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COPING WITH CHANGE:
A STRATEGY FOR EVOLVING THE CULTURE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF
NATIONAL DEFENCE

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Abstract

The Department of National Defence has experienced over a decade of turbulence and change highlighted by reductions in personnel and budgets, organizational restructuring and increased operational tempo. For success in the long-term, the departmental culture must be capable of adapting and flourishing in this period of continuous change. The purpose of this paper is to convince the reader that DND needs a strategy to develop a culture that embraces change and seeks continuous improvement to succeed in a constantly changing environment. The paper examined the department's recent history, the factors influencing change, the challenges presented by these changes and DND's successes and failures in coping with change. Three key areas were highlighted for building a strategy to effect culture change: develop leadership skills to lead change; create a communications plan to inform personnel at all levels about the process; and initiate a formal reward system to entrench desired behaviours.

"Our moral responsibility is not to stop the future, but to shape it… to channel our destiny in humane directions and to try to ease the trauma of transition." Alvin Toffler

Out of crisis comes change. For more than a decade now, DND has been in a state of crisis. This crisis is multi-faceted but inter-connected on many levels. The department has to contend with a new world order, changing government policies, decreased defence spending, rapid technological advances and an unprecedented level of military operations. Out of this crisis has come change for the organization. The change DND experienced is highlighted by re-engineering, restructuring, downsizing, absorbing massive budget cuts and increased operational tempo. "Change, even if predictable, is almost always perceived as threatening."[1] For organizations to survive in this rapidly changing world it must be recognized that change is not a one-time effort; it is constant and unrelenting. "That makes it a bigger threat because there is no sense of relief, no easy measure of success, no sense of closure - ever."[2]   The organizational culture must also be capable of adapting and flourishing in a continuously changing environment to achieve long-term success. Departmental senior leadership understands the necessity to foster an organizational culture and develop common values by promulgating vision, mission and ethics statements. But these declarations do not address the challenge of coping with constant change. While attempting to cope with the crisis of the last decade, the department missed the opportunity to develop its culture into one that adapts to change.

Evolving a culture is an imposing task for an organization because it shakes the familiar foundation upon which the personnel in that culture operate. This task is even more difficult in the military environment of deeply ingrained beliefs, traditions and hierarchy. To understand the

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[1] Jennifer James, Thinking in the Future Tense: Leadership Skills for a New Age (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996) 104.
[2] Jennifer James, Thinking in the Future Tense: Leadership Skills …, 104.

current DND attitudes and values, it is important to comprehend the present situation and the circumstances that contributed to its formation. It is equally important to recognize what is different about the changed environment, the challenges this difference presents and how the department has attempted to address these challenges. Understanding the situation is essential to build a strategy for culture change.

Most successful culture change efforts seem to include three key elements: leadership, communications and incentives. "Learning how to respond to and master the process of change - and even excel at it - is a critical leadership skill for the twenty-first century."[3] Equally important is the ability to effectively communicate the impact of change to all levels of an organization. Further, behaviours that indicate an acceptance of the desired culture change should be rewarded. This reinforces the desired behaviour and builds a critical mass of personnel that promote the new culture. Because of senior leadership's efforts, these elements are present in DND's current culture. But the focus of these elements is not on enhancing the organization's ability to adapt to change. DND needs a strategy that incorporates leadership development, communications and a reward system to develop a culture that embraces change and seeks continuous improvement to succeed in a constantly changing environment.

To develop a strategy for culture change in DND it is important to first understand the perceptions and attitudes of the existing culture. A survey conducted in 1999 by the Director of Human Resources Research and Evaluation (DHRRE) gives an indication of the department's current culture. This survey measured the attitudes and beliefs of DND personnel towards change and renewal. The results were compared to benchmark data from a similar survey done in 1995 to measure progress in the implementation of D2000 principles and values throughout

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[3] Jennifer James, Thinking in the Future Tense: Leadership Skills …, 104.

the department.[4] In general, respondents to the 1999 survey expressed the view that improvements had taken place in areas such as: Learning New Practices; Openness to Workplace Innovation; Maximizing Personnel Contribution; Using Resources Wisely; Teamwork and Integration; General Management Climate; and Change and Renewal. These positive indicators demonstrate that DND personnel improved some of their business practices over the past decade.[5] However, limited progress in implementing D2000 principles and values in other areas is cause for concern.

The survey topics that did not reflect improvement include Planning Procedures, Leadership, Effectiveness of Communication and Morale. The advent of business planning addresses the first issue. The latter three issues will later form the basis of a three pronged approach to evolve the culture in DND. Most respondents indicated that they felt the effectiveness of planning procedures declined since 1995. They did not see evidence of continuous improvement or planning for better organization and coordination of work in their workplace. The survey indicated a perception among the respondents that they would be expected to do more with less because of downsizing. Although the overall score for leadership was positive, most respondents indicated that they had not seen an improvement since 1995. A majority of respondents did not see their supervisor as a role model or as having a strong sense of mission or purpose. Instead, they viewed their immediate supervisors as being more concerned with their own careers and pleasing their superiors rather than taking risks to support their subordinates. Regarding communications, the 1999 survey indicated a perception that the information flow had not improved compared to the 1995 survey.

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[4] The Defence 2000 (D2000) principles are those we have to guide our actions in the tough areas of leadership, accountability, ethics and resource management. The core values that form the foundation for all our actions are professionalism, loyalty, integrity and mutual respect.

One fifth of the military and one third of the civilian personnel respondents did not believe DND's values and goals were clearly communicated. Almost half of those polled indicated that important news was passed to them through the grapevine rather than through the official channels. A final area of limited positive change was morale. Although the overall impression was that it had increased since 1995, only 27 percent of those polled felt that their personal morale had improved regardless of pay raises and other Quality of Life (QOL) initiatives.[6] Therefore, despite the success of a number of change initiatives, some indicators show that the department's culture does not include embracing change and seeking continuous improvement.

Along with recognizing the current attitudes in DND, it is equally useful to know the circumstances that contributed to their formation. The last decade was a period of tremendous upheaval in the way the department operates. 'You are either on the steamroller, or you are part of the pavement' was a very popular expression in this era. Defence budget cuts of the late 1980's and early 1990's led to a realization that innovative ways of doing business must be found to maintain a viable military force. These funding limitations prompted the implementation of over 300 change initiatives and reforms to try innovative, less expensive ways of doing business.[7] Lexicon like 'business planning', 'shaving the ice cube' and 'budget devolution' was common as the department's personnel explored new ways to perform the business of defense. Separate initiatives such as Base Delegation of Authority and Accountability Trial, Quality of Working Life, Socio-Technical Systems, Total Quality

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[5] Canada, Department of National Defence, Executive Summary to 1999 D2000 Survey: Change and Renewal in DND (Ottawa: DND, 2000) 2.

[6] Canada, Department of National Defence, 1999 D2000 Survey: Change and Renewal in DND. (Ottawa: DND, 2000) Summary.

[7] "Defence Minister Welcomes Final Report of the Minister's Monitoring Committee on Change," Office of the Minister of National Defence News Release 09 Feb. 2000.

Management and Continuous Improvement proliferated across the department. The purpose of these initiatives was to preserve combat capability and prepare for forecast budget cuts by reducing the workforce, infrastructure and wasteful practices. Ideas were drawn from civilian industry which was also experiencing pressure to re-engineer, downsize and become more efficient to meet the competitive demands of a rapidly expanding global market. However, attempts to mimic the achievements of civilian industry met with limited success. The deeply ingrained traditions, hierarchy and bureaucracy that control DND processes were difficult barriers to overcome. The D2000 Committee was formed in 1992 to provide guidance and support to all these different initiatives[8] This committee's aim was to foster, guide and coordinate management renewal to enable DND to cope with reductions in personnel and defence spending.

Another key circumstance that formed the present departmental attitudes occurred in 1995. Direction to reduce the number and size of headquarters prompted the stand-up of the largest departmental change effort, the Management, Command and Control Re-engineering (MCCR) initiative. The aim of this project was to re-engineer the DND/CF command, control and resource management structure, with a goal of reducing resources devoted to headquarters functions by 50 percent. The MCCR team originally adopted a re-engineering approach, with the objective of aligning structures with processes to achieve improved productivity.[9] However, when it became clear in 1996 that re-engineering alone did not achieve the necessary reductions, the VCDS ordered assigned reductions. In essence, DND coped with the budget cuts of the 1990's primarily by reducing personnel and related costs. While preoccupied with reductions,

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[8] Executive Summary to 1999 D2000 Survey…, 1.

DND missed the opportunity to develop its existing culture into one capable of adapting to change.

Although the department did not implement a change in its culture, the new environment in which it operates is very different. In the past decade DND underwent major changes in the number and variety of operations, its organizational structure and personnel strength. In his speech to the Canadian Club of Ottawa in 1999, the CDS, General Maurice Baril, emphasized that the department no longer operates in a stable environment by saying,

> During the Cold War, there was a certain amount of stability in planning
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> for a conflict in Central Europe. We could expect to face so many
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> divisions, so many tanks, and so many jets. When the Cold War ended, so
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> did the clarity of our task. We no longer had a clearly defined threat, and
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> we were unsure of how the world would change.[10]

Today, the department's missions span the entire spectrum of operations from humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and drug interdiction to peacekeeping and peace support operations. The downsizing and reduction of headquarters resulted in the relocation of the environmental chiefs of staff to NDHQ. This change emphasizes operating within a joint structure, a concept that necessitates a change in the traditional method of functioning as separate services. Further, DND has not experienced personnel reductions of such magnitude since the 1970's. In the past decade, the Regular Force downsized from 75,000 to 60,000, a reduction of 20 percent, and the civilian personnel reduced almost 40 percent. The organization survived a decade of crisis and change but there are real limits to what the military forces can now deliver in

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[9] Canada, Department of National Defence, <u>Executive Summary to MCCRT Historical Report</u>, Vice Chief of the Defence Staff. (Ottawa: DND, 1999) 2.

[10] Canada, Department of National Defence, <u>Speaking Notes for General Maurice Baril at the Canadian Club</u> (Ottawa: DND, 24 November 1999) 1.

terms of operational commitments. To continue to sustain Canada's defence commitments and

military operations in this new environment, DND needs a culture that helps its personnel handle

the challenges of an increasingly complex and changing world.

The challenges this different environment presents DND include, but are not limited to,

interoperability in joint and combined scenarios, reduced resources and the adaptability of the

organizational structure. In the first place, to meet the demands of increasingly complex

operations with limited resources, there is a greater reliance on joint and combined operations.

In addition to the traditional problem-solving skills and technical expertise, joint commanders

will need considerable skills in communication, interpersonal influence, conflict management

and negotiation to be effective in multi-service or multi-national operations.[11] Second, DND

must learn how to effectively sustain operations with limited resources. The department is still

responsible to maintain the roles outlined in the 1994 White Paper, but with reduced personnel

numbers and an increased operational tempo. This forces senior leadership into crisis

management of limited resources instead of developing coping strategies. Finally, the traditional

bureaucratic organization in the department cannot respond effectively to rapid change.

Organizations must be able to modify their structures and be continuously reshaped in order to

remain viable in a constantly changing environment. Leaders must learn how to promote change

and encourage organizational restructuring when required.[12] As the operational tempo continues

to stretch defence resources, it is essential that DND has a strategy to cope in an environment of

constant and rapid change. What has the organization done to adapt to this constantly changing

way of doing business?

The department endeavors to deal with the challenges of the new environment through

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[11] James G. Hunt, George E. Dodge and Leonard Wong, Out-of-the-Box Leadership: Transforming the Twenty-First-Century Army and Other Top-Performing Organizations (Stamford: JAI Press, 1999) 260.

improved military leadership training, better communications, exploring alternate service

delivery and restructuring the organization. DND recognized the need to implement institutional

reforms to renew the leadership and management of the military forces. This involved

developing skills in the officer corps to prepare them for operating in the new environment.

According to the latest VCDS Report on Change Implementation, the syllabi for senior officer

courses such as CSC, NSSC and NSSS now include ethics, leadership and management

training.[13] This initiative creates a solid foundation on which to base future leadership

development. As a first step to communicating DND's long-term vision and strategic goals, the

document, *Shaping the Future of Canadian Defence: A Strategy for 2020* (Strategy 2020) was

published in June 1999.   To address the challenge of sustaining operations with reduced

resources, DND adopted a policy of exploring Alternate Service Delivery (ASD) opportunities.

The department implemented several ASD initiatives on the domestic front, and at least one in

support of deployed operations. In Bosnia, civilian contractors provide logistics support to the

contingent to reduce the need for military personnel to perform these functions. The MCCR

initiative was the department's attempt to restructure and downsize the traditional bureaucratic

organization of linear hierarchies and centralized authority. DND is optimizing use of its limited

resources by creating a joint force headquarters to meet the department's operational

commitments. Departmental efforts to deal with the challenges of the new environment have

met with varying degrees of success. However, the initiatives have not considered evolving the

department's culture into one that embraces change.

Many change programmes failed in the last decade because they were overreaching,

poorly focused or implemented without true commitment to the underlying principles of

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[12] James G. Hunt, George E. Dodge and Leonard Wong, <u>Out-of-the-Box Leadership: </u>…, 48.

change.[14] The 1999 DHRRE survey is DND's report card on its relative success in

implementing change. According to the survey, 70 percent of the respondents did not accept the

D2000 principles and values. The MCCR initiative achieved its goal of a 50 percent reduction in

headquarters, but at the expense of intellectual capital - experienced personnel. Further, when

the MCCR project was handed over to Director General Management Renewal Services

(DGMRS) in 1997, there was no plan in place to maintain momentum in implementing the

initiatives, avoid retrenchment of attitudes and procedures, or encourage personnel to embrace

change.[15] Professional development for leaders emphasizes operating in the spectrum of

conflict, ethics, leadership, management and joint operations, but it does not develop skills for

leading change. The only formal training on team building and creating a climate for optimum

performance is aimed at the department's senior leaders selected to attend the NSSC[16]. The

Director of Strategic Change uses its D2000 web site and monthly bulletin to communicate best

practices and initiatives, but this passive form of communication will not greatly impact the

general departmental population. On the issue of morale, more than 80 initiatives were

implemented to improve military compensation and benefits, including support programmes for

members and their families, to address QOL concerns.[17] However, the long-term motivational

worth of such a programme is yet to be determined. As Abraham Maslow noted, "a satisfied

need no longer motivates."[18] Thus, the initiatives often failed because of lack of commitment to

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[13] Command and Staff Course (CSC), National Security Studies Course (NSSC) and National Security Studies Seminar (NSSS) are Canadian Forces College officer professional development courses.
[14] Deb Chatterji and Jeffrey M. Davidson, "Examining TQM's Legacies for R&D," Research Technology Management Jan/Feb. 2000: 12.
[15] Canada, Department of National Defence, MCCRT Historical Report Forward and Lessons Learned/Way Ahead, Vice Chief of the Defence Staff. (Ottawa: DND, 1999).
[16] Canada, Department of National Defence, VCDS Key Reports on Change Implementation. (Ottawa: DND, 2000).
[17] Canada, Department of National Defence, National Defence 2001-2002 Report on Plans and Priorities. (Ottawa: DND, 2001) ii.
[18] Abraham Maslow, Motivation and Personality. (New York: Harper, 1954).

accountability, lack of skills to lead the change, lack of communication, and lack of an effective reward system to reinforce initiative and encourage a culture that is adaptable to change.

To review, the 1999 DHRRE survey describes the current environment in DND, and the circumstances that contributed to shaping it. An explanation was given of the differences in this new environment and the challenges it presents DND. Finally, an account was presented of the department's initiatives to deal with these challenges and some resulting shortfalls. Next, a strategy will be proposed to ameliorate the concerns arising from the survey.

One possible solution for DND to achieve more enduring success in this environment of constant change is to create a culture that embraces change and continuous improvement. The rationale for practicing continuous improvement is that the world is not a static place in which an organization operates, but is dynamic and continually changing. Continuous improvement "emphasizes the need to establish an organizational commitment to a systematic continual improvement in capability, reliability and efficiency."[19] Jack Welch, chairman, CEO and the acclaimed driving force behind General Electric's re-engineering effort asserts that the level of personnel involvement in a change effort is directly associated with their acceptance of the change, motivation for success and productivity.[20] The development of an organization that embraces continuous improvement involves a behavioural learning process, or culture change, that evolves over time. These behaviours are associated with systematic finding and solving of problems, monitoring and measuring processes and strategic planning. The key to the successful implementation of a continuous improvement organization is a leadership committed to and actively involved in reinforcing the required culture change.[21]

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[19] Richard A. Reid and Elsa Leong Koljonen, 'A Systems-Based Framework for Continuous Improvement …, 50.
[20] Michael L. Tushman and Charles A. O'Reilly, Winning Through Innovation: A Practical Guide …, 135.
[21] John Bessant, Sarah Caffyn and Maeve Gallagher, "An Evolutionary Model of Continuous Improvement Behaviour," Technovation 21 (2000): 69.

The department's senior leadership appears committed to change by striving to gain government support for change programmes. In his message in the 2001-2002 Report on Plans and Priorities, the MND acknowledges that the department must respond to the defence challenges it is facing. He stated, "The status quo is not an option. Decisions will have to be made as we continue to work to sustain Canada's defence commitments and military operations, and, simultaneously, make the investments needed to ensure the future operational effectiveness of the Forces."[22] A departmental culture that embraces change and seeks continuous improvement would greatly assist the organization in meeting its defence challenges. Such a culture would adapt more readily to the constantly changing way of doing business by actively exploring opportunities to become more efficient. A three-pronged approach is recommended to evolve the culture in DND. Firstly, leaders need to be developed to champion change and continuous improvement. Secondly, a communications plan needs to be formulated to ensure all personnel are kept informed of change initiatives. Finally, the reward system needs to be amended to encourage flexibility and foster initiative. The aspects of this three-pronged approach will be addressed individually in the following paragraphs.

First and foremost, the department must develop leaders capable of leading change. In the twentieth century, professional development was primarily focused on management practices. Personnel were trained how to plan, budget, organize, staff, control and problem solve. Only in the last decade has much thought gone into developing leaders – people who can create and communicate visions and strategies. Because management deals mostly with the status quo and leadership deals mostly with change, DND will have to become much more skilled at creating leaders in the 21st century. Constant, rapid change is now a fact of life. For

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[22] Canada, Department of National Defence, <u>National Defence 2001-2002 Report on Plans and Priorities</u> …, iv.

organizations to survive in these circumstances, such change must be accepted and led.[23] A

crucial leadership skill is the ability to respond to and master the process of change.[24] Therefore,

leaders will have to take personal, leadership and management development seriously at all

phases of their careers. Learning must start at the ab initio stage and be reinforced at all levels of

professional development. The current system of leadership training is primarily linear,

sequential and progressive with several different but related programmes aimed at the various

levels of command.[25]

> The skill requirements across levels and functions may be different from
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> those in the past. It is therefore important not to assume a simple, linear
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> relationship between specific competencies and leadership effectiveness.
>
> There is no magic set of competencies that guarantees success as a leader
>
> in all situations, and the ability to learn and adapt may be the best
>
> predictor of continued success.[26]

This ability should be developed through formalized mentoring or coaching programmes that are

competency-based and applied in the workplace where it counts most.[27] Without such leaders,

the vision, communication and empowerment that are at the heart of culture change will simply

not happen well enough or fast enough to satisfy the department's operational needs and

expectations.[28]

The second prong of the approach to a culture change is an effective communications

plan. Such a plan is essential for modifying the culture of an organization to embrace change

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[23] Terry D. Anderson, Transforming Leadership: Equipping …, 283.
[24] Jennifer James, Thinking in the Future Tense: Leadership Skills …, 104.
[25] James G. Hunt, George E. Dodge and Leonard Wong, Out-of-the-Box Leadership: …, 265.
[26] James G. Hunt, George E. Dodge and Leonard Wong, Out-of-the-Box Leadership: …, 266.
[27] Terry D. Anderson, Transforming Leadership Equipping …, 14.
[28] John P. Kotter, Leading Change …, 165.

and continuous improvement. To ensure all levels understand the overall picture, senior leadership must communicate its vision and strategy. Equally important, groups within the organization working on different projects need to learn to communicate with each other. Interaction is critical to coordinate each group's individual efforts and understand the potential impact of their changes on other groups.[29]

The United States Automobile Association (USAA) is an example of a company that effectively employed communications to achieve a culture change. In 1994, the USAA launched an initiative to cut costs to stay competitive in the newly deregulated insurance market. A massive culture change was deemed necessary because the programme focused primarily on redesigning employee benefits. Recognizing that they could never communicate too much, the company drove the change with a comprehensive communications plan. "Particularly in times of change and uncertainty, communicating is a constant activity. It is not a program (sic); it is an inherent part of daily management."[30] To fortify its communication plan, the company invested heavily in communications technology, used corporate print media, internal e-mail, weekly television broadcasts and videotaped messages from the president to all employees across the country. Prior to starting the culture change, USAA had all its supervisors and managers complete a series of communications training programmes. "They were taught about their role as communicators and keepers of the flame" and trained in effective communication skills. The key to successfully implementing the culture change was that the managers learned to carry the word that, while processes might change, the company's core values would not. [31] Thus, to effect a culture change, the personnel in that culture need to know the current state is no longer

[29] John P. Kotter, Leading Change …, 141.
[30] Jac Fitz-enz, The 8 Practices of Exceptional Companies: How Great Organizations Make the Most of Their Human Assets (New York: AMACOM, 1997) 99.
[31] Jac Fitz-enz, The 8 Practices of Exceptional Companies …, 100.

acceptable and what the future state will look like. A comprehensive communication system is an important tool in projecting this message. But a communication plan needs to consider more than just the messages to be communicated and the communication medium. To be trusted, information on change needs to come from people with whom the targets of that information are in direct contact. It must also involve direct participation of senior leadership through meetings, videos, newsletters and informal gatherings.[32] Currently, DND is primarily focused on improving communications with the Canadian population through the media. To address the concerns in the 1999 survey and foster a culture change, an aggressive interdepartmental communication programme must be developed.

Leadership development and a communication plan are not sufficient for culture change to be successful. Changing a culture must also incorporate the third prong of the approach - modifying the organization's formal reward system.[33] The MCCR initiative had the right idea to implement and advertise 'quick hit' successes to encourage the headquarters personnel involved in, and affected by, the project to push forward and tackle even bigger challenges. However, both the MCCR initiative and D2000 project lacked a long-term plan to change the department's culture. Personnel were expected to change a lifetime of behavior after only a few days of team building training. "Team building and worker empowerment can take five to seven years to fully develop and implement."[34] Rewards for learning must be structured to promote flexibility and initiative, thereby encouraging personnel to develop the skills needed to identify new problems and opportunities.[35]   DND personnel must be taught to think by giving them the freedom to act, and reinforcing that it is their responsibility to produce results. The department must prepare its

[32] Jeanenne LaMarsh, <u>Changing the Way We Change</u> …, 129-130.
[33] Michael L. Tushman and Charles A. O'Reilly, <u>Winning Through Innovation</u> …, 114.
[34] Jennifer James, <u>Thinking in the Future Tense</u> …, 113.
[35] James G. Hunt, George E. Dodge and Leonard Wong, <u>Out-of-the-Box Leadership:</u> …, 57.

personnel for more responsibility by training them to a common standard, developing their

initiative, monitoring their progress and rewarding positive behavioural changes.[36]

To be effective, the reward system must consider what motivates the personnel and offer rewards

in a manner consistent with their values and needs.[37] Senior leadership in the department

recognizes that a reward system is necessary, and implementing QOL initiatives is a positive first

step. Providing ethics training and promulgating a statement of DND ethos and values are

equally important gestures to reinforce the department's existing culture. But to further develop

its culture into one that supports change, it needs a strategy that incorporates the three-pronged

approach of training the leaders, communicating effectively and rewarding desired behaviour.

There are many challenges to evolving the departmental culture into one that embraces

change. However, the most imposing challenge is the actual culture change itself. An

organization's culture or norms of behaviour is based on a system of shared beliefs, attitudes and

values. "Norms of behaviour are common or pervasive ways of acting that are found in a group

and that persist because group members tend to behave in ways that teach these practices to new

members, rewarding those who fit in and sanctioning those who do not."[38] "Widely shared

norms can be powerful determinants of attitudes and behaviours".[39] To introduce new

behavioural patterns a strategy is needed to unlearn the old patterns.[40] Without such a strategy,

resistance to change will arise from perceived threats to traditional norms and ways of doing

business.[41] The problem for DND is that these behaviours are the most enduring despite changes

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[36] James G. Hunt, George E. Dodge and Leonard Wong, <u>Out-of-the-Box Leadership:</u> …, 294.
[37] Michael L. Tushman and Charles A. O'Reilly, <u>Winning Through Innovation</u> …, 114.
[38] John P. Kotter, <u>Leading Change</u> (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996) 148.
[39] Michael L. Tushman and Charles A. O'Reilly, <u>Winning Through Innovation: A Practical Guide</u>…, 103.
[40] John Bessant, Sarah Caffyn and Maeve Gallagher, "An Evolutionary Model of Continuous …, 70.
[41] Jeanenne LaMarsh, <u>Changing the Way We Change: Gaining Control of Major Operational Change</u> (Reading:
Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1995) 104.

in key management positions because they have been accepted and internalized long ago.[42]   In

many respects, a military force resembles the lodge culture described by Jennifer James in her

book, *Thinking in the Future Tense*. "The structure and culture of many of our organizations

maintain and sometimes enforce a nostalgic-and unrealistic-view of life and work. Lodges admit

only the "right" people, dress them in ceremonial outfits, adorn them with pins and rights, and

teach them insider rituals."[43] For this reason, military tradition is probably the most difficult of

all organizational cultures to change. The beliefs and rituals built over the years create

hierarchies that tend to discourage even the most constructive changes if they threaten the 'old

guard'.[44] "Warren Bennis, premier business researcher, found that seven of ten people in an

organization will (sic) not speak up if their view differs from conventional wisdom."[45] The

perceived cardinal rule being: don't bring down the old gods if you want to be one of them.[46]

One solution to overcoming reticence is a comprehensive reward and reinforcement system.[47]

Research on reward systems in strong culture organizations indicates the main tenet that

"recognition, a sense of belonging, achievement and self-esteem are universal reinforcers, and

are often under the control of managers at all levels of the organization."[48] This reinforces the

need to enhance the leaders' ability to foster initiative, communicate effectively and reward use

of initiative.

Another obstacle to implementing a culture change strategy in DND is the length of time

involved. On average, successful change of an organization's culture takes more than six

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[42] Jac Fitz-enz, The 8 Practices of Exceptional Companies …, 67.
[43] Jennifer James, Thinking in the Future Tense …, 135.
[44] Jennifer James, Thinking in the Future Tense …, 139.
[45] Jennifer James, Thinking in the Future Tense …, 139.
[46] Jennifer James, Thinking in the Future Tense …, 139.
[47] Jeanenne LaMarsh, Changing the Way We Change …, 157.
[48] Michael L. Tushman and Charles A. O'Reilly, Winning Through Innovation …, 152.

years.[49] Military forces do not have the luxury of engaging in such lengthy transformations. The

political and strategic environment will likely change several times during that period.

Additionally, posting of key military change proponents can stall the change process short of the

finish. Recognition of instant successes helps to keep up the momentum, but any lapse in the

momentum caused by complacency may result in retrenchment of the traditional way of doing

business with remarkable force and speed.[50] Thus the maxim: critical momentum can be lost and

regression may follow if an organization lets up before the change practices have been driven

into the culture.[51] DND is particularly plagued with the problem of maintaining momentum.

Posting of key personnel for career progression, mandatory leave, budget cycles and government

commitment based on elected officials all impact continuity of change initiatives. Further,

increased attrition due to limited promotion opportunities makes it more difficult to develop and

retain talented leaders. This dilemma is compounded by reduced defense budgets, which put

pressure to cut funds for training and development, even as the need for it increases.[52]

Developing leaders to champion change, communicate convincingly and nurture initiative in

their subordinates will overcome the challenge of maintaining momentum in a culture change.

     Out at sea it takes an oil tanker 30 miles to reverse its course. In the same vein, it takes

time and commitment to change to positively affect an organization's culture. Sufficient time

and resources to successfully effect change are scarce commodities in today's quickly changing

world. The 1990's were characterized by such significant and rapid change that the department

did not have the opportunity to evolve its culture to accept the new environment. Senior

leadership recognizes the shortfalls in this new environment, and is trying to address them. The

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[49] Jac Fitz-enz, The 8 Practices of Exceptional Companies …, 81.
[50] John P. Kotter, Leading Change …, 132.
[51] John P. Kotter, Leading Change …, 133.
[52] James G. Hunt, George E. Dodge and Leonard Wong, Out-of-the-Box Leadership: …, 274.

department recently implemented policies such as amending leadership development to include ethics training, promulgating Strategy 2020 to communicate DND's vision and implementing QOL initiatives to improve morale. But these initiatives do not focus on fostering an organizational culture that embraces change. Without evolving its culture into one that welcomes and responds efficiently to change, the organization will be too inflexible to readily adapt to the demands of the rapidly changing world. The department needs a strategy to develop its culture to embrace change and continuously seek opportunities to improve.

The existing DND culture that promotes ethics and represents the values and ethos of the department and all Canadians is a good foundation upon which to build. Changing the department's culture to deal with the challenges of the new environment is perhaps the largest challenge of all. To address this challenge, the current organizational culture can be evolved into one that can cope with the constantly changing world by addressing three key elements. These elements are: building leadership skills to lead change, implementing a proactive communications plan to ensure all personnel know how they will be impacted by change and implementing a thoughtful, credible reward system to reinforce positive behaviour such as exercising initiative or seeking continuous improvement. If the department incorporates these three elements into a strategy to change its culture, it will be successful in coping with a constantly changing world.

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