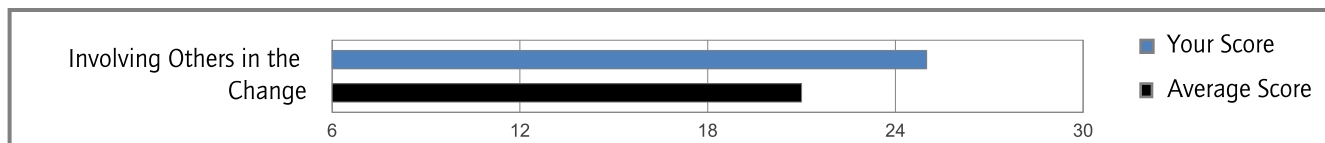
Your score indicates that you realize the value of including others in the change effort to improve the outcome and build commitment. You reach out to others as potential resources and are good at getting even quiet individuals to open up and participate.

The Challenge of Involving Others in the Change

Because participation builds commitment, it is critical that change leaders be masters at involving others in the process. This requires a mindset that change is something everyone helps bring about rather than something that is "done" to others. It means using effective questions to solicit input from those who will be affected by the change. It also means actively listening once people start opening up.

Change leaders need to be comfortable facilitating a wide range of group interaction - from impromptu brainstorming to structured problem-solving sessions. Flexibility is called for. Every aspect of the change may require a different level of involvement, and each person may respond best to a particular form of participation. The key is to provide many varied opportunities for others to shape the change because it is through these processes that they will translate abstract change goals into concrete ways they can alter their behavior on the job. This involvement is what builds personal ownership of the change.

Leading the participation process requires a paradoxically thin/tough skin. You must be sensitive enough to empathize with those who have fears or other negative feelings toward the change. At the same time, you can't take others' rejection of the change personally or allow yourself to be worn down by their resistance.

Some Approaches to Involving Others

Involving others in the change produces the most benefit when people are included from the very beginning. It includes allowing others to influence how the change will be implemented, especially if they will be the ones doing the actual work.

> **To effectively involve others:**
> - Fully consider others' ideas
> - Let others know what happened to their ideas
> - Practice empathic and non-defensive listening
> - Utilize technology to bridge physical distance

Benefits of Involving Others in the Change

Kirkpatrick (1985) ranks "participation" as one of the three key factors determining the success of a change effort. In so doing, he cites the very early research of Lester Coch and John R. P. French (1948) who concluded from their study of a clothing factory that "resistance to method changes could be overcome by getting the people involved in the change to participate in making it" (cited in Kirkpatrick, 1985, p. 135).

Besides overcoming resistance, involving the people affected by change yields another critical benefit: it "makes use of the ideas of those most intimately acquainted with the problems" (Lippitt, Langseth, and Mossop, 1986, p. 99). This almost always results in higher quality outcomes.

Effects of Failing to Involve Others in the Change

- Employees feeling devalued or disrespected
- Lack of commitment to the change

4. Helping Others Break from the Past

One of the greatest challenges in leading change is helping others break free from the present way of doing things. There is tremendous comfort in the known - even if it is fraught with difficulties.

Here the change leader's job is two-fold:
- To help others adopt a questioning stance in their daily routine, and
- To encourage others to approach the future with a clean mental slate.

The goal is to generate innovative ideas for achieving the change.

As the change leader, you will need to help others understand that the most rewarding, profitable future may not necessarily look like an extension of the present. You will need to be the guardian of possibilities, encouraging others to ask both "why?" and "why not?"

Your Score on this dimension: 22
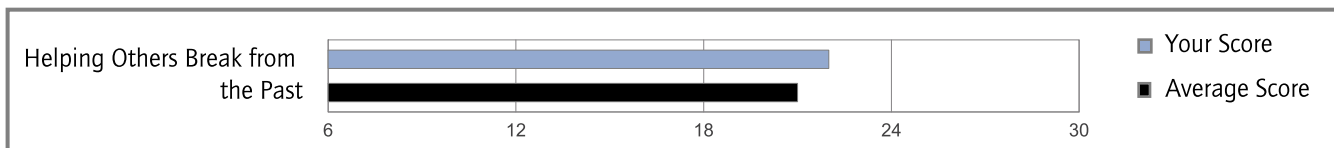
Your score indicates that you are naturally inquisitive and not afraid to take what others might consider to be risks. You see change as an exciting process with positive outcomes, are open to suggestions, and delight in trying out "what if" questions. For you the present way of doing things is never the final word, only an interim solution until your experimentation yields a better approach.

Some Approaches to Helping Others Break from the Past

Change necessarily involves abandoning what we know for what promises to be a better future. For most people, taking this leap into the unknown is a risky and frightening prospect. Helping others develop the courage to take that leap by releasing their mental grip on the way "we've always done things" is a key function of a change leader.

> **To effectively help others break from the past:**
> - Play the devil's advocate
> - Support innovation
> - Sponsor wild ideas
> - Demand continuous improvement
> - Stage a symbolic break from the past

Effects of Failing to Help Others Break from the Past
- Innovation is stifled
- Opportunities for change are never acted on
- Change never happens

5. **Creating a Supportive Learning Environment**

For change to occur, large numbers of people will need to do things differently, as well as attempt things they have never done before. As they practice these new behaviors, mistakes are likely to occur. This familiar cycle of trial, error, adjustment, and retrial is known as the learning process.

Your Score on this dimension: 29
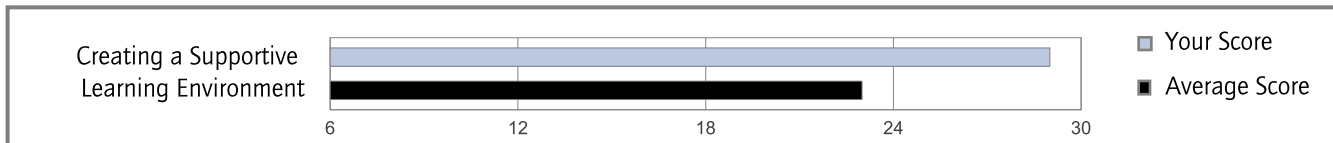
Your score indicates that you view learning as an integral part of change and accept the inconveniences that accompany it. You are not surprised by the time required to fix the errors that sometimes follow trials. You place equal value on what is done and how it is done, realizing that even bad outcomes can have positive aspects. Your confidence is not shaken by mistakes, and you differentiate between failures that are the natural result of learning versus failures that are caused by negligent or irresponsible behavior.

The Challenge of Creating a Supportive Learning Environment

For many people, learning is a trying process under the best of circumstances, but when it is combined with time pressure or the threat of job loss, it can be even more stressful.

A change leader can help in several ways. First, he or she can simply acknowledge that people are in a learning mode, and that there are going to be trials and errors. A change leader can create opportunities to practice new skills without threat of reprisal, and he or she can make it acceptable to admit when one doesn't have the answer or is otherwise unsure of how to proceed. In many organizations, admitting ignorance is met with questions of competence to perform one's job. Failures as a result of trying something new are rewarded with termination. And mistakes made from honest trial and error or reasonable experimentation are punished.

Some Approaches to Creating a Supportive Learning Environment

For some people learning is exhilarating, while for others, it is frightening and frustrating. But when people are asked to learn under time pressure, or when they have a great deal at stake, it is almost always stressful. The change leader can minimize the stress by creating an environment in which the learning process is openly acknowledged and accepted as a necessary part of the change. This means finding ways for people to try new behaviors with minimal risk and focusing on the correction of errors rather than punishing those who made them.

Creating a supportive learning environment involves giving people an opportunity to rehearse their new roles and practice those behaviors consistent with the new way of doing things. It also includes paving the way for early experiences of success and honoring mistakes and failures as an inevitable part of the change process.

> **To effectively create a supportive learning environment:**
> - Focus attention away from blame and toward problem correction
> - Admit that you don't know
> - Declare a practice zone
> - Support time for training

The Effects of Failing to Create a Supportive Learning Environment

In the absence of continual support for learning, most people will revert to previous behaviors, what they already know they can do. They can also activate defensive routines (Kofman and Senge, 1993) such as:

- Working out their problems in isolation
- Always displaying their best face in public
- Never saying, "I don't know."

All of these reactions threaten the very success of any change effort that is dependent upon people developing new skills. In addition, the competitive spirit that motivates such responses makes it highly unlikely that people will choose to collaborate, because seeking the input of others is implicitly admitting defeat. This is unfortunate indeed. Organizations that depend on harnessing the collective intelligence and problem-solving capabilities of all employees are more likely to produce the innovations that will keep the company in business.

Action Planning

Think about a change for which you are presently responsible. It could be a change that you decided to initiate or a change that someone else asked you to implement. Write a short description of that change in the shaded box.

Modeling the Change

1. How could you improve your ability to **Model the Change**?

2. Have you done something recently that was inconsistent with the change? What can you do to avoid that action in the future?

3. What are some of the actions you could take to demonstrate the change to others?

4. Whom might you ask for feedback about your behavior related to the change?

Communicating the Change

5. How could you improve your ability to **Communicate about the Change**?

6. Have you avoided communicating about the change because you aren't sure what is going to happen? If so, what *can* you communicate?

7. Have coworkers' objections to the change caught you by surprise? If so, put yourself in their shoes and try to experience the change from their point of view. What would they find frightening or frustrating about the change? What aspects of the change might be positive?

Involving Others in the Change

8. How could you improve your ability to **Involve Others in the Change**?

9. Think of a problem related to the change and make a list of persons who will be affected by the solution and who might be able to help you. How will you seek their input?

10. If you find it difficult to involve others in the change, how might you bridge that gap?

Helping Others Break from the Past

11. How could you improve your ability to **Help Others Break from the Past**?

12. The next time others express contentment with the present way of doing things, how can you challenge them to think of thing they would like to improve or do differently?

13. How might you encourage others to seriously consider unproven ideas?

14. How could you stage a symbolic break with the past? A good example of this is closing the door on a previously hostile relationship by having the persons involved literally bury an ax together.

Creating a Supportive Learning Environment

15. How could you improve your ability to **Create a Supportive Learning Environment**?

16. How could you create opportunities for others to learn and practice the skills they will need after the change is fully implemented?

17. How do you usually react when you find out about a problem related to the change? What effect might your reaction have on others' willingness to acknowledge mistakes or ask for help?

18. The next time you are confronted with a mistake or problem related to the change, how might you direct everyone's attention to understanding and correcting the situation? How might you discourage others from focusing on blaming the person(s) who made the mistake?

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Our primary audience includes corporate trainers, human resource professionals, educational institutions, and independent consultants who look to us for research-based solutions to develop key skills such as leadership, communication, coaching, and team building.

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