

FACILITATING LARGE-SCALE CHANGE THROUGH LEADERSHIP COACHING

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THE LINK BETWEEN COACHING AND CHANGE

The intricacy and speed of organizational life often force a company to make large-scale changes rapidly. This in turn requires leaders to quickly develop new leadership proficiencies and may require new attitudes and leadership styles.

Few leaders have the time or patience to sit through leadership training courses, and training without orchestrated follow-up has not proven to be the most effective way to change behavior. How then can organizations implement the kinds of large-scale change they need to stay competitive in a rapidly changing market?

For many companies who face this common challenge, a significant part of the answer is leadership coaching. The role of the leader is key whether the organization is merging with another entity, being acquired by another enterprise, reengineering its processes, downsizing its operations, or undertaking any number of productivity and profitability initiatives. For leaders, coaching offers concentrated, confidential conversations that, according to authors David B. Peterson and Mary Dee Hicks, "[equip] people with the tools, knowledge, and opportunities they need to develop themselves and become more effective." The operative words in this definition are "equipping people to develop themselves," for in the coaching relationship the individual being coached is responsible for his or her own growth. As a result of personal change, individuals grow as business leaders and can profoundly impact the shifts that are needed in their organization.

Coaching works because it is pragmatic and purposeful. It provides questions that create an entry point for effective reflection about the nature of the needed organizational change. It helps the leader get past the superficial level of thought that occurs when organizational change is discussed only on a task level. It provides the human contact people hunger for in a technologically-altered world where more time is spent reacting instantaneously to faxes, pages, voicemail and e-mail messages than in one-to-one, face-to-face interactions. Typical comments by leaders who have been coached during large-scale change are, "You got me thinking about who I am as a leader and

my role in leading large-scale changes," or "Your questions helped me deal with specific challenges and also helped me as a person."

Coaching aids business and organizational leaders in gauging the impact they have on others and their organizations. For example, leaders are often unaware of the amount of time their direct reports spend trying to translate or understand directives given at staff meetings or in one-on-one conversations. One executive, who became aware of this at the beginning of a major large-scale change initiative, remarked, "I did not realize that I was leaving behind a wake whenever I spoke." With this newfound understanding, this executive was able to take steps to modify his approach.

When coaching is conducted one-on-one, it can focus on the pragmatic, in-the-moment needs of the leader. In large-scale change applications, these leaders generally include the following organizational members, all of whom may be highly skilled technically but typically lack the enterprise-wide change leadership and change management skills to effectively orchestrate the change:

- A senior level executive(s) who spearheads the change;
- Mid-level managers and others in the organization who are responsible for carrying out the change; and
- Human resource professionals who require change management tools to work daily issues with these individuals.

For coaching to be effective, it must be conducted not in a vacuum but in the context of the large-scale change itself. There needs to be a smooth integration between the approaches that address specific concrete tasks related to the change (the outside) and those intangibles that work with the leader as a person (the inside). This integrated inside-outside context is best established through pragmatic questions that both bring out the leader's unique insights and character, and question all systems related to the change—from business strategy to procedures and policies to human resource practices.

COACHING: A BALANCE OF KNOWLEDGE AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Being a coach is more about personal character and who the coach is as a person than it is about what the coach says or does in the coaching relationship. To be effective, a coach must demonstrate unwavering personal integrity, establish trust and credibility, and have a high threshold for ambiguity. Coaches need to challenge and inspire leaders to go beyond their fears and self-imposed limitations and hold leaders accountable for their commitments.

A good coach leaves control for the change in the hands of the leader. A significant portion of equipping leaders to develop themselves is the coach's commitment to and belief in personal growth for self and others, and walking the fine line between encouraging and providing direction.

This definition of a coach does not mean that coaches can ignore the knowledge and skills they bring to the coaching situation. Coaches must perfect their "way of being" and their knowledge and skills about the use of coaching tools, techniques, and approaches. To coach leaders through large-scale organizational change, they must be knowledgeable about business strategy and operations, and organizational behavior—including change management, systems theory, and human behavior. Coaches must be able to engage in thought provoking conversations about real work situations, and select appropriate coaching practices.

To heighten effectiveness, coaches need to come from "outside" the organization within which their client leaders operate on a daily basis. This ensures that coaches do not guard their comments because of the fear of retribution and that leaders do not feel as vulnerable when they openly reveal their thoughts and emotions. It is imperative that coaches come to the coaching relationship both as an effective counselor and as a business advisor and that they believe fully in the competence and intelligence of the leaders they are coaching within the organization. Only within this frame of reference can the coach effectively help to release the leadership potential possessed by these individuals.

Paying Attention to the Four Facets of Coaching

After years of successful operations and profitable years in a highly competitive environment, a large chemical company realized that the highs and lows of the market were taking a toll on its bottom line. Profit margins were eroding and market share was falling. The company was consistently ranked at the bottom of its industry. Leadership undertook a major reengineering effort to streamline work processes for increased efficiency and profitability. Part of this initiative included the implementation of an integrated enterprise-wide software program that provided instant information on all aspects of an organization's operations.

The chemical company assigned an external personal coach to each of its senior leaders. Each leader was responsible for setting the coaching agenda and how the relationship would proceed. The overarching roles and responsibilities of each coach with regard to the relationship, outcome, process and content were defined by the organization in advance so that everyone was clear from the start on the nature of these relationships.

Coaching relationships are successful when they attend to four facets at all times. They include the relationships between the coach and the leader and the leader and his/her colleagues, and the outcomes, the process, and the content of the coaching (See Figure 1).

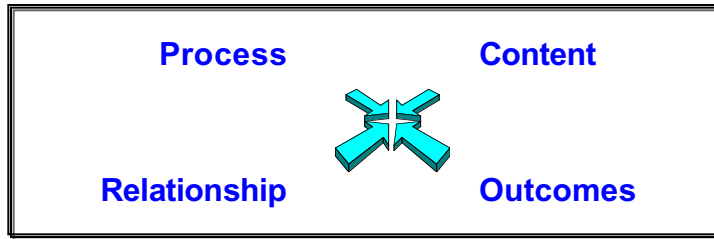


Figure 1: Four Facets of Coaching

Developing and nurturing the **relationship** between the leader and the coach is key. Both parties need to understand their individual roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis each other and the mechanics of how they will work together. The coach must be authentic, credible, trustworthy and seen as someone who can add value. The leader must also be trustworthy, demonstrating integrity and honesty in his or her words and actions.

Personal "fit" certainly plays a role, as the quality of the relationship can influence the success or failure of the coaching relationship. What is most important is the level of respect developed between the two individuals. While the leader does not necessarily have to "like" the coach, he or she must believe that there is something to gain from the relationship.

A senior level manager was very successful in running a large operation on a day-to-day basis, in spite of an abrasive style that offended some people. He was given a coach to help him manage his first change project. At first, the manager resisted all attempts at coaching. Early on in the relationship, the coach clearly stated, in behavioral terms, what she had observed about his leadership style and the impact it had on the project, the company and his direct reports. At the same time, the coach made it clear that her focus and intent was to ensure the success of the business initiative and the manager. While the coach and the manager did not personally like each other at first, a mutual respect developed. This allowed the manager to make needed changes in his behavior, which ultimately led to great success in the project.

This example signals another aspect of the relationship facet of coaching: the relationships between the leader and his or her direct reports, manager, and colleagues. These relationships also become the basis for conversation and coaching intervention. Critical here are (1) the levels and types of interactions between these individuals, and (2) how the leader addresses conflicts, handles problem behaviors, encourages and receives feedback and input, and accepts the uniqueness others bring to the work environment.

A coach was asked to work with a senior level manager to ensure that the people in her organization were prepared for a major reengineering and systems change. It became clear early on that this leader was not very interested in the people aspects of the project, nor did she care to learn. In fact, she asked the coach to "own" that piece of the project. Even though the coach was flattered by the invitation to be an integral part of the company and the project, he intervened by reiterating the difference between being "a pair of hands" and a "coach." In addition, the coach went back to the stated expectations and walked the leader through the list of business issues, problems, deliverables, and timelines a second time. When it became obvious that the leader had no intention of using the coach as a coach, the coach suggested the relationship be terminated.

The specific **outcomes** of the coaching relationship for the leader and the overall change initiative need to be dealt with up front. This shared understanding includes who is accountable for specific issues. When this is clarified early on it is less likely that responsibility will get shifted to the coach. Sometimes a leader prompts the coach for answers because she or he does not know what to do in a specific situation. Or the leader may ask the coach to take on the task because she or he does not have an interest in it or does not have the time to handle it.

In either case, the risk is that the coach, unknowingly, may take on responsibility for the results. A healthier perspective is gained when the expectation is set that the coach will help the leader to discover what needs to occur. Thus, when the coaching relationship winds down, the leader is left with the ability to critically think through similar situations without outside assistance.

While many outcomes for the leader and the overall change initiative will be measurable, some may be unknown and unknowable. Countless external and internal forces, many of which simply cannot be predicted, constantly impact an organization and its people. Yet, this does not mean that these types of outcomes should not be recognized. In addition, sometimes planned positive interventions have unintended negative consequences. For example, an executive might decide that a large event involving a cross-section of every function and all geographies would lead to a rapid implementation of the change. Those not chosen to participate may interpret their non-participation as a statement of their lack of importance and may sabotage the implementation efforts. It is important to track and understand these unintended consequences within the coaching relationship.

Three **process** areas need attention: the coaching process, the leadership change process, and the large-scale change process. The best coaching occurs when the coach uses powerful questions and actively listens to the responses in order to help the leader identify his or her thoughts and feelings. However, the coach needs to be mindful of the process between him or herself and the leader, constantly noting the level of tension, the types of words and phrases that are used, the depth of the conversation, and the underlying assumptions. Thus, sometimes

a coach needs to push back hard and withstand the conflict that might ensue. At other times, silence may be most appropriate.

The leadership change process mirrors the process of individual change. This work involves the movement from specific behavior change to changes in thinking and attitudes, to changes in feelings and emotions. The process of large-scale organizational change is described in the next section.

Effective approaches can either be interactive or reflective or both, depending on the style of the leader and the situation. Interactive tools and techniques require leaders to participate in a specific situation with others. These situations may include role playing a future conversation, practicing a new set of behaviors with the coach, or engaging in individual or group meetings while the coach observes the leader and later offers insights on the leader's participation. The leader may also want to converse with others in the organization to test new ideas or skills prior to their implementation.

Reflective tools and techniques require leaders to set aside individual time to think about their own thoughts, feelings, and actions. This can be achieved through journaling—keeping a written record of these items. They may be general comments related to the change initiative or they may target a situation, such as how the leader felt during a difficult interaction. Watching videotaped recordings of speeches or meetings can also provide the fuel for journal writing. Coaches may want to assign readings that they perceive as relevant to the leader's personal growth and development or use the results of feedback instruments as the basis for reflection and future conversation.

A coach was asked to work with the senior executive of a medium-size business who needed to make sweeping changes in his organization to achieve revenue targets. This executive was quite outspoken and opinionated regarding the best course of action. Although his charm and charismatic style often caused others to concur with his beliefs in face-to-face meetings, they often felt manipulated upon later reflection. His coach was himself initially drawn into this style of behavior. Fortunately, the coach became aware of his own reaction, and how it was encouraging negative behavior on the part of the leader. The coach made a conscious effort to stop the interaction, point out what was happening, and outline the impact of the behavior on the coach and others. In addition, feedback from the leader's direct reports revealed that the leader's personal style and lack of knowledge about business processes were major impediments to the growth of the organization. To address these issues, the coach regularly asked questions that caused the leader to stop and examine how his assumptions and behaviors were impacting his organization. While the process was painful, it helped the leader focus on the key changes he needed to make in order to lead a successful organizational change.

In large-scale organizational change, part of the **content** is derived from the needs of the organization (e.g., its business strategy, work systems, and processes), the other from the needs of the leader relative to the change itself. These content areas are interdependent—systemic organizational changes will cause the leader to rethink his or her behaviors and changes in the leader's assumptions and thought patterns will cause the organizational change to proceed differently. Coaches need to use the content of the coaching relationship to guide how they approach the process, outcome, and relationship facets of coaching. This will ensure that the focus of coaching is kept on the organization and the leader.

A coach was asked to work with the new general manager of a multi-million dollar division of a high tech company that had started to lose money. As an engineer who had come up through the ranks, the manager had had a very successful career. He realized that in order to succeed further, he needed to accelerate the implementation of some dramatic changes. As a result, the coach focused the initial coaching sessions on clarifying the critical business issues the leader and the organization were facing. This included outlining the specific steps he needed to take to gain commitment and support from his management team. Through thought-provoking questions and role playing around multiple scenarios, the leader created an overall strategy for change that fit the culture of the organization. In the process, he gained valuable insights into how his leadership style was impacting the division's bottom-line results.

Coaches who attend to the four facets—relationship, outcomes, process and content—are most likely to initiate and sustain coaching alliances, and to empower leaders to effectively lead change. Leaders in turn must make certain that their leadership style matches those needed by the organization for both leading and sustaining the needed changes.

LINKING LEADERSHIP TO ORGANIZATION STRATEGY

One day in a meeting, the leaders of the chemical company were discussing the changing roles and responsibilities of many of the employees. During their conversation it became evident that they each held differing views on what it meant to be a leader in the "new" organization. What surprised them was that this significant issue had surfaced over the months in individual coaching sessions but not in their leadership meetings.

When coaching leaders through large-scale change, it is imperative that the leader and the coach have a common definition of leadership and that this definition match the organization's strategy, values, and guiding principles. Without this alignment, the outcomes of their coaching interactions will be swayed by the definitions that each of them clings to in their minds.

Over the past 50 years, many different definitions of leadership have been put forth, some more holistic than others. It is our contention that true leadership stems not just from effective actions, but from conscious purposefulness that emanates from within the leader. Thus it is less about position, power, and authority and more about who leaders are in the moment of leading. This definition approaches the leadership arena from the internal character of the individual rather than the external demands of the situation and its circumstances. It goes beyond competency-based models of leadership, suggesting that a person's character and contribution to the organization are infinitely more important.

Effective leadership is more than doing; it is also about being—the expression of the essence of the whole of the individual, including one's mind, heart, body, and spirit. In other words, to be successful at "doing" (e.g., providing direction, leading change, clarifying vision and strategy, etc.) leaders must have a profound sense of who they are at the core of their being. Thus, there is an interdependency between personal growth and leadership effectiveness. That is why coaching, which is specifically designed to touch on and impact core character issues, is crucial as the foundation for leading large-scale change.

LINKING LEADERSHIP TO LARGE-SCALE CHANGE

The chemical company became aware several months into its change initiative that it needed to address its overall business strategy. The reengineering and enterprise-wide software implementation initiatives were helping it to reduce costs and streamline the business, but they were not making it more competitive in the worldwide marketplace. The organization could no longer focus primarily on the commodity portion of its business—it needed to discover what would make it unique in the eyes of current and potential customers. To survive long-term the company had to embrace new offerings not provided by competitors but desired by its customers and reflective of innovative business practices.

The need to achieve and maintain competitive advantage is often the catalyst of large-scale change. Companies faced with a rapidly changing marketplace and a downward spiraling bottom-line realize that they must transform themselves or die. This might mean re-thinking their business, their markets, their processes, their values, and their workforce needs. In any case, a large-scale change refers to a profound transformation in the organization's character that begins with questioning some or all of the assumptions upon which the business was originally created and is currently operating.

Figure 2 (shown on page 10) depicts an open systems framework for large-scale organizational change. It is based on Dick Beckhard and Reuben Harris's change formula (as revised by Kathy Dannemiller) for diagnosing and planning a significant change.

$$\text{Change} = (\text{Dissatisfaction})(\text{Vision})(\text{First Steps}) > \text{Resistance}$$

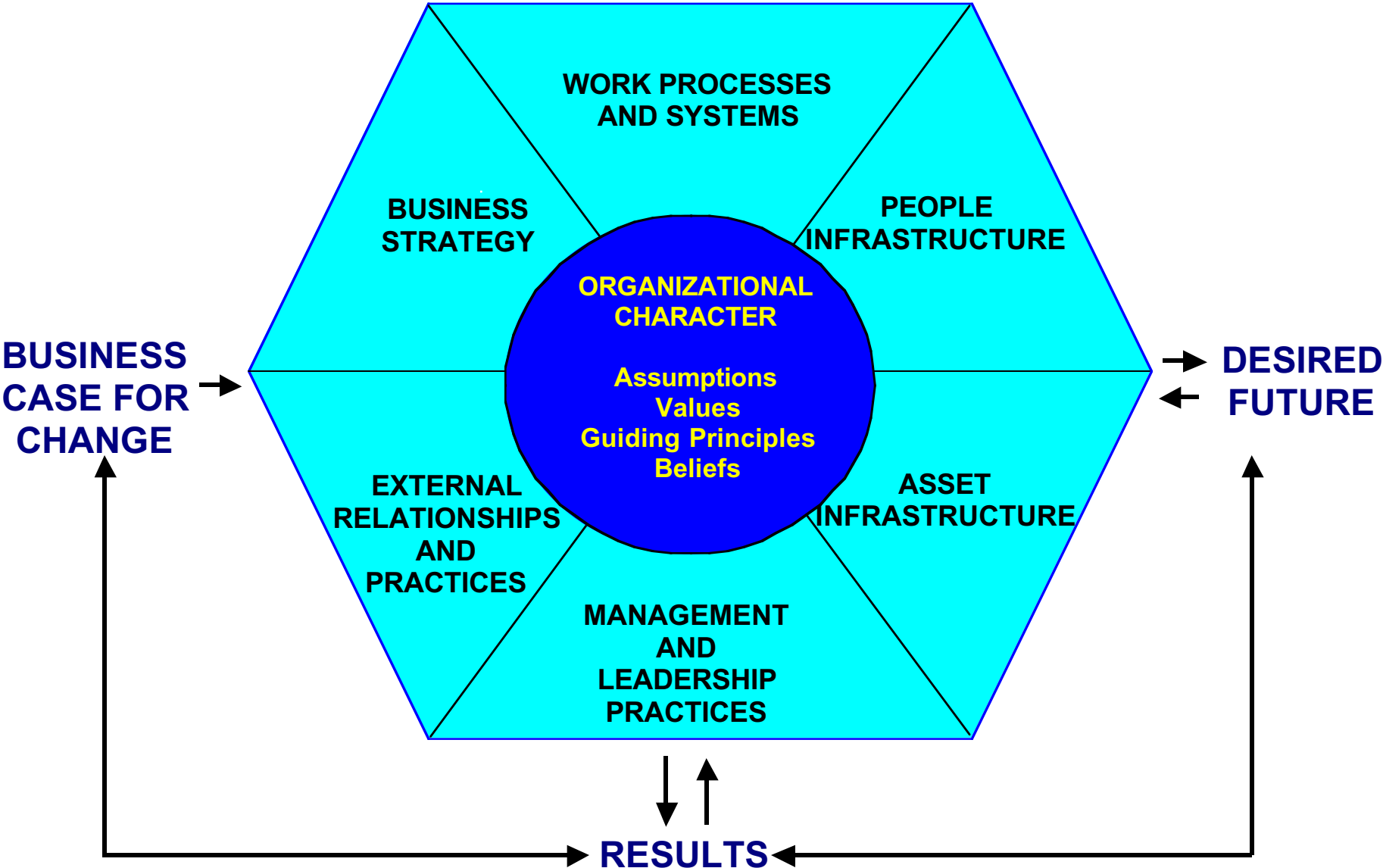
Large-scale change is given the opportunity to occur when three elements are in place simultaneously—dissatisfaction with the present situation, a compelling vision of how the change will create a better future, and first steps for reaching the vision. If any of these elements is missing or collectively they are less powerful than the resistance to the change, then change will not take place.

In the framework shown in Figure 2, the business case for change reflects the *Dissatisfaction*, the desired future is the *Vision*, and the seven filters which form the center of the framework speak to *First Steps*.

Effective leaders lead from the inside out. Likewise, the seven filters that are a part of this framework can be viewed as an "inside out" approach to systemic large-scale change. The inside filter (i.e., Organizational Character) represents the organization's state of "being;" the six filters that surround it represent its state of "doing." As leaders are coached through a change initiative, early on their coaches need to address both the organization's and the leader's characters, since they support and influence the activities required to align the outer filters with each other and the desired future. It is our assertion that attending to a leader's internal character leads to a strong organizational character, which in turn supports more powerful actions in other parts of the framework. In other words, powerful being leads to more powerful doing.

In its totality, this framework for large-scale organizational change can be used to assess the need for large-scale change (versus incremental improvement), as a template for planning and implementing a large-scale change initiative, and as a tool for ongoing feedback and improvement during and following implementation. As such, it serves as a guide for coaching leaders through a large-scale change effort.

Figure 2:
Framework for Facilitating Large-Scale Organizational Change



COACHING LEADERS THROUGH LARGE-SCALE CHANGE

The challenge for coaches and leaders is to tie together the four facets of coaching (relationship, outcomes, process, and content), what it means to lead from the inside out, and the fundamentals of large-scale organizational change. Table 1 presents sample questions for each of the ten elements of the framework for large-scale change, organized from two perspectives—the internal character of the leader (inside focus) and the external demands of the change itself (outside focus). Both of these perspectives are presented here with the understanding, as presented earlier, that leadership is more about "being" than "doing" and that there is a strong link between personal character and outward leadership effectiveness.

These questions serve as the beginning of the dialogue and are by no means exhaustive. The coach must be able to delve into the responses that are provided in order to "equip the leader with the tools, knowledge, and opportunities they need to develop themselves and become more effective."

Table 1: Inside and Outside Focus Questions for Coaching Leaders on Large-Scale Change

Large-Scale Change	Inside Focus	Outside Focus
<p>The Business Case for Change</p> <p>(Compelling argument that propels the organization to change the status quo)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How comfortable are you with your personal statement of the business case for change? ■ How prepared and willing are you to have your business case for change altered by others? ■ What about the change itself wakes you up in the middle of the night? ■ What will you personally lose if this change succeeds? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What is the case for change that you plan to present to stakeholders? How will you communicate this case to them? How will you know they have "gotten the message" about the need to change? ■ How might individuals or teams respond to the change? ■ What are some of the losses others might face in this change initiative?
<p>Desired Future State</p> <p>(The vision of what the organization must look, feel like, and be like to achieve the desired business results)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What future do you envision for yourself? How does this align with the vision for the change initiative? ■ How do you plan to exhibit your commitment to the vision for the change initiative? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What compelling vision for the change will capture the hearts and minds of the workforce? ■ What possibilities exist if everyone got on board? ■ What steps have you taken to create this vision for them? ■ How will you know that people are making the necessary changes to reach the desired future state?

Large-Scale Change	Inside Focus	Outside Focus
<p>Results</p> <p>(What the organization needs to achieve from the change initiative; results may be stated in terms of value to consumers, financial payback to the organization and its stakeholders, growth and investment opportunities, or other important measures)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What is the personal significance of the results the change initiative needs to achieve? ■ What is at stake for you in reaching the required results? ■ What is your level of commitment to obtaining these results? What are you committed to do to reach them? ■ How will you personally add value to the change process? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What results are needed from the change initiative? How do these compare to the results that exist today? ■ How closely aligned are your views about the needed results with those of other stakeholders? ■ How will you communicate these expectations to others? ■ How will you and others know that this initiative is a success?
<p>Organizational Character</p> <p>(The organization's assumptions, values, guiding principles, and operating beliefs)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What values and guiding principles are the most important to you personally? What assumptions underlie them? ■ How may your personal assumptions, values, and guiding principles be impacted by the change initiative? ■ What "stake" are you willing to put into the ground to ensure the success of the change? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What assumptions do you and the organization hold about people, the workplace, and your organization's industry affiliation? ■ What assumptions, values, guiding principles, and beliefs are in place that support the desired future state? ■ What challenges to the organization's assumptions, values, guiding principles, and beliefs might be triggered by the change? How will people react to this?
<p>Business Strategy</p> <p>(The organization's current market strategy, vision, mission, long-and short-term business plans, and core competencies and the alignment between these items)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What is your personal mission? Your personal vision? How do they align with the company's strategy and plans? How will you resolve any conflicts? ■ What are your personal core competencies? What competencies will you need to add or develop because of the change? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What are the core competencies of your team and the organization? ■ What competencies will stand the organization in good stead and which need to be added or developed? ■ How do the organization's overall strategy and plans align with that required by the change initiative?
<p>Work Processes and Systems</p> <p>(Individual and aggregated procedures/work instructions and task instructions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What work processes and systems that you own or participate in need to be altered because of the change? ■ How do you plan to approach these changes? How do you feel about making them? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What work processes and systems support the desired future state and results? Which do not? ■ What types of work processes and systems will need to be created because of the change? ■ What existing work routines might be disrupted by the change?

Large-Scale Change	Inside Focus	Outside Focus
<p>People Infrastructure</p> <p>(Formal governance and reporting structures, and formal and informal working relationships)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How will the change initiative impact your relationships with your management, board, and direct reports? ■ How will your roles and responsibilities change if this initiative is successful? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What will be the impact of the change initiative on people's roles, responsibilities, and working relationships, both formal and informal? ■ How specifically will you help people work through these issues?
<p>Asset Infrastructure</p> <p>(The organization's financial, physical, information, knowledge, and technology resources)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What additional knowledge do you need to gain because of this change? How will you accomplish this? ■ What assets will be taken away from you because of the change? How will you accommodate this? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How well do the current physical, technical, knowledge, and financial assets support the change? ■ What additional assets are needed? How will they be obtained?
<p>Leadership and Management Practices</p> <p>(Policies, reward and recognition systems, decision making style and leadership behavior)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Describe your interpretation of the organization's definition of leadership. What behaviors will you need to change? How do you plan to approach these changes? How will you model new behaviors? ■ How might you need to change the way you make decisions? ■ What norms are most important to you and would be most difficult to change? What challenges does the change represent to these? ■ How will you hold yourself accountable for results? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How do current policies, the performance management and reward systems, and the most prevalent decision making approach support the change? ■ How would you characterize the leadership style here? ■ How do the current leadership practices both support and not support the new change? What does this mean to the organization and its leaders? ■ What norms might be threatened by the change initiative? ■ How will you hold other leaders accountable for results?
<p>External Relationships and Practices</p> <p>(Activities and systems that tie the enterprise to its customers, suppliers, outsourcing partners, community, and other outside stakeholders)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How open are you to hearing opposing points of view? ■ How adept are you at negotiating differences? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Who are the key stakeholders? ■ Where do they "stand" with regard to this change? ■ How will you create an arena where key issues can be negotiated?

CONCLUSION

Leadership coaching is a critical factor in ensuring the success of large-scale organizational change efforts. To heighten its productiveness, it is important that senior leadership clarify the definitions and expectations surrounding coaching, its leadership approach, and its large-scale change initiative.

Coaches who realize that effective leadership is based on strong individual character exhibit a passionate commitment to enhancing the human and leadership potential of those they advise and counsel. With this perspective as the foundation, when using the framework for facilitating large-scale change, coaches enable leaders to systematically assess, plan, and implement a large-scale change. By asking powerful, thought-provoking questions, using interactive and reflective tools and techniques, and "pushing back" hard when needed, coaches act as catalysts for the growth of the leader, and consequently the growth and success of the organization.

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