

Seven rules to Prepare for Change

The director asked: Can you teach our people 'How to handle change?' Of course.

Is this the right question?

How to handle a specific change depends on what the goal of the change is, and what the change may be. Must the people involved design their own change, or do they have to execute a prescribed change? Many methods for handling change are in practice. A search on Google for Organisational Change results in 2.480.000 entries.

Learning a method or methods is practical when that method fits most situations. There is no method that fits all situations. It is better to prepare for any change.

What is important in preparing for any change? Seven Rules

1. Understanding the value of habits, protocols, heuristics, algorithms.

They all make humans, organisations and actions effective and efficient. Based on the principle that when we equalise many situations, a prescribed pattern of actions will contain no mistakes, and can be done with high levels of performance, without the need for any human conscious decision.

In business words: when you can scale a specific product which you previously standardised, you can lower the production costs and be more competitive on the market. Enlarge your market share. Milk the cow. That is creating wealth.

2. Understanding the other side of this successful coin.

Success makes one immune to weak signals of change. This can include new competitors entering the market who imitate and serve clients with less quality for a cheaper price, or change by the increase of new technologies that make the old techniques fade away. Sometimes milking the cow till she dries up is a strategy with old technology.

3. **Give permanent attention to weak signals for change** in the world outside the company. People differ in their natural alertness to signals. Organisations can build signalling methods: scanning scientific studies, scanning actions of competitors, scanning technological investments; sending people to conferences on new topics; listening to clients' remarks, behaviours.

4. Develop a mindset for change.

Because wealth is produced by effectiveness and efficiency, attention is on repeating everything as smoothly as possible. This results in tunnelled thinking. A closed mind. A helpful question is: When we are free to start afresh, what products

would we focus on? What would be the components? How would we produce? What markets would we want to serve?

This is easy as a mental exercise, but human change is difficult. New ways of thinking, new ways of acting. Skills that are out of use, unable to acquire the new skills. How does the personal mindset prepare for any change? Sure, the mindset oriented on 'keep the happy life as it is now' is not a mindset that is open for change, on the contrary. It is a mindset prepared for freezing what exists, and fighting to keep everything as it is now.

5. Sense of urgency.

Recognising one's own and others' reactions to weak signals. At one end one thinks: 'Well this is not a signal, just a spook', at the other end, 'We have to make a turn today otherwise....'

6. Give attention to all weak signals for breaking down the internal cooperation. Here is a checklist with weak signals for cooperation:

Cooperation with.....	week one	week two	week three	week four
Fewer signals on upcoming events				
Fewer invitations to discuss issues before decision making				
Fewer spontaneous meeting				
Fewer meetings without urgency				
Less seeking feedback				
Less giving feedback				
More telling on what to do				
More mistakes				
It takes more time to get an answer				
Less copying in emails				
Fewer invitations for meetings				
.....				
.....				

7. Ongoing talking about

'Why do we do what we do?' Ongoing relating all daily thinking, acting ones' values and sharing with others. Personal values change and in connections with others.

The best way to prepare oneself and an organisation for change is to relate deep personal values and connect with others.

A conference day.

The aim of the day is to understand their own concepts on change and learn to discuss signals and lead to actions.

The day has four topics:

One: Important Concepts on Change. Discussing the topics on: 'What is important in preparing for change'.

Two: Search for the personal make up from the past that influences all personal reactions to change. Sharing opens understanding of each other.

Three: Search and interpretation of weak signals in the company and in the business environment.

Four: Organising sensitivity to signals, interpretation and evaluation

1. Important concepts on change: the Seven Rules

2. Inquiry on basics concepts on change in everyone's life.

A. What is **your attitude** towards:

- + life in general
- + time in general
- + Self
- + Others
- + Death

Formulate it in a sentence, or a statement

Share.

B. We all have, not always consciously, a **concept of our life span**, which is often divided into several episodes with different characteristics or different challenges to meet.

Make a drawing of your lifetime and name the different episodes and the specifics. Where are you now? Share.

C. Change is normal and a daily activity, in all details and also seen in a bigger time perspective. You change, I change. All areas we live in change. Sometimes the changes are small, sometimes big.

We handle change at any moment.

The way we handled change in the past formulated our **lessons for the future**. We created habits, thinking habits, action habits.

Think of three important moments of change in your life, connected to a person or to an event. Write down what happened and what was the lesson you use as a rule of thumb, a heuristic. Share.

D. When you have the word 'change' in your mind, what **feelings** are most strongly connected to it? These can be contradictory feelings, or it can be one feeling? Share.

E. To what other important values in your life is “***Myself in change***” most connected? Share.

3. The organisation in an ever changing environment

Each organisation is a temporarily stable combination of activities of many people in an ever-changing environment. All actors in the environment change constantly as they strive to realise their own goals. Competitors fight for the attention of clients. Clients change in their preferences. Technology opens new products, services and modes of production.

A. *Sensitivity to weak signals.*

All participants write down what they see, hear, read as weak signals on:
technology; clients; own productivity; behaviour of competitors; cooperation in the organisation. Share

B. They add ***interpretations*** and labels to it: threats and opportunities

C. They start a *discussion*

- What do I see?
- What do we think?
- What is our goal
- Change needed?

4. How can we organise our sensitivity to weak signals of change?

Discussing, goal setting, planning and Who does What before When?