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***The Strategic Leadership and Change Management Continuum:  
Getting from Here to There***

By

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## Thesis

***Leading change is an essential element of Strategic Leadership.  
Distinct fundamentals of change management exist, with the human dynamic being the preeminent factor. The human dynamic, and these fundamentals, must be carefully managed for successful organizational change.***

## ABSTRACT

Change has been an ever-present reality in the Canadian Forces and the Department of National Defence for many years. As the pace of change accelerates in modern society, so increases the imperative for change in the Canadian Forces as it struggles to maintain relevance and effectiveness in a continuously restrictive fiscal climate. This in turn emphasizes the absolute necessity of effective strategic leadership from the senior members of the Forces and Defence establishments.

Definitions are developed for management, leadership and strategic leadership. The key roles of strategic leaders are delineated, and change is a constant theme. It is not enough to simply *direct* change or *order* change to take place, or even to unleash a reasonably conceived plan for change without effectively *leading* the change process and overcoming the inherent resistance to change that exists in people and organizations. All too often, change is attempted without due attention to managing the human dynamics element of the process.

Managing and leading change is integral to effective strategic leadership. Within the arena or milieu of leading change, whether it be transitional/transactional or transformational change, the fundamentals of overcoming the resistance to change must be identified and carefully managed as part of the process. The three key areas to successful change delineated in this paper are overcoming resistance to change, identification of and engaging the critical mass, and following a logical framework. The strategic leader must actively set the conditions for change and then lead the process through these three key areas. Large-scale change initiatives are not “smart weapons” that one can “fire and forget.” Neglect of this essential function will lead to certain failure. A framework for change is proposed.

A cursory review of the MCCRT initiative illustrates how neglect of these fundamentals contributed to its failure, and how following them has lead to significant initial success in the harmonization process of dental and medical services within the overarching CF Health Services.

## **Introduction**

The paradoxical mantra “change is the only constant” is universal. Learning to cope with change, stay ahead of change, or both leading and managing change are necessities for the strategic leader.

Recent history has demonstrated a clear inability within DND to effect meaningful strategic change. A great deal of this lack of success can be attributed to a failure to apply a functional change model and to both consider and factor in the human dynamic, which is a prerequisite to achieving success.

This paper will first evolve the concept of strategic leadership with a view to understanding that successful execution of strategic change is both integral and core to the issue. It will then address a very important and often overlooked element in such leadership – the requirement to focus on the human dynamic. A model for strategic organizational change will then be presented. The paper will conclude with two cursory “case studies”, one of which will serve as an example of failed strategic change (the Management Command and Control Re-engineering Team (MCCRT)) – and the other, an example of successful application of strategic leadership and the change model (the Health Services Harmonization Initiative).

## **Preamble**

Author Eric Hofer wrote “In a world of change, the learners shall inherit the earth, while the learned shall find themselves perfectly suited for a world that no longer exists.” This is not a statement of unfettered ambition, but rather a confirmation of learning and change as a lifelong journey and its requirement for continued success in an ever-changing environment. Similarly, the thought “We cannot solve problems using the same level of thinking that created them” by Albert Einstein, underscores the need to elevate one’s abilities and capacities in order to deal with contemporary and future challenges. Indeed, staying ahead of the curve, so to speak, is both daunting and necessary for the modern strategic leader. This being said, staying ahead of the curve requires one to know where the curve is and where it is going, and short of the proverbial crystal ball, requires some strategic vision, planning and execution.

But can we stay ahead of the change curve? Cynics may say that in a world where the pace of change is ever increasing, it is pointless to even attempt any long-range predictions because no matter what future you plan for, it won't be right and therefore strategic planning is also pointless. But as Peter F. Drucker, one of the great organizational development gurus of the last century says "it is possible – and fruitful – to identify major events that have already happened, irrevocably, and that will have predictable effects in the next decade or two."<sup>1</sup> His perfectly valid point is that we can identify in our past and present, events and forces that will definitely influence our future. The environment is going to change around us so we had best prepare for it. Some educated strategic planning and preparation is certainly better than none, and adjustment is possible along the way. Common sense and strategic risk management would dictate that no planning is simply not an option. We may not be able to stay completely ahead of change, but we could very easily be left so far behind that we will become completely irrelevant in the new reality.

Without getting into a lengthy dissertation on "strategy", which is in itself a subject area upon which volumes have been written, we will accept in somewhat loose and general terms that strategy implies the planning and processes involved in maximizing the probability for favourable outcomes and a favourable future. It would then follow that strategic leaders must concern themselves with maximizing the probability of success in the future for their respective organizations. Knowing that the world is changing around them, that the operating environment of the future will be different from today, the question for the strategic leader then becomes how must the organization change to maximize the probability of success in this anticipated future? So managing these changes as part of the leaders strategy for continued success, with all the broad implications that the word "success" carries, becomes both key and integral to strategic leadership.

A common pitfall in managing change is that the leader or leadership team gets too bogged down in focusing on structures and systems and the human dynamic is forgotten. "Senior managers of today's large enterprises must move beyond strategy, structure, and systems to a framework built on purpose, process, and people."<sup>2</sup> Organizations are not a collection of

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<sup>1</sup> Peter F. Drucker, "The Future That has Already Happened," *Harvard Business Review*, Sep/Oct 97, Vol 75 Issue 5: 20.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Bartlett, S. Ghoshal, "Changing the Role of Top Management," *Harvard Business Review* Nov/Dec94, Vol 72 Issue 6: 79.

flowcharts, buildings, policies, machinery and offices. Organizations are a collection of *people* who work, act and behave based on their own individual and collective belief and value systems. Without question, the former list is essential for operation but it is the people who make everything work. You must first influence the people before you can effectively influence or change anything else. The leader himself may require an adjustment in thought process before he or she endeavors to influence anyone else. Far better than just *influencing* or *managing* people would be to truly *lead* them. The latter is a matter of perspective on leadership and will be addressed as a separate issue.

Actually being able to execute a change plan once conceived is a critical element. “Without the ability to execute, all other attributes of leadership become hollow.”<sup>3</sup> The importance of people in the change management milieu is clear. Once the strategic plan is formulated, actually executing the plan must absolutely address the human elements of the greater process or it will be doomed to failure. Bossidy and Chara reiterate the importance of people as their first core consideration. “The Heart of execution lies in the three core processes: the people process, the strategy process, and the operations process.”<sup>4</sup>

Before we can hope to adequately comprehend the concepts of effective strategic leadership and change management, we must first have an understanding and contextual basis on how we define leadership versus management. This fundamental understanding of leadership is necessary before making the leap to strategic leadership and understanding its integral nature and roles. This will in turn provide the basis for delving into the integral nature of managing, or perhaps more appropriately *leading* change as an essential element of effective strategic leadership. Strategic planning and visioning, execution, organizational culture, resistance to change, and organizational alignment are but a few of many elements in the highly complex and multi-dimensional continuum that is strategic leadership.

Once armed with a more complete and comprehensive understanding of the contexts and concepts of management, leadership and strategic leadership, we will be able to examine the area of organizational change in more depth. There is a wealth of information and experiences that can be gleaned from the literature to support the existence of fundamental elements of leading and managing change.

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<sup>3</sup> Larry Bossidy and Ram Chara, *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done* (Crown Business, New York, NY. 2002), 34

## Definitions

Let us first take occasion to decide exactly what leadership and strategic leadership might be before a more in-depth discussion is undertaken.

While there has been a rather large body of work and research done in the area of leadership espousing a variety of opinions, contemporary theory could easily be described as “fragmented, complicated, and self-contradictory.”<sup>5</sup> There also seems to be a general inability to agree upon a definition of leadership<sup>6</sup> in either the civilian or military contexts, and there is diverse commentary on strategic leadership.

Rather than try to define leadership, many in the literature have provided various lists of traits and skills seen as either desirable or essential to be a successful leader. Beyond the usual things such as ability to lead, influence, and various other common verbs, some have included “the ability to match behavior to the society, the situation and the time... to apply reserves of courage, willingness to make difficult decisions (and a knowledge of when to defer a decision)...”<sup>7</sup> This is quite insightful, and consistent with Drucker’s thoughts previously mentioned, in that it alludes to the need for a leader to see the organization’s place in the context of historical timelines and evolutionary progression. This is the quality that will differentiate a purely operational leader from one who has the ability to anticipate the future, be a visionary, and have the capacity for real strategic leadership.

## Differentiating Leadership from Management

Precious little in the literature delineates between strategic leadership and just leadership in the purest of terms. The blending and overlap of terms, concepts and theories seems to be commonplace without much attempt to separate the two. There is a greater effort, however, to differentiate between the broader leadership milieu and management.

The highly revered Steven Covey’s opinion is that in simple terms, management is about doing things right where leadership is doing the right things. He further elaborates that:

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Martin Chemers, *An Integrative Theory of Leadership*, (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1997)

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Rost, *Leadership for the Twenty-first Century*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1991)

<sup>7</sup> Gregory R Copley, “What Constitutes Strategic Leadership?” *Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, Sep 2003, Vol 31 No. 9.

“Leadership deals with direction – with making sure that the ladder is leaning against the right wall. Management deals with speed. To double one’s speed in the wrong direction, however, is the very definition of foolishness. Leadership deals with vision – with keeping the mission in sight – and with effectiveness and results. Management deals with establishing structure and systems to get those results and focuses on efficiency, cost-benefit analyses, logistics, methodologies, procedures, and policies.”<sup>8</sup>

It is hard to disagree with anything Covey says here, but he has more elements of strategic thinking than of pure leadership.

Ian Wilson<sup>9</sup> separates the two ideas along similar lines but uses the terms and concepts of leadership and strategic leadership synonymously. His thoughts are much more firmly rooted in strategic visioning and essentially separates leadership as dealing with the future and management as dealing with the present. Northouse hints at organizational alignment as a leadership function<sup>10</sup>, but this will be discussed further later in this paper. The thoughts of these three authors can be compared in the following tables.

According to Covey	
Management	Leadership
Doing things right	Doing the right things
Speed	Direction
Bottom Line	Top line (Mission)
Efficiency	Effectiveness
Methods	Purposes
Practices	Principles
Chopping down the trees fast	“Are we in the right forest?”

According to Northouse	
Management	Leadership
Produces Order and Consistency	Produces Change and Movement
Planning/Budgeting	Vision Building / Strategizing
Organizing/Staffing	Aligning People / Communicating
Controlling/Problem Solving	Motivating/Inspiring

<sup>8</sup> Stephen R Covey, *Principle-centered leadership*, (New York: Summit Books, 1991), 246.

<sup>9</sup> Ian H. Wilson, “The 5 Compasses of Strategic Leadership,” *Strategy & Leadership*, Jul/Aug 1996; Vol 24 No. 4: 26-31.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Northouse, *Leadership : Theory and Practice* (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2004), 10.



According to Wilson	
Managers	Leaders
Focus on the present	Emphasis the future
Deal with “what is”	Emphasize setting direction for “what will be”
Execute controls	Give vision and inspiration
Manage things/programs/resources	Lead people
Focus on organizational efficiency	Build organizational effectiveness
Emphasize hierarchy and chain of command	Emphasize heterarchy and diffused authority

The common theme between these three authors and others in the literature is that management deals with those processes that influence efficiency and the efficient management of various types of resources.

A derived definition of management can be stated as:

**Management is the science of the logistics and administration of resources, where the resources are: personnel, financial, materiel, and time.<sup>11</sup>**

A point to take away from this is that solely directing and ordering people to do something, or things to happen is managing, and not leading, as will become clearer in the next section.

## In Search of Pure Leadership

Just as the search continues in the world of physics for a grand unifying theory, so remains elusive a universally accepted definition of leadership. It has been viewed and described from many different perspectives.

Machiavelli<sup>12</sup> asserted that leadership was about maintaining control and order – even, if necessary by means of “well-used” cruelty. This was not an encouragement of sadism, only an unsentimental pragmatism that viewed cruelty neither as good nor bad but merely useful in its proper place. This was consistent with the balance of his views on leadership, which were as

<sup>11</sup> Scott Becker, First developed this definition in 1998.

<sup>12</sup> Barbara Kellerman, “The Pragmatist”. *Harvard Business Review*, Dec2001, Vol 79 Issue 11: 16.

much about image and posturing as it was about strength, position and power. It had debatable application in medieval times, but hardly in the modern era.

More contemporary views profess that leadership is the process through which leaders *influence* the attitudes, behaviours, and values of others.<sup>13</sup> Organizational behaviour theorists Arnold and Feldman<sup>14</sup> have said “We will define leadership as an influence process; leadership involves the exercise of influence on the part of the leader over the behavior of one or more other people... What is the source of the leader’s power over subordinates? Five distinct sources of leader power have been identified.” They go on to explain them as: “reward power; coercive power; legitimate power [authority by position or legal basis]; expert power [respect for their technical knowledge]; and referent power [level of respect they command].”<sup>15</sup> Their last category of referent power is more reflective of real leadership than the others but their context in my mind is more about management than leadership. *Leadership is not so much about use of influence and power per se as it is about something even greater.* Real leadership has the ability to stir men’s souls, and this cannot be explained by limiting the view to only the exercising of various types of power.

Although hardly contemporary, the most recent CF doctrinal publications on leadership date back to the 1970s. They define leadership as the “art of influencing human behaviour in order to accomplish a mission in the manner desired by the leader.”<sup>16</sup> In 1973 when General JA Dextraze was the CDS, he articulated his views on leadership to the CF in the CF Personnel Newsletter stating that his preferred definition of leadership was “the art of influencing others to do willingly what is required in order to achieve an aim or goal.”<sup>17</sup> Another publication from 1978, *Leadership: A Manual of Military Leadership for the Canadian Forces*, defines a leader as “anyone who directs and influences people in such a way that they will act with willing obedience, confidence, respect, and loyal cooperation in order to accomplish a mission,” while leadership is defined as “that combination of persuasion, compulsion and example that makes people do what you want them to do.” In my research, these are the first appearances of the

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<sup>13</sup> R Vecchio,, *Organizational Behavior*, Orlando Fl.: Harcourt Brace & Company 1995.

<sup>14</sup> Hugh J Arnold and Daniel C Feldman, *Organizational Behavior* (New York: McGraw-Hill 1986), 120-121

<sup>15</sup> First published by Raven and French, *The Basis of Social Power*.(AnnArbor MI: Inst. For Social Research 1959).

<sup>16</sup> Department of National Defence, A-PD-131-001/PT-001 *Leadership: Junior Leaders Manual* 1973 and A-PD-131-002/PT-001, *Leadership: The Professional Officer* 1973.

<sup>17</sup> Department of National Defence, “The Art of Leadership,” *Canadian Forces Personnel Newsletter*, June 1973

word “willing” but none went on to explain why this word was there, nor why this was important. In the opinion of this author, this is a very key concept.

The United States Army defines senior leadership and command as:

“ the art of direct and indirect influence and the skill of creating the conditions for sustained organizational success to achieve the desired result . . . In the final analysis, leadership and command at senior levels is the art of reconciling competing demands according to priorities activated by a clearly formed vision, implemented by clearly communicated intent, and enforced by the toughness to see matters through.”<sup>18</sup>

It should be noted that the word “influence” has been a recurring verb and communication has been stressed.

Jack Welch, a highly renown industrial leader who almost single-handedly transformed GE from a failing company into possibly the most successful industrial giant of modern times, consistently spoke of the need to “stimulate positive emotional energy in subordinates: He wanted to ‘turn on’ his people” as well as the need to win their “hearts and minds.”<sup>19</sup> He had progressed from not only making people his focus but making that emotional connection. Reaching their “hearts and minds” was the key. This is just another way of describing the need to *inspire* his people. The US Army teaches: “Effective leaders strive to create an environment of trust and understanding that encourages their subordinates to seize the initiative and act.”<sup>20</sup> This would seem to imply the need to be inspired and enthusiastic. In his book on leadership, JM Burns describes a “higher form” of leadership that must be “inspiring them through motivation to become committed to and a part of the shared vision in the organization.” It must also provide intellectual stimulation and “leadership that stimulates followers to be creative and innovative,” as well as individualized consideration by “leaders who provide a supportive climate in which they listen carefully to the individual needs of the followers.”<sup>21</sup>

So General Dextraze was closest to the central point here in that he was only missing the progression beyond *influence* to *inspire*. One could say that inspiration is one of several means of influence. Possibly so, but then I would assert that the other means of influence fall more into the area of management rather than leadership.

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<sup>18</sup> US Army Field Manual 22-100, Senior Leadership (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1987) 3.

<sup>19</sup> Noel Tichy and S. Sherman, *Control Your Own Destiny or Someone Else Will* (New York: Doubleday, 1993).

<sup>20</sup> US publication FM 22-100, *Army Leadership* pg 1-14

<sup>21</sup> JM Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper and Row. 1978), 174.

The end product of this logical thought progression dictates a definition of leadership as:

**Leadership is the art of *inspiring* others to do that which is required, willingly.**<sup>22</sup>

Inspire is clearly the key word when discussing leadership. There are many types of *influence* (authoritative, coercive, political, reward, etc) as we have already noted that do not, as Jack Welch saw was essential, reach their hearts and minds. For example, you can order or influence a man to use his hands or back to **do** something but you can't order his mind or his heart. These can only be engaged willingly, or they can be inspired. In a person's heart, mind, and soul is where you will find their enthusiasm, loyalty, creativity, ingenuity, trust and dedication. Imagine the difference between two organizations where one has all the people fully inspired with an abundance of enthusiasm, loyalty, creativity, ingenuity, trust and dedication at work throughout (or directed towards a change initiative), and the second organization with an abundance of apathy, no creative thinking, no sense of ownership about their key activities, a general "who cares", "I/we don't need this" and an "I don't believe the leadership anyway" attitude. The end results, especially long term, would be hugely different. This example could be used to illustrate the difference between good and bad leadership or between pure leadership and pure management. Inspiration versus pure efficiency of process could be viewed as the inspired creation of a cathedral as opposed to the efficient production and movement of millions of granite blocks into an enormous pile.

Real leadership is about inspiring trust and generating emotional commitment, none of which is possible without being able to connect with their hearts and minds. ***Emotional commitment is not something you can get with a lawful command or by threats and coercion, and you can't buy it.*** You have to ***earn it*** by standing for, and being seen to stand for, a set of universally appropriate values and principles (Principle-based leadership is in itself, a broad subject area and time and space preclude further exploration in this paper). Trust must be earned by being, and being seen to be, consistently fair, self-disciplined, having a high degree of integrity and by not abusing your people. The authoritarian management style (certainly in peacetime) is just that, it is managing and not leading at all. Ordering people about is merely administering a human resource and is therefore managing and not leading.

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<sup>22</sup> First noted on the Dental Detachment Commanders Course 1984.

Paraphrasing Walter Lippman, as a final thought on emotional commitment, “The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind him in other men the conviction and will to carry on.” Only a leader who has inspired his people and generated emotional commitment will leave behind him the will to carry on the philosophy, rationale and purpose that they had shared together.

## Strategic Leadership

Strategic leadership is a complex, multi-faceted capability that has many nuances and subtleties, making it difficult to easily codify.<sup>23</sup>

Harrison and Pelletier rather simplistically define a strategic leader as “one who makes strategic decisions that commit the total organization to a given course of action.” and that strategic leadership is simply the activity of making these strategic decisions.<sup>24</sup> Others expand further proposing that strategic leadership is the leader’s ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, and empower others to create strategic change as necessary.<sup>25</sup> Strategic change is that which occurs in the firm’s existing strategy due to a stimulus caused by triggering events.<sup>26</sup> Hitt & Ireland defined strategic leadership as “a person’s ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, think strategically, and work with others to initiate changes that will create a viable future for the organization.”<sup>27</sup> This definition is quite reasonable but does not go far enough in saying that only the *initiation* of changes was within the strategic leadership context. This paper asserts that the next step is crucial where the changes must be actively *lead*. Organizational change is not a “smart weapon” that one can fire and forget. Hitt & Ireland do, however, also re-enforce the importance of the human element in that it is “the relationships between individuals and organizations that facilitate action” in organizational change.<sup>28</sup>

The US Army tries to differentiate strategic leaders from solely “senior” leaders as those who: “Tailor resources to organizations and programs and set command climate... establish

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<sup>23</sup> M Sorcher, J Brant, “Are You Picking the Right Leaders?” *Harvard Business Review*, Feb 2002 Vol 80 Issue 2: 78-85.

<sup>24</sup> E Frank Harrison and Monique A Pelletier. “CEO Perceptions of Strategic Leadership,” *Journal of Managerial Issues*, Fall 1997; Vol 9 No. 3.

<sup>25</sup> RE Byrd. “Corporate Leadership Skills: A New Synthesis” *Organizational Dynamics*, 87 Vol 16 Issue 1:34-43

<sup>26</sup> TL Wheelen and JD Hunger, *Strategic Management and Business Policy* (New York NY, Addison-Wesley 1998).

<sup>27</sup> MA Hitt and RD Ireland, “ The Essence of Strategic Leadership: Managing human and social capital.” *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*; Summer 2002; Vol 9, No.1: 3-14.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

structure, allocate resources, and articulate strategic vision... Strategic leaders focus on the long-range visions for their organization ranging from 5 to 20 years or more.”<sup>29</sup> The timeframe expressed here is quite wide but would be acceptable within the bounds of conventional and contemporary thinking, or is at least consistent with most authors on the subject. There are isolated cases in the literature, such as Micheal Keller who describes strategic leadership as “having a comprehensive strategy for the immediate future”<sup>30</sup> but this does not fall into conventional thinking.

Perhaps the US Army’s most enlightening words describe strategic leaders as those at a level who “establish force structure, allocate resources, communicate strategic vision, and prepare their commands and the Army as a whole for their future roles... Strategic leaders concern themselves with the total environment in which the Army functions.”<sup>31</sup>

The common themes that are consistent in this subject area are preparation for the future in some form or another. Leaders acting as stewards for their organization must recognize the many elements which impact on the future of their respective trusts and then actively plan and influence these elements with a view to maximizing success in the envisioned future. This has brought us back to the earlier brief discussion on strategy.

Ian Wilson provides a rather succinct and insightful summary of these issues as he categorizes the different thoughts about strategic leadership using the metaphor of the compass. He describes “the 5 compasses of strategic leadership” as the following:

“1. The strategic compass – Leadership implies setting a direction that others will follow. ...it must be guided by some form of strategic sense – that uses, but transcends ordinary logic. It is a unique blend of thinking and feeling, analysis and intuition. Having a strategic compass is the trait that most markedly sets leadership apart from management. A leader uses this inner compass to help determine what the destination and the direction for the (organization) should be; to know when a change of course may be required; and, having established “true north”, to keep the organization on course to its destination, whatever zigs and zags a flexible strategy may entail.

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<sup>29</sup> US Army Regulation 600-100 (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1993) 1.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Keller, “Strategic Leadership,” *Law and Order*; Oct 2003; 51,10: 121

<sup>31</sup> US publication FM 22-100, *Army Leadership* pg 1-14

2. The action compass – leadership also implies movement – action: a leader moves an organization from point A to point B. Vision – a sense of strategic direction is admirable and necessary but action is the end point.
3. The culture compass – ...the critical importance of developing... a culture in which strategic thinking, learning, and action are widely dispersed, and a culture that creates a climate of openness and trust. The reason for this truth is obvious: leadership communicates the vision and drives toward action, but action only happens through people. Arthur Martinez of Sears has it right when he says, ‘If you’re unable to galvanize people into action, all the thinking, the analysis, the strategic prioritization doesn’t matter at all.’
4. The socio-political compass – (Wilson describes a range of issues including greater public scrutiny into governance practices, distribution of economic wealth and other societal needs.)
5. The moral compass – the moral dimension of corporate leadership should be obvious to all. Strategic leadership must set the moral tone of the organization, by word and by deed. Propensity to action does not mean that the ends justifies the means.”<sup>32</sup>

Wilson re-enforces the required connection to people that was stressed in the previous section, but his point about *action through people* is tremendously important. This linkage of the human element to the actual *execution* of the planned change is vital to understand if there is to be any hope of success. The quote from Arthur Martinez nails the concept exactly. All the planning, strategy and analysis will be inconsequential if you cannot “galvanize people into action” as he so appropriately puts it. And this will take a measure of inspiration!

Taking all of the above into account and phrasing it into a more concise definition of strategic leadership is a daunting proposition. However, a logical progression of thought, and amalgamation of the common themes brings us to the following definition:

***Strategic Leadership is the art of accurately envisioning future organizational needs, outputs, and outcomes; what organizational alignment will be required in order to meet those needs and required outputs, and then successfully generating the organizational change necessary to achieve the desired outcomes.***

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<sup>32</sup> Ian H\_Wilson, “The 5 Compasses of Strategic Leadership,” *Strategy & Leadership*, Jul/Aug 1996; Vol 24 No.4: 26-31.

The intent of the “future organizational needs” portion of the definition is to recognize that the future geo-political environment will have its own needs and impose pressures on an organization. Also, this definition would appear to be most applicable to a peacetime change scenario, but a liberal interpretation of the “needs, outputs, and outcomes” would allow for a wartime application as well. A possible weakness in this definition, depending on one’s point of view, could be that the context of future is not clarified, although peacetime convention would normally attach a 10 to 20 year outlook to the word strategic. The real strength of this definition is that it incorporates the key elements of strategic visioning, the broad scope of organizational alignment and all the connotations and considerations contained therein, and that the successful execution of organizational change is an integral component.

The inspirational aspects of leadership are what will be required in the successful generation and execution of those changes. By this definition, the generation of comprehensive and analytically derived plans for change will not make you a true strategic leader unless you can actually execute those plans and generate the desired outcome. One may be a rather astute strategic *planner*, or perhaps an insightful strategic *analyst*, but there is the requirement to engage leadership (from the perspective described earlier) and successfully execute, before the leap is made to being a strategic *leader*.

## **Corollary Thoughts on Leadership and Change**

Having reached the conclusion that strategic leadership requires successful change execution, there are several types of change and their associated leadership styles that warrant some clarification. Transitional, transactional, and transformational types of leadership and change are terms and concepts used frequently, but too often interchangeably and incorrectly. These need some clarification before an analysis and discussion on leading change itself can begin. Transactional change, transformational change, transactional leadership, and transformational leadership are four different things.

“A classic work by the political sociologist James Burns titled *Leadership* (1978)” is described by Northouse explaining that “transactional leadership focuses on the exchanges that occur between leaders and their followers. A leader offering promotions for those followers that surpass their goals is transactional leadership. Transformational leadership refers to the process



whereby an individual engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and follower.”<sup>33</sup>

Covey continues along this line of tangibles versus intangibles proposing that “Transformational leadership is not the same as transactional leadership. The former basically means that we change the realities of our particular world and more nearly to conform to our values and ideals. The latter focuses on an efficient interaction with the changing realities. Transformational leadership focuses on the top line and is principle-centered. Transactional leadership focuses on the bottom line and is event-centered”<sup>34</sup> He continues to differentiate the two with “Transformational leaders are recognized as change agents who are good role models [inspire], who can create and articulate a clear vision for an organization, who empowers followers to achieve at higher standards, who act in ways that make others want to trust them, and who give meaning to organizational life.”<sup>35</sup> He goes on to summarize the two saying that transformational leadership is preoccupied with purposes and values, morals and ethics. It is oriented toward meeting long term goals without compromising human values and principles. It separates causes and symptoms and works at prevention. Is proactive, catalytic, and patient. It focuses more on missions and strategic considerations. His statement about values, morals, and ethics speaks to organizational culture. One perspective is that transformational change is much about creating a new organizational culture. Organizational values, morals and ethics take a great deal of time to change, and would likely take an entire generation before a change was clearly identifiable.

In contrast, transactional leadership is preoccupied with power and position, politics and perks, is short-term and hard-data oriented, confuses causes and symptoms and concerns itself more with treatment than prevention, and focuses more on tactical issues.<sup>36</sup>

This sounds much closer to a comparison between management and leadership, but the transactional type of leadership can have some of the more pure leadership elements within it.

Ackerman further separates organizational change into three categories and includes the less dramatic “developmental change.” His is arguably the most clear and concise explanation of transitional and transformational change where he states: “Developmental Change is the

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<sup>33</sup> Northouse, *Leadership : theory and practice...* 170

<sup>34</sup> Stephen R Covey, *Principle-centered leadership* (New York: Summit Books 1991), 285-286.

<sup>35</sup> Northouse, *Leadership : theory and practice...* 198

<sup>36</sup> Covey, *Principle-centered leadership...* 286

improvement of a skill, method or condition that for some reason does not measure up to current expectation. Transitional change is the achievement of a known new state over a set period of time. Transformational change... is catalyzed by a change in belief and awareness about what is possible and necessary for the organization. Unlike transitional change, the new state is usually unknown until it begins to take shape.”<sup>37</sup> By these criteria, the difference lies in whether or not there is a clear and definitive endpoint that is trying to be achieved. Changing a Dodge Caravan plant over to a Dodge F150 truck plant, knowing exactly what is required to do this, over a 2-year timeframe would be classical transitional/transactional change. Changing that same Caravan plant over to a production facility that would produce the next generation of wheeled armored vehicle, where research and periodic adjustments to the change plan would be required, where the clear end result is not known at the time the change is embarked upon, would be real transformational change.

To summarize, “transformational” leadership or change deals with changes to the fundamental construct of the individual or the organization. It deals with fundamental paradigms, values and beliefs etc, and must be more inspirational in nature. “Transactional” leadership or change does not deal with these things to nearly the same extent and is more about the use of the various types of social power to influence behaviours and outputs towards a preconceived and desired endpoint. It would not be hard to envision a different skill set being required to effectively lead one type of change over the other. These are not mutually exclusive and will be discussed further.

## **Essential Roles for a Strategic Leader**

Having adopted a definition of strategic leadership that incorporates by default successfully executing change, it is highly useful and relevant to put this in the context of some clearly defined leadership roles. Without rehashing the material seen in the derivation of our leadership definition, the literature consistently supports at least three central roles of the strategic leader. The roles can be succinctly summarized<sup>38</sup> as pathfinding, aligning, and empowering.

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<sup>37</sup> Donald F Van Eynde, Judith C Hoy, and Dixie Van Eynde, *Organization Development Classics : The Practice and Theory of Change-- the best of the OD practitioner* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997), 46-48

<sup>38</sup> Steven R Covey, *et al*, *The Leader of the Future* (Jossey-Bass Publishers: San Francisco, 1996), 152.

Pathfinding is both a natural and inherent function for the strategic leader. This is the first and primal function. Hitt, Ireland and Hoskisson developed a strategic leadership model which included six critical components and ranked them in a descending order of importance. The first and most important component of strategic leadership was determining strategic direction<sup>39</sup>, or pathfinding.

This involves the strategic visioning process, of intuitively melding experience, wisdom and foresight into accurately choosing an organizational path towards a successful future. If the strategic leader gets this step wrong then they, the organization and all the people in it, are doomed to failure. Choosing and blazing a trail that takes everyone right over a cliff or into the proverbial wasteland is complete and utter failure. Successful pathfinding also requires clarity of purpose. Stephen Covey says “all things are created twice.”<sup>40</sup> The “product” is first created mentally, and then physically. Understanding your purpose, or in the organizations case the mission, you can then create your vision of how to fulfill that mission in a future environment. “To do this you need to define your mission and values, and create a vision and strategy that links the two passions.”<sup>41</sup> Covey agrees stating that “The essence and power of pathfinding are found in a compelling vision and mission.”<sup>42</sup> There is a need for creating a blueprint, as well as a need to resolve and/or explore your mission, values, vision, strategy, and stakeholder’s needs.<sup>43</sup> The strategic leader must ask the questions: Where are we going? Where is the future taking us? And where do we need to be to survive, to be functional, and to be relevant in the future?

Even from the military perspective the themes are consistent. The strategic visioning process as delineated by the VCDS, and laid out in the Strategy 2020<sup>44</sup>, are:

1. set long-term strategic objectives;
2. identify force structure and goals and targets that need to be achieved along the way;
3. define military and leadership accountabilities and responsibilities;
4. prioritize activities and resources to ensure the vision is achieved;
5. establish criteria to measure performance; and
6. ensure activities and outputs are achieving desired strategic outcomes.

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<sup>39</sup> AF Hagen, MT Hassan, and SG Amin, “Critical Strategic Leadership Components: An Empirical Investigation”. *SAM Advanced Management Journal*; Summer 1998, Vol 63 Issue 3: 39-44.

<sup>40</sup> Stephen R Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 99.

<sup>41</sup> Franklin Covey Co. 2200 West Parkway Blvd., Salt Lake City, Utah.

<sup>42</sup> Covey, *Principle-centered leadership* ... 285-286.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid

Clearly the first two of these are within the context of pathfinding, the third and fourth are debatable, but four to six fit into the area of planning and execution. Hesselbein *et al* reinforce the need for an accountability structure.<sup>45</sup>

Organizational alignment is another fundamental concept and role to strategic leadership. It could easily be said that organizations are perfectly aligned to produce the results they do. Because of their alignment they can produce nothing else than what they do produce. Car factories produce cars because they are aligned to do just that and can produce nothing else. If you want that plant to produce vans then a change in alignment is required. If the Canadian Forces only produced poorly equipped and over-burdened forces with an ever-diminishing deployment capability then it would be because the Department of National Defence is perfectly aligned to produce just that. The key question would then be is the alignment problem within the CF or are the Government's expectations and demands out of alignment with their resource allocation and policies towards the CF?

“Bad alignment between structure and shared values; between vision and system; the structure and systems of the organization poorly serve and reinforce the (old) strategic paths.”<sup>46</sup> “As a leader, you must work to change your systems, processes, and structure to align them with the desired results you identified through pathfinding”<sup>47</sup>. In designing the alignment, one should follow the old Organizational Development adage that “Structure should follow strategy.” Inherent to this is a shared understanding of the organizations purpose and core values. But the concept of organizational alignment goes beyond just structure and mission. Total alignment entails “all the elements of (the organization's) ideology, strategy, process, rewards, and people.”<sup>48</sup> The unstated implication is that alignment between the internal and external environments is required, but that may be beyond one's control depending where you are in the hierarchal structure. (eg. PMO/cabinet demands/expectations on the CF, if you are the CDS.)

The role of empowering pertains to creating the conditions that foster and release the

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<sup>44</sup> Department of National Defence. *Shaping the Future of the Canadian Forces: A Strategy for 2020*. 1999.

<sup>45</sup> F Hesselbein, M Goldsmith, and R Beckhard, *The Organization of the Future* (Jossey-Bass Publishers: San Francisco, 1997).

<sup>46</sup> Stephen R Covey, *Principle-centered leadership*. New York : Summit Books, 1991

<sup>47</sup> Franklin Covey Co. 2200 West Parkway Blvd., Salt Lake City, Utah

<sup>48</sup> Hesselbein, *The Organization of the Future...* 61.

creativity, talent, ability and potential that exist in people. Specific guidance on Strategic Leadership is given in the US Army Field Manual<sup>49</sup> to “empower your subordinate leaders.” The portion of this role that is the “creating the conditions” is quite broad in scope. This will, first and foremost, entail the leadership dynamic where the leader is actually inspiring as opposed to directing. The human connection of trust and emotional commitment must be generated along with the structures, policies and procedures that will allow for this release of creative energy. This will in part come from the strategic leader being a role model. Burns describes the need for strategic leaders to maximize “Idealized Influence” “as leaders who are strong role models and followers identify with them and want to follow in their example, they exhibit a high level of moral and ethical conduct.”<sup>50</sup> Hitt, Ireland and Hoskisson’s strategic leadership model also emphasized the importance of ethical practices by the leadership.<sup>51</sup> Larkin and Larkin take it one step further with “If you break the rule that values are best communicated through actions, not through words, employees will punish you.”<sup>52</sup> ***Duplicity and two sets of rules, one for the leaders and one for everyone else, is never acceptable. If leaders preach a particular set of ethics and values then the leadership must hold itself to the highest ethical and moral standard in order to lead by example, and to inspire. To do otherwise will result in a loss of both credibility and trust. And without these there is no ability to lead.***

Once reaching the strategic level, arguably the first requirement of the leader is to think. Time must be taken to use all the attributes discussed above in thoroughly thinking issues through. It will be the application of deep thought, using information and anticipation filtered through the experienced and *wise* strategic mind that will allow him or her to successfully fulfill the strategic leader roles.

## **Directing Leadership into Change: Change Theory**

An abundance of change theories abound but they generally fall into two broad groups. There are those that are more structure and systems centered and those that are more people

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<sup>49</sup> US Army Field Manual 22-100, Senior Leadership (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1987) 3.

<sup>50</sup> Burns, *Leadership*... 174

<sup>51</sup> Hagen, *Critical Strategic Leadership Components*... 39-44.

<sup>52</sup> T.J Larkin, Sandar Larkin, “Reaching and Changing Frontline Employees,” *Harvard Business Review*, May/June 1996, 96.

centric. For the purposes of brevity and illustration, one prototypical study<sup>53</sup> has been chosen to represent these two groups although many similarities will be seen with those articles already discussed. Beer and Nohria<sup>54</sup> describe two archetypes of change theory. The first is based on economic value (E Theory) and the second is based on organizational capability (O Theory) and they are characterized as “E” and “O” change strategies. E Theory is based on economic or shareholder value (organizational bottom-line performance). It is top down driven with little input from the organization and “usually involves heavy use of economic incentives, drastic layoffs, downsizing and restructuring.”<sup>55</sup> This change strategy is not people centric. In contrast, the O Theory is much more people centric and has a bottom up approach. Subscribers to the O theory believe that the risk of employing strictly an E theory approach will harm their organization. In this softer approach to change “the goal is to develop corporate culture and human capability through individual and organizational learning – the process of changing, obtaining feedback, reflecting, and making further changes.”<sup>56</sup> The O theory is much more cognizant of the human element and is more about dealing with the people as opposed to dealing with financial balance sheets. O theory generates buy-in, and sees the risk of breaking commitment-based psychological contracts with their employees, in effect losing their trust. O theory wants to generate emotional commitment towards organization performance.<sup>57</sup> But, Beer also notes “CEOs who embrace Theory O find that their loyalty and commitment to their employees can prevent them from making tough decisions.”<sup>58</sup>

There is a great deal of similarity here in our previous model of management and leadership where change is managed or “ordered/commanded” in contrast to where change is, perhaps more appropriately characterized, inspired. This does not negate the fact that sometimes leadership requires tough decisions to be made, and this is in fact often part of the pathfinding and alignment roles of leadership. Tough decisions may indeed be unpopular, but by following the proposed framework for change proposed in this paper, the resistance to change can be

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<sup>53</sup> This study is based on a corporate construct and is not completely applicable to the military environment although the themes and principles are very relevant.

<sup>54</sup> Micheal Beer, Nitin Nohria. “Cracking the Code of Change,” *Harvard Business Review*, May/Jun2000, Vol 78 Issue 3, 133-142.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 134

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 134

<sup>57</sup> Burns, *Leadership*... 174

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 138

overcome. Those who will be part of the organization's future will hopefully *understand* the need for change and then even *embrace* the change.

Several change theorists make the case for the types of change processes that organizations engage in and those that are most survivable. Several<sup>59,60</sup> speak of the dangers of big disruptive change as opposed to the introduction and implementation of smaller incremental changes. The point is to avoid the big sine wave of massive change, then chaos, then loss of some capabilities, then recovery, then wait again for another crisis and the process starts all over again. An argument could be made that if a large change produced chaos then it was not properly managed in the first place. The terms dynamic stability<sup>61</sup> and sustaining innovation<sup>62</sup> are used in the context of using continuous "tweaking" of the system or successive introductions of smaller changes so as to avoid the big disruptive changes. It is noted that this is not easy to do and that "achieving dynamic stability is more difficult to achieve than ramming big, hairy, audacious changes through an organization"<sup>63</sup> The analogy is made of ending a war with negotiation rather than an atomic bomb, the dynamic stability model of change leaves survivors and avoids "fatal pain"<sup>64</sup>. My assertion is that whether the change is large or small, the framework suggested later in this paper will be functional and guiding in nature.

According to Beer and Nohria the dimensions of change are goals, leadership, focus, process, reward system, and use of consultants. (Note these for future reference later in this paper and how these fit with the proposed framework). Each of the change theories take different approaches to each of these areas. It is not difficult to see that "in their purest forms, both change theories clearly have their limitations."<sup>65</sup> Just as good management and good leadership are not mutually exclusive, each of these approaches have their applications depending on the circumstances. Burns agrees in his assertion that the two theories must be combined in order to maximize effectiveness is consistent with our proposed change framework. His points on combining the two include<sup>66</sup>:

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<sup>59</sup> Clayton Christensen, Micheal Overdorff, "Meeting the Challenge of Disruptive Change," *Harvard Business Review*. Mar/Apr2000, Vol 78 Issue 2, 66-76.

<sup>60</sup> Eric Abrahamson, "Change without Pain," *Harvard Business Review*, Jul/Aug 2000, Vol.78 Issue 4, 75-80.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid

<sup>62</sup> Burns, *Leadership*... 174

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 138

<sup>64</sup> Burns, *Leadership*... 138.

<sup>65</sup> Hagen, *Critical Strategic Leadership Components*... 137

<sup>66</sup> Burns, *Leadership*... 174

- Set direction from the top and engage people from below (this is consistent with communicating the vision, getting buy-in, is an opportunity to generate desire for change and the critical mass is never just the top management);

- focus simultaneously on the hard (financial realities) and soft (people issues) aspects of the organization;

- Let incentives reinforce the change, not drive it; and

- Use consultants as expert resources who empower employees.

Finding that right balance of “E and O theories” or “hard and soft” styles may be difficult but will be important for maximizing the chances of success. Worth noting is that fiscal realities may dictate a hard-line economic approach to budgetary cuts and manpower reduction, greatly reducing the opportunity for using much of the softer approach. Whichever style is chosen, consistency is needed to generate trust as “employees distrust leaders who alternate between nurturing and cutthroat corporate behavior”<sup>67</sup>

I will leave the last word in this section to Bennis who said “the only real way to change organizations lies in changing the climate of the organization, its way of life made of beliefs and values that strongly contribute to regulating interactions.”<sup>68</sup> Once again a core issue is beliefs and values. These are not things that can be changed by force or coercion. They can only be changed by leadership and inspiration.

## **The Effective Leader**

Having now differentiated between leadership and management, discussed the transactional versus the transformational leadership and change methodologies, as well as the two prototypical change theories, it must be made clear that these are not all mutually exclusive. In fact, it is quite the opposite. The truly effective leader must have the wisdom to recognize when and where which of these approaches, or combination thereof, is necessary, and then have the skills to properly apply whatever is required. An effective leader must absolutely have sound management skills, but must know the difference between these and the application of real leadership. Many factors come into play when leading or managing a particular group under changing circumstances. Obviously, one should not treat a group of inexperienced and

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid

<sup>68</sup> W Bennis, *Organization Development: it's nature, origins and prospects* (Reading, MA: Addison Wesley, 1969).



disorganized individuals the same way as an experienced and highly trained team. The truly effective leader will have flexible management and leadership styles with the knowledge and skill to apply them as required. And, it may or may not be in the context of a carefully chosen change approach based on, one or a combination of, change theories.

## **The Concept of Critical Mass**

**“In any complex change process, there is a critical mass of individuals or groups whose active commitment is necessary to provide the energy for the change to occur.”<sup>69</sup>**

Richard Beckhard, possibly the “Godfather” of change analysis, defines critical mass as “the smallest number of people and/or groups who must be committed to a change for it to occur.”<sup>70</sup> To create an avalanche you do not need to push thousands of tons of predisposed snow from the top of a mountain. You need only dislodge enough snow to have enough momentum to keep it falling and bringing the rest of the snow on the mountainside down with it. The same is true for change. You only need to convince enough people in a sufficiently large proportion of the organization for change to develop its own momentum. How large this critical mass may be and where the critical locations are may be different for every change in every organization.<sup>71</sup> Every organization and situation is different and one cannot accurately quantify nor identify the precise individuals necessary to be the critical catalyst for the planned change. Likewise, neither is it necessary to identify nor quantify with great accuracy the snowflakes needed to generate an avalanche. The certainty is that the critical mass as a minimum must be put into motion for it to have enough momentum to bring the rest of the snowfield down with it. Assuming the leadership is reasonably well attuned to their organization, they should be able to “analyze the organization’s systems that are affected by and effect the change, and judge the size of the critical mass for a particular change effort. It may be small, but nonetheless vital.”<sup>72</sup> Human dynamics will differ between organizations so determination of the critical mass will require an analysis by the senior leadership, which should not be too difficult assuming the leadership knows their people and the human dynamics at play within their organization. From a communications perspective, it is never possible in large organizations to reach every individual

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<sup>69</sup> Richard Beckhard and Reuben T Harris, *Organizational Transitions: Managing Complex Change* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1987), 92.

<sup>70</sup> Richard Beckhard and Wendy Pritchard, “Changing the Essence,” (Jossey-Bass Publishers: San Fran, 1992), 77

<sup>71</sup> FIS Change Management Framework - Implementation of the FIS for the Government of Canada.

and the clearly articulated vision of one individual will not be sufficient to move a whole organization forward. The proportion of the organization that must be brought on board to bring about change will be this critical mass.<sup>73</sup>

Other Organizational Development theorists have produced a slightly different perspective on critical mass. Their opinion is made against the context of an organizational acceptance gradient where there are immediate acceptors who constitute 10-15% of the people, the early adopters 20-25%, the late adopters 25%, skeptics 20-25%, and the hard-core resisters 10-15%, respectively.<sup>74</sup> The point is made that time and effort should not be lost “preaching to the choir.” They state:

“Our normal tendency is to go after the hard core resisters and attempt to change their mind, rather than creating a network of those who are already sold on the idea (immediate acceptors). Finding out who in the organization, regardless of formal role, are solidly in support of an intended change and bringing them together can be one of the most important factors in overall change. Their shared interest in the change virtually always leads to some highly innovative ways to enroll the early adopters.”<sup>75</sup>

The definition evolves to be:

“A critical mass of supporters is that number required for a change goal to be sure to be reached. The effort becomes self-sustaining, and no longer needs to be kept alive through constant vigilance. It is unclear just what percentage of an organization’s employees constitute a critical mass, but it is often said that when 20% of the employees get solidly behind an idea, success in implementing that idea is assured.”<sup>76</sup>

This is a less specific definition than others and raises the question of the practicality of including “everyone” who likes the idea right away.

An organizational critical mass does not necessarily include an entire level of management nor are the members of the critical mass restricted to any particular rank level or job classification. They are those select members of the “heart” of an organization that have credibility above and below them, and through their ability to influence the organizational population can either make or break a change initiative. This sentiment was echoed by Vice-

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<sup>72</sup> Christensen, “Meeting the Challenge of Disruptive Change,”...66-76.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid

<sup>74</sup> Van Eynde, *Organization Development Classics*... 46-48

<sup>75</sup> Ibid

Admiral GL Garnett during his speech on change to the Performance and Planning Exchange 2003 Annual Symposium 21-22 May 2003 where he identified the “middle level officials” who are critical to a change initiative. The middle managers and front-line supervisors are a very important group to consider when trying to correctly identify the critical mass for a particular change initiative in a given organization. They have a great deal of influence on the opinions and attitudes of the front-line workers or the “rank and file” of any organization.

Larkin and Larkin agree, writing “Frontline supervisors, not senior managers, are the opinion leaders in your organization.”<sup>77</sup> They go on to make the case for face-to-face communications in order for the message to be effective and not to “rely on videos, publications, or large meetings. And (that the leadership should) target frontline supervisors; do not let executives introduce the change to frontline employees.”<sup>78</sup>

“Senior managers must realize that employees will change the way they do their jobs only if they learn about it from a familiar and credible source. Communication between frontline supervisors and employees counts the most toward changed behavior where it matters the most: at the front line.”<sup>79</sup>

Although we have said that the critical mass may be different depending on the circumstances, it nonetheless exists and must be both identified and engaged. Warren Bennis on “Organizing Genius”<sup>80</sup> observed that:

“strategic leaders must build and utilize great groups (or teams) as a means of developing effective, collaborative relationships. Insightful leaders build great teams (groups) with diverse and rich talent that can be called on to solve problems in a complex and dynamic ... environment and to help develop a vision for the future.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid

<sup>77</sup> T.J Larkin and Sandar Larkin, “Reaching and Changing Frontline Employees.” *Harvard Business Review*, May/June 1996: 95

<sup>78</sup> Ibid

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 104

<sup>80</sup> W Bennis, *Organizing Genius: The Secrets of Creative Collaboration*.(Reading, MA: Addison Wesley, 1997)

<sup>81</sup> MA Hitt and RD Ireland. “ The Essence of Strategic Leadership,” *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*; Summer 2002; Vol 9, No.1:3-14.

## Overcoming Resistance to Change

A thorough understanding of this area is absolutely key for the strategic leader in order to create the conditions that will allow the desired changes to occur. A solid understanding of the resistance to change factors and dynamics, when combined with the skills to influence those factors, will both facilitate the preemptive reduction of resistance before the changes are actually introduced and prevent a premature end to the ongoing change process once begun.

**“There is a universal condition that wherever there is a change effort, there will be resistance. It may be caused situationally by the need to learn new things or destroy old and familiar ones, or it may result from the individual dynamics of a fear of failing, or looking silly or incompetent.”<sup>82</sup>**

Or perhaps as Newton so aptly put it “For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.” Without doing a comprehensive review of the psychology literature, suffice to say that people just don’t like change as part of human nature and they seek stability. This is consistent with psychology scholars in the area of organizational behaviour who have investigated one’s psychological attachment to an organization and have found that it “results from identification with the attitudes, values, or goals of the model.”<sup>83</sup> This would be a partial explanation for one aspect of resistance to change as individuals and groups would have a psychological attachment and comfort level to the old system and will naturally resist, consciously or unconsciously, giving it up for something else. Unless of course they are unhappy with the status quo and there is an inherent desire for change. Commenting on human nature, Albert Einstein surmised “The biggest obstacle to new knowledge, is old knowledge.” Changing paradigms is difficult as people have trouble letting go of things that they “knew” (or thought) to be true, including how “things” should work or be run and/or organized. Speaking on the difficulty of changing an established organizational inertia Hornstein describes the “rule of repeated action. In doubt, do what you did yesterday. If it isn’t working, do it twice as hard, twice as fast and twice as carefully.” It is difficult to disagree with his conclusion that “The tried and proven ways of doing things dominate organizational life.”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Beckhard, *Changing the Essence* ...74.

<sup>83</sup> Cary L Cooper ed., *Fundamentals of Organizational Behavior*, Volume Three (Sage Pub: London, 2002), 331.

<sup>84</sup> Harvey Hornstein, *Managerial Courage*. (New York: John Wiley, 1986), 12.

Beckhard's experience shows that "resistance is most likely to be found in the middle levels of senior management."<sup>85</sup> Retired VCDS Vice-Admiral GL Garnett concurs saying "There will always be those that resist change. A group that must be watched closely is the middle level officials, who often don't feel empowered and who can, despite strategic direction, defeat initiatives by the application of rules and regulations whether they apply or not."<sup>86</sup>

This is where the forces of resistance can most easily derail the change effort. It is the middle and senior managers who have the power and ability if so inclined to subvert, work around, delay, block, obfuscate, undermine, and otherwise prevent the change direction and initiatives from being successfully implemented. On a one-on-one basis the strategic level leader can try to manage /discipline individuals but it is impossible to fight against a widespread quiet rebellion within the organization. If the critical mass is against the change, success is highly unlikely. This emphasizes the need to recognize the mechanisms and fundamental elements of this resistance so it can be "managed." Or in the best-case scenario, have the resistance so skillfully managed early in the change process that it is prevented from being a real factor in the first place (Sun Tzu would be proud). If the strategic leaders were truly worthy of their title they would have expended some effort to have actually *inspired* their people and generated some *emotional commitment* to the process in the first place.

Resistance to change will normally exist as a matter of fact but understanding the sources of this resistance is critical to developing a strategy for either preventing it from occurring in the first place, from getting any worse, or overcoming what resistance is already there. Communication is key, both in what the message is and getting the message across in a clear and understandable fashion that is relevant to the audience. "The detail provided by a comprehensive description of the future provides the necessary information for those not involved in the definition process to understand what is desired."<sup>87</sup> Everyone needs to know where he or she will fit into the future organizational construct.

"Misperception of the implications of a change for one's own future role and responsibilities is a major cause of resistance to change. Resistance can be significantly overcome by providing employees with sufficient information about the end state to

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<sup>85</sup> Beckhard, *Organizational Transitions...* 92.

<sup>86</sup> GL Garnett speech to the Performance and Planning Exchange 2003 Annual Symposium 21-22 May 2003.

<sup>87</sup> Beckhard, *Organizational Transitions...* 51

provide a more accurate perception about their future role in the organization – and to reassure them that they will indeed have a role”<sup>88</sup>.

Nothing will generate resistance to a change like people thinking it will threaten their existence.

Having briefly discussed why resistance is there and where it might be found, the next step is to look at how it could be “managed”.

## **Developing A Simple Formula for Overcoming Resistance to Change**

In 1975 Richard Beckhard of MIT proposed a model for “determining readiness and capability for change”<sup>89</sup> which is the foundation for the model presented here.

He discusses first the need for an organization to determine its readiness for change, which he defines as “either [the] attitudinal or motivational energy concerning the change.” As a means for determining this state of readiness he uses a formula described mathematically as “ $C = (abd) > x$ ”<sup>90</sup> where C= change, a = level of dissatisfaction with the status quo, b = clear or understood desired state, d= practical first steps toward a desired state, and x = “cost” of changing.” There is some elaboration on the “abd” component of this equation but he fails to define or discuss exactly what the “x” is supposed to represent.<sup>91</sup>

Although one could get into an argument on semantics, I assert that what the right side of this equation is referring to is not that the product of abd must be greater than the non-defined “cost” of the change but that the change will not occur without the abd generating enough energy to overcome the *resistance to change* inherent within the human dynamic and psyche of individuals and groups. Within the context of this equation, Beckhard correctly states that “for change to be possible and for commitment to occur there has to be enough dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs to mobilize energy toward change.”<sup>92</sup> What he fails to do is make the next logical step in his analysis and state that there has to be *enough* energy to both make the change happen and sustain the change. One can add a little heat (energy) to a pile of wood, but it has to be enough to reach the point of combustion if the desired end state is a bonfire. So, how

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid

<sup>89</sup> Richard Beckhard, “Strategies for Large Systems Change,” *Sloan Management Review*, Winter 1975: 43-55.

<sup>90</sup> Beckhard attributes this formula without a citation to David Gleicher of Arthur D. Little

<sup>91</sup> This formula was also discussed by Beckhard and Harris in a later work, but in that one the “d” is described as the “practicality of the change – minimal risk and disruption” – taken from Van Eynde, *Organization Development Classics...* 46-48

<sup>92</sup> Ibid

much energy is *enough* for generating the change? The answer is enough to overcome the existing resistance to change in that particular organization at that particular time in its existence.

The requirement to overcome resistance in an organization in order for it to move in a particular direction over a given distance is as fundamental as the laws of physics where the force of resistance must be overcome for an object to move in a given direction, and this fact is held to be both fundamental and self-evident.

A minor modification of Beckhard's formula to " **$M \times V \times A > R$  for change to occur**" delineates, in the opinion of this author, an absolutely fundamental premise for organizational change. Addressing the elements in this equation will reduce the resistance and ergo reduce the threshold energy required to generate enough organizational inertia to make the change both possible and self-sustaining.

The revised contextual explanation of this formula is as follows. "M" is the level of motivation towards change, which is itself bi-dimensional. Motivation is determined by, and is proportional to, the dissatisfaction for the way things are today, and/or the desire for change. These may be at the corporate or individual levels. "V" is the vision for a future reality, if our future needs and outcomes were fully realized, which is adequately understood by a sufficient proportion of the organization. "A" is the early and real action taken toward change and ensuring the target audience experiences a positive effect. This will go a long way to generating the essential "buy-in" from individuals and groups within the organization. These three things together must exceed the "R" which is the resistance to change, which in itself is multi-factorial.

Each of the four key elements in our formula must be examined:

**M – Motivation:** This has the two distinct elements of dissatisfaction and desire. As a separate point and at a very basic level, desire can have many drivers and is often multi-factorial. Desire can be driven by wanting to avoid pain, for monetary gain, ambition, or the desire for a more satisfying work environment. Desire can be personal or altruistic.

From the organizational perspective, several questions must be asked about the personnel in the organization to be subjected to the change. What, if anything, are they currently dissatisfied about the status quo? Does the desire for change exist? Is it there in the fabric of the rank and file members but just not out in the open? Is it just not clearly articulated? This is one issue that absolutely must be handled properly or the planned changes are doomed from the beginning. If there is not a consistent message of discontent for the current reality or a desire for

change being sent by the organization to its leadership, then a carefully orchestrated communication plan must be carried out. There must be some inherent problems or issues in the organization or there would be no reason to change. Overriding and compelling reasons must exist why the organization cannot go on as it has. Whether it be budgetary pressures or technological obsolescence, a changing environment or a changing mission, if the people of the organization do not understand these imperatives then they must be pointed out to them as to why they should want these changes, or at the very least understand why they are necessary. If the desire for change is not strong, or there is not a significant level of dissatisfaction with the current reality, then one or the other of these key elements must be *generated* through education. Beckhard agrees stating “if most of the system is not really dissatisfied with the present state of things, then early interventions may well need to aim toward increasing the level of dissatisfaction.”<sup>93</sup>

**V – Vision**: There must be a vision for the desired end state. It must be clear enough so that it can be understood and recognizable (and not being some nebulous entity that would prove impossible to identify once the organization supposedly got there), and *is* in fact understood within the organization which implies it has been adequately communicated. “Misperceptions due to lack of information about the projected nature of the changed state results in resistance”<sup>94</sup> which usually take the form of either verbal or written expression of why the proposed changes are unattainable, will not be functional, or not meet the stated need or political imperatives of the stated mission requirements. The change leaders must ensure that the target population have enough information to adequately understand the “vision”. Rarely will people embrace something they do not well understand. Perhaps in circumstances where a leader has generated and *earned* an enormous amount of trust from his people will they embrace the change initiative or new direction only because he said so, without gaining a reasonably understanding the change rationale. Some astute individuals may accept the change proposal on an intellectual basis, assuming it is well founded and has some inherent logic, but this is much more likely to be the exception than the rule.

Obviously, how this vision is communicated is an important consideration in gaining acceptance. From the psychologist’s standpoint, there are two “routes” of persuasion that are

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<sup>93</sup> Larkin, “Reaching and Changing Frontline Employees.”... 45.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 52



critically linked to the vision, these being the Central and Peripheral. The central route first requires a well-communicated and clear vision. “The central route to persuasion represents the persuasion process involved when elaboration is high. When persuasion is achieved through the central route, it commonly comes about through the extensive issue-relevant thinking: careful examination of the information contained in the message, close scrutiny of the message’s arguments, consideration of other issue relevant material (eg. arguments recalled from memory, arguments devised by the receiver), and so on. In short, persuasion through the central route is achieved through the receiver’s thoughtful examination of the issue relevant considerations.”<sup>95</sup>

“The peripheral route represents the persuasion process involved when elaboration is relatively low. When persuasion is achieved through peripheral routes, it commonly comes about because the receiver employs some simple rule (some heuristic principle) to evaluate the advocated position. For example, receivers might be guided by whether or not they like the communicator or by whether they find the communicator credible. That is, receivers may rely on various peripheral cues (such as communicator credibility) as guides to attitude and belief, rather than engaging in extensive issue-relevant thinking.”<sup>96</sup>

The peripheral route is much more likely to be the most common in a large organization, and is dependant on the credibility of the communicator. The point here is that if you want your people to actually think critically about your vision (likely necessary if they are to commit to it), you must manage carefully how you send it out. This links to a previously mentioned study showing the middle managers as the opinion leaders in an organization and, assuming they are perceived to be a credible group, will be a critical linkage to the rank and file members, and many will be part of the critical mass. Another critical element of the vision is that it must be believable. Committing the assets required for the change initiative and making them visible to all is crucial<sup>97</sup>. So, the vision needs to be correct, understandable, believable, recognizable, and communicated effectively, in the broad multi-dimensional sense.

**A – Action**: As a leader of change, you actually have to *do* something and not just talk about it. If you masterfully explain the issues and generate the desire for change, and with great skill and aplomb articulate the vision with exceptional clarity, but then do not actually take some

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<sup>95</sup> Daniel J O’Keefe, *Persuasion: Theory and Research*, (Sage Publications Inc. 2002),139.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid

<sup>97</sup> GL Garnett speech to the Performance and Planning Exchange 2003 Annual Symposium 21-22 May 2003.

action that creates tangible differences that the people in the organization can see and feel, then it all becomes just a lot of rhetoric. People will become frustrated and lose both trust and any emotional commitment they may have had to the change. And if this frustration progresses too far, then any recovery back to the change initiative may be lost.

The issue of personal relevance is significant both when communicating the vision and with the planned actions early in the change process. Intrinsic to the message of taking some initial action is that it must be seen by the people to be something that affects *them* personally. The question of “What is in it for me?” will have to be addressed, even if the answer is sometimes at least partially altruistic and less than tangible. The more professional an organization it is, the more likely they will be to accept the less concrete answer. Several rapid small changes which the people can see, touch and feel will go a long way to changing the “maybe, but we’ll wait and see” attitude to some real emotional commitment.

## **A FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE**

There is no rigid formula that will work for every organization so wisdom, knowledge,

reviewing and updating respectively. Beckhard<sup>99</sup> discusses the essential elements in a vision-driven change effort as:

- Communicating and building commitment to the vision among key managers. (This is engaging the critical mass) and he specifically notes the importance of using this group to help with the gap analysis<sup>100</sup>;
- Attention to the team – developing trust, decision and planning processes;
- Communicating the vision;
- Early steps in realizing the vision; and
- Concurrent activity of other steps in the framework including developing critical success.

We will accept as a given that the system has gone through the process of deciding on the need for change and we are past the question of whether or not to change, but the question at hand is how to go about facilitating the change and successfully reaching the desired endpoint. This “desired endpoint” carries with it a considerable amount of impetus that there has been a substantial visioning process and an endpoint has indeed been chosen.

The proposed framework of this paper has nine steps in three phases. It consists first of a definition phase to map out the change direction and dimensions, followed by an implementation phase, and finally a consolidation phase to cement the new status quo. The execution of these steps would not be completely sequential, but they do represent key aspects that will need to be separately managed. Some overlap and concurrent activity is to be expected, and sometimes required.

## **Phase I : DEFINITION - Mapping the Journey**

### Step One - Building the Baseline

“The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality.”<sup>101</sup> By definition, an organizational change must start from its current state. Simply put, in order to get from point A to point B, we must first have a clear understanding of where we are now (point A) and be able to clearly articulate the present organizational state. The output of this step is a clear start point, or baseline for the organization and each of the key stakeholder groups.

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<sup>99</sup> Richard Beckhard, Wendy Pritchard, *Changing the Essence*. Jossey-Bass Publishers: San Francisco 1992

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 28

<sup>101</sup> Max DePree, *Leadership is an Art* (New York: Doubleday Pub. 1989), 11.

## Step Two – Set Strategic/Organizational Objectives

This will be the end point and articulation of the pathfinding and strategic visioning processes, the essentials of which have already been covered. The *right* vision ie. a vision that is functional, believable, identifiable, achievable, and understandable, is one that will be able to be properly communicated to the people and will both generate buy-in and mitigate resistance. Strategic objectives should be set to give a clear desired end point, as well as interim goals and milestones. This gives structure to direction and breaks up a large plan into smaller portions that are more easily envisioned and will provide successive successes for morale reinforcement.

## Step Three – Gap Analysis

Defining the gap is essential before you can develop strategies to effect or accelerate the transition. Once we know where we are (step 1) and where we want to be (step 2) we can develop strategies to close the gap. Determining the size and dimension of this gap is essential in order to derive a meaningful plan to move the organization across the gap. Metaphorically speaking, one's plans would be hugely different if the destination was just across the street as opposed to on another continent over 10k miles away. The assessment as to whether or not you need to embark on developmental, transitional, or transformational change will obviously affect your change strategy. Essential areas to consider will be resources (people, financial, materiel, and time) and organizational alignment in the broad sense. The latter includes values and organizational culture.

## Step Four - Develop Change Strategies and Plans<sup>102</sup>

Strategies and plans will have to be created that address all the issues identified in the comprehensive gap analysis. Some of these will be underlying assumptions and beliefs both up and down the chain of command. Involve the necessary experts and stakeholders to develop targeted strategies. The output here includes target changes and strategies for either the M, V, or A for each stakeholder group. As applicable, identify organizational structures and interim goals that need to be achieved along the way. Military and leadership responsibilities and

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<sup>102</sup> FIS Change Management Framework - Implementation of the FIS for the Government of Canada; available from [http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/fin/sigs/FIS-SIF/communications/framework/1Summ\\_e.asp](http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/fin/sigs/FIS-SIF/communications/framework/1Summ_e.asp); Internet; accessed 08 March 2004.

accountabilities will need to be defined. Carefully chosen working groups involving key people in key areas to produce recommendations would be productive.

It is essential to keep in mind at the stage where strategy for change and plans are being developed that one not get bogged down in too much detail. As it is impossible to predict the future with complete accuracy, overly detailed plans are sure to fail because the planned for circumstances are sure to change. As several military theorists have argued, (Clausewitz, Von Motke, and Mao Tse-Tung included) a degree of flexibility is key as overly detailed plans normally fail due to the inevitability of changing circumstances. Successful strategy includes adaptability and “planful opportunism.”<sup>103</sup>

## **Phase II: IMPLEMENTATION – Making It Happen**

Based on the determinations of first phase, this information must be applied with the concepts of critical mass and the formula for overcoming resistance in mind. The first phase should also provide indications as to what aspects of which change theory/styles might best suit the endeavor. (eg. look at choosing between, or a combination of, the E and O type corporate change theories. The two must be in perfect step to maximize results<sup>104</sup>.) The steps, or activities, in this phase will for the most part overlap or be concurrent.

### **Step Five – The Communications Plan**

“Commence with a fully developed communications strategy.”<sup>105</sup> Use the right message with the right delivery from the right people to the right audience at the right time.

Dissatisfaction will have to be addressed if it exists, desire generated if it doesn't, the vision clearly articulated, with the first action steps and dedicated resources clearly visible and concrete. Along the same lines as generating the desire early if not already there, Beckhard submits that “Educational activities for managing organizational change can help people understand a change problem and offer needed commitment.”<sup>106</sup> The people of the organization must be given, and they must accept, at least partial ownership of the problems at hand *before* the change initiatives are announced. This is the only way they will buy into the planned

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<sup>103</sup> Noel M Tichy and S Sherman, *Control Your Own Destiny or Someone Else Will* (New York: Doubleday, 1993). 67

<sup>104</sup> Beer, *Cracking the Code of Change* ... 137-141.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 96

<sup>106</sup> Beckhard, *Changing the Essence...* 98

changes as a solution to *their* problem (or at least a problem that they see as partially theirs). This will prevent a spontaneous generation of early resistance to the desired organizational changes, which may be difficult or even impossible to overcome later.

It is essential that the people in the organization actually listen to the message and take some time to think about it and generate some emotional commitment to the change, or at least to the end result. In order for this to happen, the message must be clearly relevant to them as this is the greatest factor affecting someone (a “receiver”) to engage in issue-relevant thinking. This assumes the ability to think analytically (and if not, will follow peripheral route of persuasion) and be motivated to do so.<sup>107</sup> Motivation is tied to the desire for change or level of dissatisfaction with the current situation. A relevant question for the receiver will be “How does this affect me? Why is change better for me?” So, if the change initiative does not communicate personal relevance, then it is less likely that those involved will give it serious thought and “believe” in it, hence they are less likely to engage the change and will increase resistance.

“ The most studied influence on the receiver’s motivation for engaging in issue-relevant thinking is the personal relevance of the topic to the receiver. As a given issue becomes increasingly personally relevant to the receiver, the receiver’s motivation for engaging in thoughtful consideration of that issue presumably increases – and indeed investigations have reported findings confirming this expectation.”<sup>108</sup>

#### Step Six – Leveraging Leadership<sup>109</sup>

People follow real leaders and respond to them. This is where the concept of critical mass is most applicable. It is said that strategic leaders must build and utilize great groups (or teams) as a means of developing effective, collaborative relationships. Insightful leaders build great teams (groups) with diverse and rich talent that can be called on to solve problems in a complex and dynamic ... environment and to help develop a vision for the future.<sup>110</sup> Multi-level leadership engaged toward the common purpose will generate momentum and ultimate success.

“Strategic leaders play a critical role in configuring and leveraging human and social capital. Effective leaders know well the people who work with them in terms of their

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<sup>107</sup> Daniel J O’Keefe, *Persuasion: Theory and Research* (Sage Publications Inc. 2002), 141

<sup>108</sup> Ibid

<sup>109</sup> FIS Change Management Framework ...

<sup>110</sup> W Bennis, *Organizing Genius: The secrets of creative collaboration* (Reading, MA: Addison Wesley. 1997)

capabilities and weaknesses. In assigning tasks, they match the task requirements to each employee's skills and capabilities. Effective strategic leaders understand that when assigning tasks that must be coordinated, they should try to bring individuals together with complimentary capabilities.<sup>111</sup>”

As has already been established, a large part of the critical mass will be the middle managers, as opinion leaders and potential sources of great resistance if they are not on side. In the military environment, engaging the senior NCMs will be key.

Also, we must at appropriate times chose participants and types of participation to generate not only the needed information and plans, but also the essential elements of “buy-in” and sense of involvement and participation of organizational members. They must begin to take ownership of the process and ultimate result. Face-to-face meetings will be needed for some, where involvement in a survey may be appropriate or sufficient for others.

### **Phase III: CONSOLIDATION - Transition to and Maintaining the New Status Quo**

At this point the questions will be: “Are we getting to where we want to go?”; “Are there emerging issues to deal with?”; and “Is the alignment right?”

#### **Step Seven – Performance Measurement**

“Perhaps the most important single requirement for continued change is a continued feedback and information system that lets people in the organization know the system status in relation to the desired states.”<sup>112</sup> A performance measurement system would fill this need. Tools must be designed and put into place which determine where we are now in relation to the baseline and desired end point, what's working well, are we getting the desired outputs, and where does the critical mass (as well as the alignment issues) stand with respect to the change(s). This will allow appropriate corrective and/or supplemental measures to be taken as required.

#### **Step Eight – Monitor Emerging Issues**

People are not machines and behaviours are driven by beliefs. Be vigilant of emerging issues that have the potential to derail the change process. These could be internal or external vectors. Events that destroy trust or belief in the vision can be fatal to the process and destroy all

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<sup>111</sup> Hitt, *The Essence of Strategic Leadership* ... 3-14.

<sup>112</sup> Beckhard, “Strategies for Large Systems Change,” ...54.

the progress made up to that point (e.g. a major contradictory message or breaking a trust or commitment). Issues will emerge along the way and must be dealt with in a timely fashion, hence the earlier assertion that the plans must have a measure of flexibility.

VADM Garnett's conclusion that "Promises must be kept and a reward system is very important to obtaining buy-in<sup>113</sup>" is consistent with both steps eight and nine. A reward system is positive reinforcement and is needed for cementing the new status quo.

#### Step Nine– Securing the Change

Organizational culture is often far more concrete and persistent than most people allow for. An aligned reward system is a recurring and essential element of transformational change processes discussed in the literature. The nature of this in the military context will not include stock options or other business type incentives. Autonomy, control, performance evaluations, as well as superior and/or managerial support are a few areas which can be used to reinforce desired behaviours. Changes to organizational culture take a great deal of time and are very complex.

## **COMPARISONS TO THE MODEL**

### **The Management, Command and Control Re-engineering Team Initiative (MCCRT)**

This topic area has been the subject of a several studies of varying degrees and depth, and this section does not pretend to cover the topic in depth. There are, however, a number of salient points that can be drawn from a few sources that both illustrate and re-enforce elements in the required elements of the change continuum described in this paper. The following review is admittedly cursory, but is nonetheless illustrative.

Although it is clear that great energy went into the overall change effort that was MCCRT, with the benefit of hindsight, it is equally clear that there were flaws in virtually every phase of the organizational change initiative. From a strategic perspective, the process was much too focused on structure and systems, rather than on dealing with people issues necessary to make change happen. The general direction and intent of the visioning process had merit, but the

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<sup>113</sup> GL Garnett speech to the Performance and Planning Exchange 2003 Annual Symposium 21-22 May 2003.



aggressive downsizing and personnel reductions needed to respond to the drastic budget cuts were not offset by a corresponding reduction in workload or activities.

The MCCRT initiative was stood up in 1995 “to re-engineer Defence’s management framework and processes, in order to reduce the number of personnel and resources devoted to headquarters functions and tasks, and empower managers to execute their assigned functions. With the reduction of resources allocated to headquarters function, the MCCRT initiative was to bring a commensurate reduction in workload.”<sup>114</sup> The workload reduction was intended to come from process re-engineering. This initiative was partially driven by the ’94 White paper, the Government’s deficit reduction imperatives and the belief that the end of the Cold War would produce a “peace dividend” for Canadians.

The overall goal was to improve operational capability as much as possible through significant reductions in headquarters. Separate objectives included: retain an integrated NDHQ while eliminating one level of operational headquarters; reduce the overall HQ headcount by 33% (later 50%) including a 25% reduction in the number of senior officers and an unspecified number of civilian executives; produce efficiencies through process re-design; and improve accountability.

The condensed version of the successes includes: movement of the environmental HQs to NDHQ (but not really eliminated); reductions in Generals and Flag Officers from 128 to 65; a reduction of Colonels from over 300 to 245; a 24% reduction in the size of NDHQ; a Delegation Instrument<sup>115</sup> was put in place to clarify delegation of authorities and accountabilities; some Alternate Service Delivery (ASD) was achieved; some processes were re-engineered; and the number of buildings that DND occupied were reduced from 28 to about 6 (depending on your timeframe).

An equally condensed version of the failures includes both tangible and non-tangible points. Workloads were not reduced<sup>116</sup> and activities were neither reduced nor prioritized. There was a loss of credibility on a number of points such as: no apparent reason or basis for the 50% reduction goal, the ’95 federal budget had already identified HQs to close before the MCCRT initiative even started; the establishment “shell game” played by the senior leadership; the

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<sup>114</sup> Report to the Minister of National Defence by the Advisory Committee on Administrative Efficiency. *Achieving Administrative Efficiency*. 2003. 9

<sup>115</sup> MCCRT Historical Report. DND – Gov’t of Canada. Para 143

<sup>116</sup> Report to the Minister ... p 9,12

questionable business cases supporting some ASD decisions; very few permanent civilian EX level reductions; the large number of contractors/consultants who became permanent fixtures at NDHQ; and a resulting CF population that was largely resistant to change and disillusioned. Due primarily to the failure to reduce workload, a snap-back process began almost immediately to where we are as large or larger than we were before the process started. NDHQ now has by 2004 statistics: 4,875 civilians; 5,240 military; over 2,000 consultants; all occupying space in 40 buildings at a rental cost of \$68M per year.

#### Critical Analysis and Lessons Learned

Although it is clear that great effort went into the overall change effort that was MCCR, and now with the benefit of hindsight, we can see that there were flaws in virtually every phase of the organizational change initiative. From a strategic perspective, the biggest flaw in the entire process was that it was much too focused on structure and systems, rather than on the only thing that could actually make this change happen, which was the people.

The general direction and intent of the visioning process had merit, but perhaps the biggest problem with the vision, which impacted significantly on many other dimensions was the aggressive downsizing and reduction of personnel without a corresponding reduction in workload or activities. This, in combination with the rather arbitrary 50% target on headquarters reductions, rapidly created frustration and destroyed any sense of initial buy-in that many of the people may have had. The vision of MCCR quickly became unbelievable and perceived as unachievable and misguided. The response to this was that many decided to not cooperate with the spirit and intent and went about hiding their assets in one way or another. Some civilian and military ADMs decided not to participate by saying their organization (perceived by many of the senior CF population to be somewhat bloated to begin with) was just perfect the way it was, and they in fact needed even more resources. Unfortunately, this tactic remained unaddressed. Then the NDHQ establishment shell game began by renaming or reallocating Units to the “field” and out of the NDHQ sphere so as to escape the reductions. Unfounded resistance to change was indistinguishable from genuine concern over the ultimate functionality of a HQ reduced by 50% (ie they had lost faith in the vision). As soon as the entire process degenerated into a “head count” without a visible reduction in workload, or even a prioritization of activities, the process lost credibility in the eyes of the people and was doomed to fail.

The resistance to change formula illustrates specific points. Was there an adequate desire for change towards the new vision? Buy-in to the vision and process was not pervasive beyond the Defence Management Committee. Overall answer is No. Was there a high degree of dissatisfaction with the existing status quo? Same answer. Was the vision correct and well communicated to people? The vision was partially correct in the beginning but had significant flaws, and it was neither identifiable nor understandable to the majority. Overall answer is also No. Was there action taken that generated positive effects and changes that the people could relate to reinforcing the change vision? Quite the contrary. Most of the early actions and results only destroyed credibility and increased resistance. As soon as it became apparent that much of the military and civilian leadership did not apparently believe in or buy-into the process either, and began hiding resources, all credibility was lost. So, there were failures in all aspects of the  $M \times V \times A > R$  formula.

On the issue of critical mass, was it identified and engaged as part of the process? It cannot even be said with certainty that all members of DMC were committed to the process considering the establishment shell game that ensued. Granted, there were some high-level meetings and briefings on the subject, and national level change teams were implemented centrally, but who indeed constituted the critical mass? Were all the Base and Wing Commanders on board with the changes? No. Were the senior NCMs specifically targeted and engaged? No. Was middle management in general, especially within NDHQ, engaged and committed to the changes? No. Was even the majority of senior leaders at NDHQ engaged and committed before the process began? It certainly does not appear so after the fact. Was the critical mass identified and engaged? The answer is clearly not.

It has been impossible to determine if a change model was even applied during MCCRT, and if there was one, it is unclear to almost everyone what exactly it might have been. Even going down the steps of the proposed change model itself, problems become quite evident. There is a common perception that baselines were inflated to reduce the net reductions ultimately affected, so even the baselining could have been erroneous. The vision was flawed being not functional with massive staff reductions and no workload reduction (although it was assumed process re-engineering would produce some reductions). The strategic objectives proved to be neither achievable nor believable. The gap analysis would seem to have underestimated the scope and difficulties of the change targets and hindsight questions the validity of the plans to

achieve them. The communication plan did not generate a desire for change towards the new status quo before the change plan began implementation, nor were the changes themselves well communicated or understood throughout the CF, further increasing resistance. Many people only understood that jobs were being cut, probably their own, without any understanding as to why. Performance measurement tools were not in place and emerging issues were not well managed. There was at least one perceived breach of trust when the promise that Bases could keep monies they saved by internal means was broken, and there were no positive reinforcement or reward mechanisms to maintain what elements of the desired changes that were ever so briefly achieved before the return to the old ways and numbers. One could easily say the snap-back was due to the un-reduced workload, and the system responded as a means to survive and cope under the workload pressures.

So, by the criteria of managing resistance to change by the formula, using the critical mass, and meeting the requirements of the change model, MCCR failed on all counts. This could be used as an explanation as to why the MCCR initiative failed, or at best had limited success. In all fairness to the MCCR initiative of the time, it must be acknowledged that there were considerable limitations on the process from the beginning, the CF was operating without control over all the change levers, and it took place in an incredibly complex environment. There was significant senior leadership change and “churn” during this period so there lacked a consistent “change champion” who could have seen more of the initiative through to completion. The overall scope and amount of change ongoing at any one time was much too large to manage effectively and essentially spun out of control.

This is all the more reason that the fundamental elements of a complex change initiative must be separately broken out, identified, and managed. The tools identified in this paper could also be the means by which a similar process could be managed to successful conclusion.

## **The Health Services Harmonization Initiative (HSHI)**

A cursory review of the harmonization effort within Health Services is intended to show the potential positive effects and ability to move a change effort forwards if the fundamentals of change management, as espoused in this paper, are followed.

First, a contextual understanding of the starting point (fall of 2002) of this example is essential. Previous direction from the CF senior leadership to have an “integrated” health

services was clear. Problems and obstacles were numerous and significant, not the least of which were the very stormy history between the Medical and Dental Services, and the perceived differences on the vision as to the way ahead. Condensing history, efforts towards change ground to a complete stop as a state comparable to the height of the “cold war” ensued. Absences of trust or communication on both sides, combined with an absence of buy-in on a vision resulted in an enormous amount of resistance to change. At that point, organizational movement towards change was at a complete standstill. Now, a very short 18 months later, harmonization has made tremendous strides forward and the end of the process is already in sight. So what happened? The short answer is the Director Dental Services (DDentSvcs) and Director General Health Services (DGHS) got together employing the formula for overcoming resistance (MxVxA>R), identifying and engaging the critical mass, and following the framework for change<sup>117</sup>.

Following a series of discussions in the fall of '02 between DGHS and DDentSvcs, a general plan and vision were agreed upon. The vision adopted a change from forced “integration”, which among other things was understood to be a loss of identity by the Dental Services, to one of “harmonization” retaining the core elements of each service and then harmonizing or combining areas of common activity. The new mantra became an “Enhanced Partnership” with “change where it made sense to do so,” which was much less threatening in nature. Underlying frustration existed within the Dental Corps as to the seemingly constant state of conflict with the Medical Services. This would be the foundation to address the “M” portion of the resistance equation, and the new vision would begin to address the “V”, and the change in accepted (versus directed) vision would be used to initially address the “A” requirement for some action. As suggested earlier in the paper, often the communication plan must include efforts before the changes are embarked upon to generate both the dissatisfaction for the current reality and the desire to change towards a new one. Organizational resistance must be reduced before commencing implementation. This is setting the right conditions for change.

DDentSvcs and the Dental Branch Chief Warrant Officer immediately began talks with their own people beginning with the senior leadership in Ottawa in both the Directorate and Unit HQ. (This was beginning to engage critical mass). Gaining buy-in from the Dental *and* Health Services (HS) senior leadership, the message was then taken on the road to the Dental officers,

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<sup>117</sup> This is the assessment, opinion and life experience of the author who lived this as DDent Svcs '02 – present..

men and women in the field. Concurrent discussions at the HS executive level also took place. The first part of the initial message was to articulate that nobody liked the conflict, it wasn't getting anyone anywhere, and this couldn't go on any longer (ie dissatisfaction with the current reality). The second part of the message was that there existed a real danger that if we in Health Services couldn't work it out then direction would come down from "on high" and dictate a future for us. A workable win-win solution was possible and we just had to find it (desire to change to a future "we" chose). Adequate discussion took place and this message was left with the people to think about for a short period of time. The critical mass had been identified at two general levels, members of the HS senior leadership and the Dental Corps middle management, the latter consisting of the Dental Detachment Commanders and their senior Non Commissioned Member (NCM) clinic coordinators. The senior NCM group was identified as an essential element of the critical mass.

The communication plan then called to initially address the "V" and "A" portions of the formula. At a Health Services Commanders Conference in Nov '02, with all the senior and middle management personnel (95% of the critical mass) assembled in the same place, both DGHS and DDentSvcs stood in front of the groups and expressed a common vision, one slightly changed from the previous expressions (the first action), and one that most everyone could buy into (an acceptable V). This was the right message at the right time to the right people. A number of meetings, town halls, and informal communications were held over the following months to address concerns and to both re-enforce and clarify the vision as required. The biggest factors in generating emotional commitment were the events surrounding a rank rationalization Establishment Change Proposal (ECP). This had been a much overdue and previously denied initiative that would not increase the number of personnel but equilibrate the imbalance between ranks and responsibilities of key positions. The resurrection of this particular initiative as part of the HSHI was key. Ultimately carried up the Chain of Command to VCDS level and accepted, became the watershed point and the definitive "A" in the resistance equation. This was something that touched virtually everyone and benefited the entire Branch. This became a large measure of proof and early validation of the message.

All the parts of the equation began to fall into place as people now, for probably the first time, really started to *believe* in the vision (a vision that was looking very functional, believable, identifiable, achievable, and understandable). Waning resistance plummeted further, and with

the critical mass now fully engaged, the rate of change accelerated. Opinion and morale at the grass roots level was palpably different. The mood was positive but still wary. Improvements included unprecedented levels of cooperation and bilateral empathetic listening. Cooperation in HS decision-making forums increased from only two or three to well over 50. Administration and HR areas began streamlining but more work is needed. Bilateral cooperation on a formal consultant executed harmonization analysis and report has been done.

Perhaps most significantly of all, the Dental and Medical Services have mutually combined their schools in CFB Borden into the Canadian Forces Health Services Academy (CFHSA). The “Schools” for any Branch are usually regarded as hallowed ground and sacrosanct. A carefully implemented communication plan, after senior leadership buy-in, was used to mitigate resistance in both Branches. A similar comprehensive approach to the HSHI was used only on a smaller scale. Enthusiasm for this portion of the change is now widespread. The overall HSHI is not complete but great successes have been achieved in a short period of time. A fully and appropriately harmonized Health Services is not far off in the future.

From the framework for change perspective, not having completed the process, a definitive assessment is not yet possible but the indicators are all positive. Although not a large formal process initially, the baselines were superficially discussed by DDentSvcs and DGHS early on and studied in more detail in the consultants Harmonization review and report. The visioning process appears to have been right with functional, believable, identifiable, achievable, and understandable strategic objectives. The gap analysis was concurrent with the early planning and also appears to have been accurate. The implementation phase is well underway and nearing completion. Plans were made; a review conducted both as confirmation of the plan direction and to identify missed elements if present. The communication plan(s) have been a significant success on many fronts, from early mitigation of resistance to change, to ensuring the vision was understood by all, to celebrating and re-enforcing the initial successes. Leadership was leveraged by utilizing key senior personnel and consciously engaging the critical mass of the organizations. Support from ADM HR (Mil) and VCDS in moving the lynch-pin ECP initiative made an enormous impact. Some types of performance measurement are in place and others are under development. Emerging issues have been well managed to date and potential “show-stoppers” have been preemptively addressed, although not completely resolved. The potential

for the re-emergence of resistance, or even the loss of ground already gained, will remain for some time.

Caution must still be held to ensure any event that would be seen as a breach of trust does not occur as this could rapidly erase gains made so far, and trust could be lost for a very long time.

It is still too early in the process to have had the rewards system addressed to any great extent with respect to reinforcing desired changes and behaviours as part of maintaining a new status quo.

This is certainly a much smaller scale and less complex than the MCCRT initiative but the fundamental change issues are the same. The HSHI remains an example of a successful change initiative in progress, but successful nonetheless. It has been the conscious management of change fundamentals, and remaining focused on dealing with *people*, that has made the difference.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In an effort to provide a common context for understanding the central themes of the strategic leadership and change management continuum, separations and definitions have been delineated for the main components.

Management and leadership are different entities. Management deals with those processes that influence efficiency and the efficient management of various types of resources. Our derived definition of management is: **Management is the science of the logistics and administration of resources, where the resources are; personnel, financial, materiel, and time.**

Discussions and theories about leadership predominantly focus on the word influence. The assertion here is that influence in more management oriented and that real leadership must be, and is, more inspirational in nature. Various arguments were reviewed on this subject, which lead to the definition of leadership as: **Leadership is the art of *inspiring* others to do that which is required, willingly.** Inspire is clearly the key word when discussing leadership as you can influence one's hands (work), but you can only inspire their hearts and minds. In a person's heart, mind, and soul is where you will find their enthusiasm, loyalty, creativity, ingenuity, resourcefulness, trust and dedication.



In making the leap to strategic leadership it was discussed and developed in the context of the roles of a strategic leader. The three fundamental roles of a strategic leader are: pathfinding, organizational alignment and empowering. It was about being able to look into the future, see what organizational alignment will be necessary in order to be successful in that future, and then actually executing the required organizational change. Hence, our definition of strategic leadership was determined to be: **Strategic Leadership is the art of accurately envisioning future organizational needs, outputs, and outcomes; what organizational alignment will be required in order to meet those needs and required outputs; and then successfully generating the organizational change necessary to achieve the desired outcomes.**

In successfully executing this required organizational change, the fundamentals of overcoming the resistance to change must be identified and carefully managed as part of creating the conditions for change to occur. The three key areas to successful change are: overcoming resistance to change by consciously addressing each of the components in the resistance formula of “ $M \times V \times A > R$  for change to occur”; identification of and engaging the critical mass, and follow the described logical 9-step framework. The strategic leader must actively lead the process through these three key areas. Large-scale change initiatives are not “smart weapons” that one can “fire and forget.” Neglect of this essential function will lead to certain failure. This is not a cookbook process, however, the utilization of systematic approaches and methodologies will undoubtedly be advantageous.<sup>118</sup>

A cursory review of the MCCRT, although it may have been a Herculean effort in a highly complex environment, shows that it failed on many counts. The etiology of this failure can be viewed as, at least in part, an overall failure to have managed the resistance to change, to not having identified and engaged the critical mass, and not following a logical strategic change framework. In contrast, a substantial amount of initial success in the Health Services Harmonization Initiative can be attributed to having consciously addressed all of these critical issues.

A very important area common to any change initiative is having a “Change Champion” who can consistently maintain and communicate the vision and see the change initiative through

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<sup>118</sup> Richard Beckhard and Reuban Harris. *Organizational Transitions: Managing Complex Change*. Reading Massachusetts, 1987, 117.

to completion. Minimizing senior leadership turnover during the change period, at least in key positions, will always be a critical factor.

Strategic leadership contains within its own fundamental construct the requirement for leading and managing change. In turn, change management has certain fundamental elements that must be addressed if there is to be hope of success. These fundamentals, along with the leadership required to actually execute the changes, are *people* focused.

“Intervention in large systems is, and probably will continue to be, largely an art. But even an artist needs some technique and some tools, and experience in how to use them.”<sup>119</sup> Having the tools is an important part of getting any job done, but it must not be forgotten that the techniques are being applied to a human dynamic. “Senior leadership must not only appreciate the whats, hows, and whys of the change management process, but they must not forget they are dealing with people and address the human dynamic of resistance to change.”<sup>120</sup>

The understanding of the nature of leadership and the change management fundamentals provide the essential tools with which to combine an element of artistry to produce a successful organizational future.

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 116

<sup>120</sup> Ibid

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