

# Managing Change in an Innovative World

**a.k.a. Business during Innovative Times** By Natalie Jenkins



Change Management isn't what it used to be. I know, I know...we hear that about everything in business these days, but it doesn't make it less true. In the past Change Management was about mobilizing your employees around the newest strategies / strategic intent or skill building movements. Today, in the innovative environment where constant change is a daily reality often forced upon us by new technologies, new competition, or global pressures, it is not about one big organizational push to reach a specific goal. It is about how you as an individual contributor maintain a spirit of constant agility, flexibility and innovation without losing sight of your strategic and performance goals.

**“Constant change is a daily reality”**

The bottom-line is how do you get the insight to adapt goals when needed based on new information or new innovation. A pretty intimidating task for anyone. What it comes down to is what can an organization do to equip their employees with the skills they need to:

- Communicate Effectively
- Adapt when needed
- Focus during Chaos
- Notice what's important and what's not
- Manage daily business in the mist of constant change
- Create success and recognize it
- Learn from mistakes

Let's take it one area at a time.

## Communicate Effectively







We've got a rapid rate of change and now sprinkle in all the various personality styles in your organi-

zation and what do you get? Well, if it were a cake it probably wouldn't rise.

As any personality assessment tool will tell you, there are many different communication styles. In my words I'd boil it down to 6 primary types of communicators:

- details & facts
- big picture
- emotional - from the gut
- “this is what I think and you better think it too”
- let's not ruffle any feathers
- everything is all good or bad

This is why a tool like The Six Thinking Hats developed by Dr. Edward de Bono makes a major impact to improving the quality of communication. The Six Hats shows you how to separate out your thinking - the creative from the critical, the emotional from the facts. As reported by users of the method, it also helps you to listen better because you do not have to search for the intent of the comment. What are the Six Hats?

-  **White Hat:** Information known and needed
-  **Red Hat:** Gut feeling - intuition - How I feel right now
-  **Yellow Hat:** Benefits - why it might work
-  **Black Hat:** Risks - why it might not work
-  **Green Hat:** Alternatives / Possibilities
-  **Blue Hat:** Thinking about the thinking - set thinking sequence, agenda, next steps

This tool can be used individually, in a team or in coaching, drastically reducing the amount of confusion, frustration and miscommunication.

### **Adapt when needed**

You may start off with a very good plan but then something changes. Very often people say, “oh, well” and keep implementing their plan. It was a very solid plan and people seem to have a hard time letting go of it – even when it is painfully obvious that it is no longer the best move.

Why is this? It’s my belief that it is because once a plan is in place, people focus all their energy on implementing the plan. We forget to review the plan to make sure it still fits our changing world. Most people do not have a process for challenging things that seem to be going well or where problems haven’t been clearly identified.

There is a tool in Lateral Thinking called Challenge that helps people routinely challenge areas where no problems have been identified. Challenge encourages a company-wide innovative perspective: “There isn’t anything wrong here, but maybe there is a better way”. Although it may feel uncomfortable at first, embedding Challenge into a culture promotes a feeling of being back in control and on top of things. Employees are prepared to approach and explore what needs to be adapted without pointing out a problem or a mistake. After all, there may not be something specific to point to as a problem with the plan or strategy.

Information doesn’t come to us all at once, conveniently scheduled to arrive the day of our strategic planning session. Instead, new information flows to us over time. Therefore there will always be moments in time when change is required – not because of a faulty plan but because there is a new reality to take into consideration.

### **Focus during Chaos**

Do you ever have the feeling that your mind is spinning around in so many direction that you just don’t know what to think? You can’t even track what all you are thinking about because it is just too much all at once. I’d say that if you are like most people that your answer is not only yes but HELL YEA.

When you experience this you need to stop, take a deep breath and then ask yourself what you are focusing on. You’ll find that most of the time

you are trying

to think about too many things all at once. Write down all the areas that you are thinking about – separate them out. The blue hat process of Six Hats or the Focus tool in Lateral Thinking can help you to do this in a structured way.

Then how do you prioritize where you should spend your time?

The tool-set in Six Value medals will help you to do a quick value scan and assessment. Reading the scan will make very clear which value packages deserve top priority. It’s calming and productive to use tools to focus thinking during high pressure, chaotic moments.

### **Notice what’s important and what’s not**

This seems like a mystical thing to do but it really is not. The routine use of thinking tools dissolves a lot of the chaos and clutter in you mind, providing a clear view of values and priorities. The Six Hats and lateral thinking tools outlined above are a head-start in this direction. Learning how to direct your attention, and the attention of those around you, using additional management thinking tools in our Management Thinking portfolio, refines and strengthens your ability to keep yourself and your team on track.

### **Manage daily business in the midst of constant change**

The biggest issue here is to review your policy and procedures every quarter – not once a year, or never, as most organizations do. Why is this so important? Because people get trapped by their policies and procedures that were set under a dif-

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ferent environment. By reviewing once a quarter, you'll be able to make adjustments that are necessary and timely so that you don't get bogged down in your daily work activities or spend a lot of time dealing with exceptions.

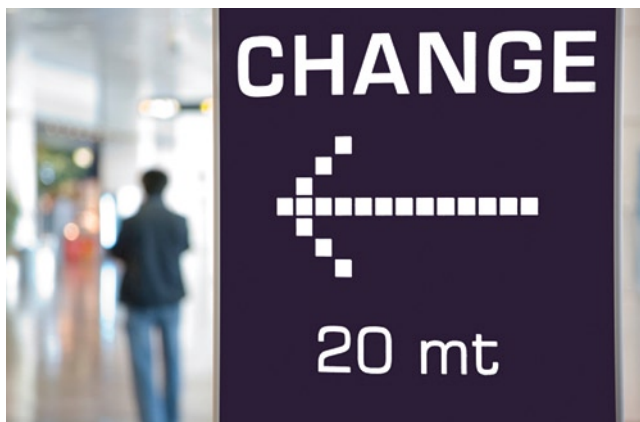
A tool that will help here is Dr. Edward de Bono's Simplicity. The Simplicity tools show you how to create a simplicity team that is always checking for a more productive and less complex way to operate. This will not only reduce complexity but will stop organizations from wasting energy implementing policies that are no longer relevant.

## Create success and recognize it

When making your plans and strategies, state what success looks like in the short term, long term, and big picture. When predicting what we want success to look like, we need to break it down into smaller pieces - not just 1 big financial goal.

By breaking success indicators down into small parts you will then be able to recognize the progress you are making. A nice side benefit is that if you are not having success then you can make adjustment earlier and avoid a big failure. And, that is a success to recognize! For example, in reviewing our early success indicators, we noticed that we were not achieving our targets. Our team made the needed adjustments and not only are we back on track, but we reduced a couple of under performing budget items. Therefore we project coming in under budget by \$25,000.

Once you know what success looks like, what systems should you have in place for making it visible?



There are a lot of different ways to do this. Here are some general ideas to help get you started.

- Reward it
- Create a Success / Brag Board (virtual or real world or both) for your team or department
- Include a Weekly Success Stories time during each staff meeting
- Create a success calendar - you can use this at performance review time

Overall, have fun with it. Success is exciting and energizing to talk about and recognize.

You cynics out there may be thinking, "It's our jobs to create success. If we aren't succeeding then we have a big problem. I shouldn't need a pat on the back or need to toot my own horn for doing my job".

I'd say, you're half right and half wrong. What you've got right is that you are expected to be successful in your job. What you are missing is that if you aren't being clear about what success looks like and recognizing it when it's achieved, you will likely not notice when you need to make adjustments. After all, you very likely are implementing your plan perfectly and that feels good and feels like success. So, it is so important to keep an eye on the indicators of success of the task, project, etc. and talk about them. It's not about tooting your own horn but about checking your sails along the way to your destination.

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## Learn from mistakes

Ask successful people and heads of organizations if they have made any mistakes. They will tell you that they have, and they have made lots of them. So, why are people so afraid to make mistakes? Because they think they'll lose their job or not get promoted?

What they don't realize is that the people they report to are more interested in what they learned, the quality of the thinking that went into their decision and how they have grown from the experience than the mistake itself. Plus, you have to be willing to take some risk if you want to get anywhere new. If you never make any mistakes, chances are you aren't taking any risk and you are not adding new value.

Very often when a mistake is made and there was good quality thinking that went into that decision - there is still a huge value to the organization. Why? Because in most cases the learning itself created something new for the organization that turned out to be of great value.

There is a big difference in making a mistake (bad decision) because you were lazy or just didn't stop to think through it properly and making a mistake that was based on good quality thinking.

### **In conclusion**

The successful leaders of the future will be those individuals who not only learn how to cope but to excel while everything is changing around them. This will take guts and smarts. Equip yourself with the best thinking methods you can get your hands on and you just might find that it's not so scary out there after all, but actually a world full of more opportunities than ever before.



Change is coming.