

FREE E-BOOK SERIES



The Little Black Book of Change

The 7 Fundamental Shifts for
Change Management that Delivers

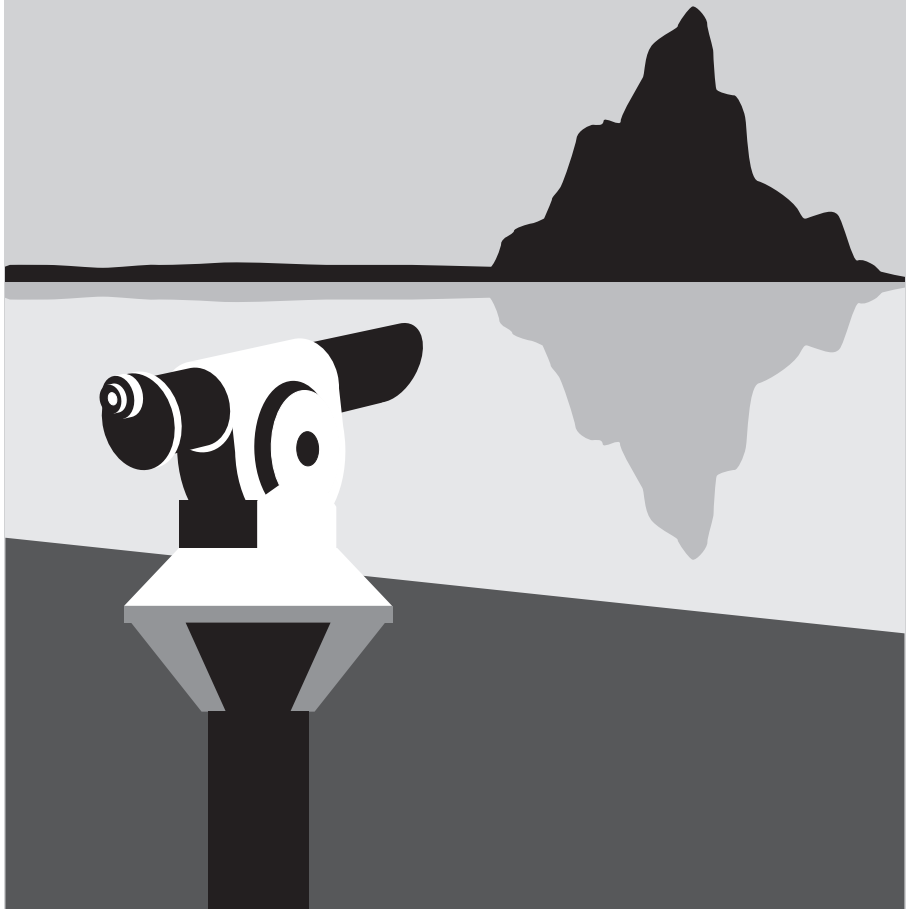
CHAPTER THREE / SHIFT THREE

A photograph of an astronaut in a white space suit floating in space. The astronaut's helmet is the central focus, with the text 'Creating a bold new vision of the future' overlaid on it. The background is a light blue-grey color with several dark, irregularly shaped rocks or debris floating around. The astronaut's suit has a red and white American flag patch on the right shoulder.

**Creating a bold
new vision of
the future**

Shift 3

CREATING A BOLD NEW VISION OF THE FUTURE





This shift is about creating a bold, empowering vision and mission for the organization that is *not constrained* by *past experience*, together with a compelling reason for change.

A vision and a mission?

A vision provides an organization with a clear underlying purpose for its existence, which guides behaviour and action. To refer to a well-known example; John F Kennedy's vision with regard to US space exploration was:

"To become the world's leading space-faring nation."

A mission is a shared goal, which has a clearly defined end-point in the future, and the success of which is measurable. In 1961, John F Kennedy declared the following mission:

"I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the Earth."



However, it was how Kennedy engaged people that made the difference – what really stuck with people was how he made them feel when he declared “A man on the moon (at the end of the decade).”

Remember delivery AND content: It's what you say AND the way you say it

A recent survey¹ highlighted a significant communication challenge for leaders:

- 86% of business leaders rate themselves as good or very good communicators.
- Only 17% of their stakeholders agree with them.

In the words of successful, modern-day leader and former US President Bill Clinton:

“You measure the impact of your words, not on the beauty or the emotion of the moment but on whether you change the way people not only think, but the way they feel.”

What are you going to say that will inspire your people about your strategy?

How are you going to do it?

What are you intending to leave them thinking and feeling?

Alignment will only be achieved and appropriate action taken when management is engaged in a common purpose

¹Source: The Leaders Voice – Clarke and Crossland.



that they recognize will provide a value greater than their perceived loss or risk.

Possibility needs to be constantly created by leaders, it doesn't exist naturally. This enables their people to act consistently with that possibility until it becomes a reality.

Use burning platforms

Burning platforms are pivotal points or situations; an impending crisis where an organization must "do or die". A burning platform can quickly and easily create a common purpose, as illustrated perfectly by the Nokia story. CEO Stephen Elop attempted to rally the troops in 2011 with a brutally honest company-wide memo. Within it he explained the challenges the company faced as a result of their failure to adapt to shifting markets: in short he used language to suggest that Nokia had been slow in responding to the developing smartphone market and that their effectiveness in creating and achieving countermeasures was not good enough. He also cited that the situation was mainly due to a Nokia internal issue and unless they collectively did something different they would no longer exist.

This email to all staff highlighted a critical issue that had put the company on a burning platform. Survival meant jumping off. Change and taking risks were a condition, not an option, for survival. It is a great example of how a leader has tried to alter the reality of their people by changing the context within which they're operating. In this case, it



didn't stop the later takeover by Microsoft and potential disappearance of the brand in 2014. However, it was a very powerful memo that has become an example of how leaders can galvanize their organization towards a change. If you want the full email you can Google it.

There are many other ways that one negative aspect of the business can be prioritized for action through either deliberate decision or crisis; such as poor service, lack of sales or poor quality standards. The selected burning platform immediately provides a clear purpose and helps to rationalize the resulting decisions that are inevitably needed.

Avoid the pull of the past

When leaders articulate a new vision or mission, the gravitational pull of historical rituals and people's existing assumptions and beliefs often water down both the original ambition and the genuine desire for change.

A *Harvard Business Review*² article talks about the example of a CEO, George Fisher, who failed to get his organization to take a different view of itself.

In 1993, he took over the reins as CEO at Kodak, having left his position as CEO of Motorola. Under his leadership Motorola had thrived, increasing

² Source: Kodak and the Digital Revolution – *Harvard Business Review*, Nov. 2004.



market share and profitability. He was therefore seen as the person to take Kodak to a new level.

Having spent some time in Kodak, it was clear to him that the business needed to diversify and make strong inroads into the digital camera sector. They had some of the best digital technology within the industry, so whilst there were some unknowns, the organization was in a strong position to move forward swiftly.

In sharing his vision of the future with his senior team, Fisher told them that the "film" industry was dying and they needed to move in a different direction. But the senior team was fully committed to the business as it was – "a film making organization". "We don't do digital!"

George Fisher failed to shift the thinking and context of the organization – that "we make film and that's our business".

This is an excellent example of how an organization's bold future can become normalized – and Kodak has now become part of history!

Creating the future

One of the key ingredients in building a bold new future is the ability to communicate this future. This is a very



creative art and encompasses painting a vivid picture of a future that taps into the emotions and thinking of different types of people. We are all different, but at the core are the same principles that when combined together can create an inspiring vision of the future.

The following are the key ingredients to mix together:

1. **Resonance with people** – understand their motives and what concerns people and ensure you tap into that. Tune into the way people are currently thinking and feeling and ensure your speaking resonates with how they are listening. Like an old-fashioned radio that crackles until you move the dial and then the pure sound emerges – which is what you are metaphorically doing – you are tuning into how they listen. Once tuned in, your credibility and the picture of the journey you are taking them on can be created. Remember, the more tuned into them you are, the more power your speaking will have!
2. **Words matter** – how and what you say matters. Think of all the great speeches and comments – the choice of words is critical as it can create a reality for people and a mental picture of the future as a result of a change or shift in their world. Words and rhetoric can either be uniting or divisive in change – pay attention to the words used. In an organization we worked in, the senior leader announced to the group that he was no longer the project's sponsor – it was an executive more senior to him. His intention was to show that the initiative was now so embedded that it had sponsorship at a more senior level.



However what people heard was that the senior leader was not committed anymore – the opposite of what he meant – so be careful what your words suggest and build in people's minds.

3. **Memorable** – choose a memorable image, slogan or headline to convey the essence of what you are aiming for – it allows people to hang on to what is being communicated.

4. **Big picture and detail** – it is important to communicate at all levels. The big picture is critical for elements of the future in order to elevate people who are bogged down in their daily routines. The big picture gives people the meaning and context for change – it is the dream and shows what will be different in the future. The details behind the big picture are also important because sometimes people don't understand what the vision is without this detail. They nod at the words, but do not hear the music and get the meaning – as a result, they don't know how to dance to the tune.

5. **The request** – this is often missed. This is the specific, clear and candid request to those being communicated to. The request is simply what action you want people to immediately take following this communication. In our experience this part is often missing from creating a bold new future, so people are left wondering what they are supposed to do differently. Their response is often to go back into the spectator stands at the sports ground and observe what the next action is, when what you want is people to get on the pitch and play!



6. **Continual process** – the communication of a bold new future is continual; you are always looking for opportunities to inform and reinforce the message every week and every day. All communications or conversations are opportunities to drive the message home.

Follow this six-step process continually and you will see the bold new vision come to life and start to be built upon and continually generated.

Understand the power of emotion

A common challenge when creating a bold new future is being able to recognize the power of emotion and handle it in a positive way.

Emotion typically shows up in organizations in the following ways:

- Opinions, stories and emotions drive behaviours/ culture.
- Fear of change and vulnerability.
- When decisions are taken these can be perceived as irrational.
- A feeling of being overwhelmed.
- A lack of direction and purpose.
- "Commentators" become a strong force recruiting supporters for their views and opinions.



Commentators are those that sit on the sidelines, providing opinions and views to others. Often they have little evidence to support their claims. The commentator plays a role similar to the “leader of the opposition” in politics. For example, discussing with you what should have happened that didn't. Who should have done what, etc. As you may know, the leader of the opposition is a role where you cannot really lose. They may comment on the challenges against change, identify the risks, and can amplify their opinions to whatever level they wish. Generally the commentator cannot be proven wrong until after the event. These people play a powerful influencing role that can be negative if their assertions and actions are not challenged.

If emotion is not managed, expect commentators in the business to create a rationale so compelling that “righteousness without fact” will prevail. As a result, an overwhelming desire to “do the right thing” often masks the real problems and drowns out the facts. A leader operating within this situation needs to have the organization orientate themselves around the future and mission, to help them compensate for the likely irrational emotional reactions that can drive behaviours.

USE EMOTION AS A CATALYST

Managed in a skilful way, the power of emotion can be used to galvanize change, as seen in the next example.



The power of emotion

In the summer of 2008, a healthcare company received a letter from a UK customer concerning inadequate supply of a specialist skincare bandage, for treating difficult skin-related problems.

The letter, from the mother of a young boy, described her visit to the local chemist to obtain a repeat supply of the product. The pharmacist responded with an "out of stock" apology, estimating additional supplies within three weeks, adding "The factory can't make enough due to manufacturing issues."

In her letter, the mother raised her son's medical condition; a severe skin complaint that was very painful. "Without this product for three weeks it will be unbearable for him. Do you realize the impact of factory issues on the wellbeing of a young boy? He will be up all night. We have little hope of any rest due to the pain. Is there really no way of getting more bandages quickly? Could the company please respond, and let us know what can be done to help? Please ask the factory workers if they realize the impact of their actions."

The challenge

The letter was highly emotional and hand written. It highlighted the direct consequences of the



operational problems at the factory. At the time, suppliers were consistently letting the company down, frustrations on site were high, overtime was restricted and every day more challenges arose in reaching agreements between management and staff. It was also around the time of pay negotiations. As a result, authorized overtime and goodwill from staff had been steadily reducing for what seemed to be good reasons.

The approach

Senior management posted the letter on notice boards, and it was a leveller for all concerned. Reading it made managers and factory workers alike feel terrible. The impact was amazing; within hours people got together independent of role, seniority and status and discussed action.

Emotion took over.

The results

Over the coming days and weeks, the respective manufacturing lines performed at levels not experienced before. Within days, raised output led to a rapid replenishment of UK supply chains to chemists and hospitals, and a special supply was sent to the mother for her son.



In this example, the letter gave the organization new insight into a customer's life, and it got into the right hands for something to be done about it quickly.

The way events unfolded was outside the company's normal operations.

After all, the customer service department would usually have handled this type of matter, and it would have been unlikely to galvanize any immediate action. When this type of information is received, how often is it used in a way that unfreezes an organization?

"Without this for 3 weeks it will be unbearable for him.

Do you realize the impact of factory issues on the wellbeing of a young boy?"

The problem was very clear. It translated across the breadth of the organization, illustrating how powerful it can be to create a context for people that is meaningful for them. The rationale for change and also the request for action were crystal clear.

Cultural misalignment and failure to agree were dissolved. What happened was unexpected and extraordinary. Normally people wouldn't even have tried, but their frame of reference had been changed by their awareness of the customer's distress.



If this hadn't happened, it is likely that management would have accepted the situation and continued to try to negotiate more effectively with unions and suppliers – and as a result there would only have been marginal improvement. In creating this exception to the rule, the organization became unfrozen, and something happened that was extraordinary. The organizational culture was reshaped, which meant that new things could happen – the same people in the workforce achieved different results.

To put the situation into perspective, the factory included a staff base of around 1000 people at the time, yet the response time across the whole site was equal to that of a small, well-informed team. No issues or constraints were raised in relation to manufacturing line performance or quality of product (first time pass). No overtime or meal break discussions.

A burning platform was created in a positive context. This was not operational fire-fighting, but galvanizing people for the common good, and it triggered huge positive motivation. The common purpose was so strong that the issue of personal risk was dissolved and any perceived risks, such as the impact on pay negotiations or overtime agreements, were outweighed by the advantages.

The letter had a huge impact on the culture of the company – unknowingly, they had not been staying true to their vision. The customer experience for the mother and son was very different from the company's vision, which was to help save lives and improve quality of life. Although the employees were proud of what they did, they didn't realize that sometimes they weren't actually doing it! The mother's letter embraced



the company's raison d'être and motivated everyone to achieve what the company had originally set out to do.

The difference one individual can make can be significant, whether inside or outside the organization. Given meaningful context, individuals have the potential to create a culture shift in the organization. Interestingly enough, it is unlikely that the mother who wrote the letter even realizes the impact of her actions.

WHAT ENABLED THE SHIFTS AND THE SUCCESS?

- Using emotions to align the organization with a clear and meaningful purpose.
- Creating a new context that was meaningful to individuals.
- Surfacing and managing negative emotions.
- Creating unpredictable circumstances for people, leading to the delivery of extraordinary results.

How to create a bold new future

Here is what is needed to make a change:

From Leaders:	To Leaders:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speaking their views and acting like "commentators".• Complying with rules and opinions.• Responding to concerns and complaints.• Being confrontational.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Driving conversations towards desired outcomes.• Being active decision makers, breaking the rules as necessary.• Making direct requests based on factual merit.• Being adaptable.



SURFACE AND HANDLE NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

There is a natural tendency for people to be pessimistic about change, and to fear the worst is going to happen – the fear of loss is greater than the desire for gain. It is useful for leaders to both anticipate and explore this. In fact, there are many cases where, despite negative emotions associated with an office or factory closure, performance has actually exceeded previous norms. This happens primarily because once the historical grip is broken there is a new clarity of purpose. Existing ways of working, which may actually have been holding people and performance back, are less relevant than before.

“The fear of loss is greater than the desire for gain.”

Leaders can be vulnerable when emotions run high, because decisions taken at such times can be perceived as being irrational. Our experience has shown that it is best to avoid confrontation based on rational facts, when negative emotions are running high, because this form of confrontation can quickly erode the power of a leader. It is more effective to work through issues patiently, to acknowledge the emotions and if necessary leave the situation until emotions have simmered down.

“It is best to avoid confrontation based on rational facts, when negative emotions are running high.”



An agreement that follows a period of negotiation can sometimes become a compromise, to which both parties need to align. Whilst alignment may not be the preferred solution for either party, it does move the organization forward on the matter being negotiated. But there is a further risk once the change has been introduced – often, what is implemented is different from that which was expected. In order to prevent the situation normalizing again and to keep success on track, be prepared to re-convene to regain alignment.

Key takeaway practices

- Tune into listening – make a note of the key conversations, concerns and aspirations of people that will be impacted positively by the change.
- Practise creating a story that stirs up people's emotions and interest (gets people to stand up, listen and want to commit freely) communicated in a way that promotes a strong image and provokes emotions in people.
- Ask people after the communication what they heard – this will allow you to assess your effectiveness.
- Practise making powerful requests to the people you are communicating to – ones that get people on the pitch versus in the stands watching!

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