

Introduction:

1. This note is on the leadership of change, drawing on the insights from non-church institutions and organisations, and discussing their relevance to the Church. It is deliberately entitled the 'leadership of change' rather than 'change management' (although both terms are used in the note) since the latter implies a reactive approach which seeks to manage events which are happening to a body. Effective leaders and organisations must also be pro-active and make change happen if they are to advance their goals.

The Challenge of Change

2. Too often, organisations leave to chance the 'people change' aspects of strategy and/or project implementation. Developing the right plans to lead an organisation forward is not sufficient: the plans require a supportive culture if they are to be carried forward effectively. Change initiatives require a change to people's attitudes and behaviours. People often fear that change will involve loss, and will naturally resist it unless they have a deep understanding of the compelling reasons for change, and have some personal involvement in the decisions.

3. Many organisations struggle with change. US figures suggest that the cost of failed projects is between \$80-\$145 billion annually. Projects are:

- Started but never completed
- Completed but under-delivered
- Behind schedule, over budget
- Only 16% meet scheduled due dates
- More than 70% are cancelled or have major problems before completion.¹

4. There are two kinds of change failures: failed changes, and failure to change. Examples of the latter include Woolworths (which had significant problems many years before it folded which management failed to address e.g. by not backing innovations in

¹ Sources: META Group, Gartner Group and Standish Group.

relation to internet shopping or new store formats), Kodak (which is said to have “overflowed with complacency”), Firestone radial tyres (incremental change led to poor products). “Many assume that the problem is paralysis, but the real problem is active inertia – an organisation's tendency to persist in established patterns of behaviour.”²

5. In his influential book on leading change³, John Kotter lists eight of the most common reasons why change initiatives fail:

- Allowing too much complacency (no sense of urgency)
- Failing to create a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition
- Underestimating the power of vision
- Under-communicating the vision
- Permitting obstacles to block the vision
- Failing to create short-term wins
- Declaring victory too soon
- Neglecting to anchor changes firmly in the corporate culture

Change and the Church

6. The desire of Christ is to transform and renew. ‘If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come’ (2 Corinthians 5:17). ‘And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit’ (2 Cor 3:18). Yet the Scriptures also testify to people's fear of change: ‘...for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us’ (Acts 6:14).

7. Christ calls His church to help Him in His task of spiritual transformation and renewal, and the Church of England recognises that this ‘task of change’ must itself be undertaken in a way which changes over time – that it must proclaim the faith ‘afresh in every generation’ (Declaration of Assent). However, resistance to change in the Church of England is very significant:

- It has a long tradition and a strong culture –independent and intellectual, used to challenging and questioning, weak accountability (and no fear of legacy).
- It has a diffuse structure – heavily delegated and comprising different traditions.

² Quotes from Sull D, *Why good companies go bad and how great managers remake them*, Harvard Business School Press, 2005.

³ Kotter J, *Leading Change*, Harvard Business School Press, 1996.

- It is tied to heavy past investment (church buildings) and geographical structures suited (in many cases) to a former age – maintenance of which absorbs energy, time, money and also elicits fierce loyalties.
- It is governed by Parliamentary legislation.
- A disempowered laity (in places) – resistant to change or frustrated by a lack of it.
- A lack of human resources training /skills/capacity to help clergy and lay people to lead change.
- A 'norm of niceness' (Sara Savage) derived in part from fearing confrontation with a largely volunteer workforce.

8. The symptoms of this can be seen in the way that parishes, deaneries, and dioceses struggle to devise and deliver strategies which make a significant difference to the existing allocation of the Church's resources. So change is, at best, incremental or, at worst, a mere tinkering with the status quo. **Failure to change risks undermining the Church's proclamation of the faith in this and the coming generations.**

9. All this means the Church of England needs to invest even more in change leadership than other organisations if its mission and ministry plans are to bear fruit over the long-term.

Effective Change Leadership

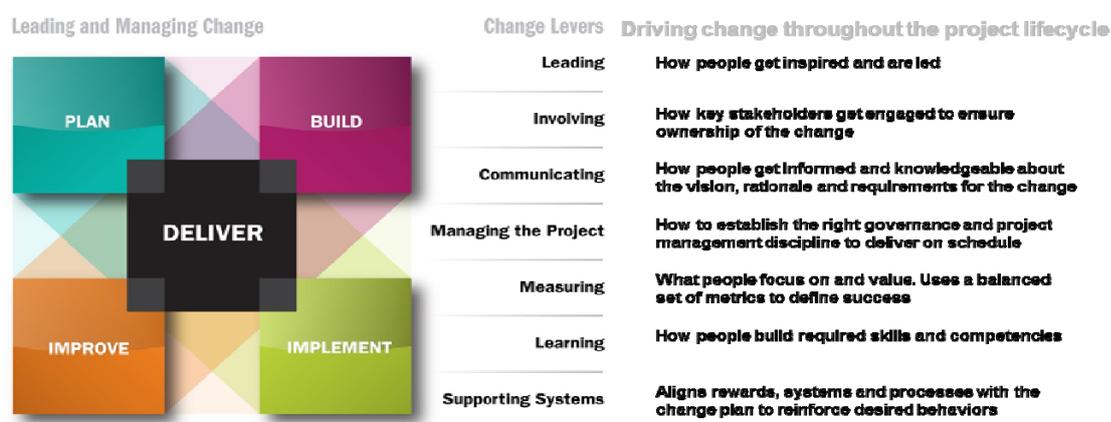
10. Any significant development in the Church's mission and ministry – and redeployment of its resources – requires effective leadership of the change process. That the Church is not an organisation with a simple command structure does not mean it cannot learn about change planning from commercial or charitable organisations, some of which have very complex structures (e.g. the multi-national company spanning many different countries, languages and cultures). A diocesan leadership team primarily relies on influence rather than direction, but it does have significant areas in which it can influence change e.g. how and what it communicates, decisions about appointments, resource allocation, reshaping ministry structures, training, and parish support and development.

11. Effective change leadership in any organisation involves the following:

- A powerful guiding coalition (the senior leadership team or a sub-set of it) which:
 - diagnoses the current/future challenges;
 - relentlessly communicates the reason for change (e.g. to avoid a 'burning platform') and a vision for change (where we want to get to);
 - helps people see what's in the change for them as well as the organisation;
 - develops and communicates measures of success;
 - involves them in decision-making (there is no 'illusion of inclusion');

- o navigates the obstacles to change (whether people or processes);
- o creates some short-term wins on the road – to experience early success and gain confidence; and
- o perseveres through the inevitable setbacks, rather than allowing any drift back to the status quo.

12. Below is a model for leading and managing change which identifies seven 'change levers', all of which need to be deployed in a change plan when an organisation is contemplating major reforms. The plan itself will need to be evaluated and improved over time.



Plan	Develop a change management strategy and approach tailored to the specific change and the business case
Build	Develop the plans and tools to implement the change management solution
Implement	Execute the change management plans and make improvements along the way
Improve	Step back after the implementation and identify lessons learned and how things can be done better next time

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13. The leaders of an organisation may spend months, even years before embarking on a particular project while they consider whether they are ready to make the necessary investment in the change leadership process, and, once they decide they are, while they develop the change plan.

'For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish",' (Luke 14:28-30).

'Sluggards do not plough in season; so at harvest time they look but find nothing' (Proverbs 20: 4).

14. Church leaders experienced in leading change testify to the need to tackle the 'culture of inertia' within the Church before major mission, resourcing and structural

changes are contemplated. A key step in doing so is simplification – removing complex structures and processes which serve to hide inefficiency, waste, cross-subsidy, a lack of responsibility and other poor behaviours. Streamlining diocesan committee structures is one way to do that; another is to ensure that the system for raising monies from parishes and providing them with financial subsidy is transparent so each church is aware of its contribution towards funding ministry across the diocese.

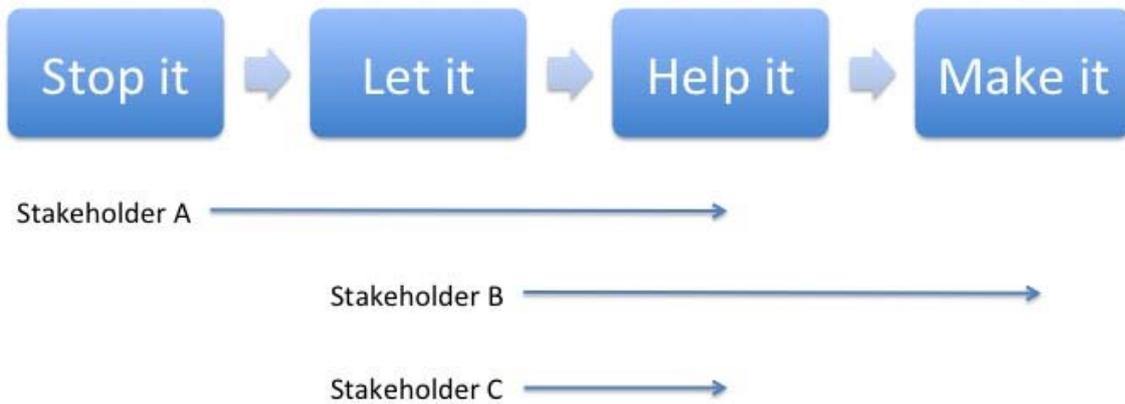
15. Church leaders also highlight the particular importance of communications, prior to and during any change process. What leaders speak about is a key signal of their priorities. *Consistency* of message is thus vital. Sir Terry Leahy, the former Tesco CEO, once said that the most difficult thing about leadership is saying the same thing for 15 years i.e. avoiding the temptation to chop and change your message. Only through consistent communication will people believe you are serious about the need for change and your plans for delivering it.

16. People easily interpret change as a negative thing i.e. it will mean closure or cuts. It is vital to be truthful when things are bad or the future looks bleak. People need to know the likely consequences of a 'do nothing' attitude. But reality must be tempered with hope – otherwise people flick from denial to fatalism. It is important to try and address people's fears, by helping them to see the need for change and the fruits of change e.g. the closure of their church building can free up resources for investment in mission elsewhere (new life through death).

17. The *method* of communication is also important. Face-to-face often has most power. Electronic communication can be more effective than print, although it should never be assumed an e-mail gets read just because it has been sent. The key thing is to invest the necessary effort to ensure the most effective communication.

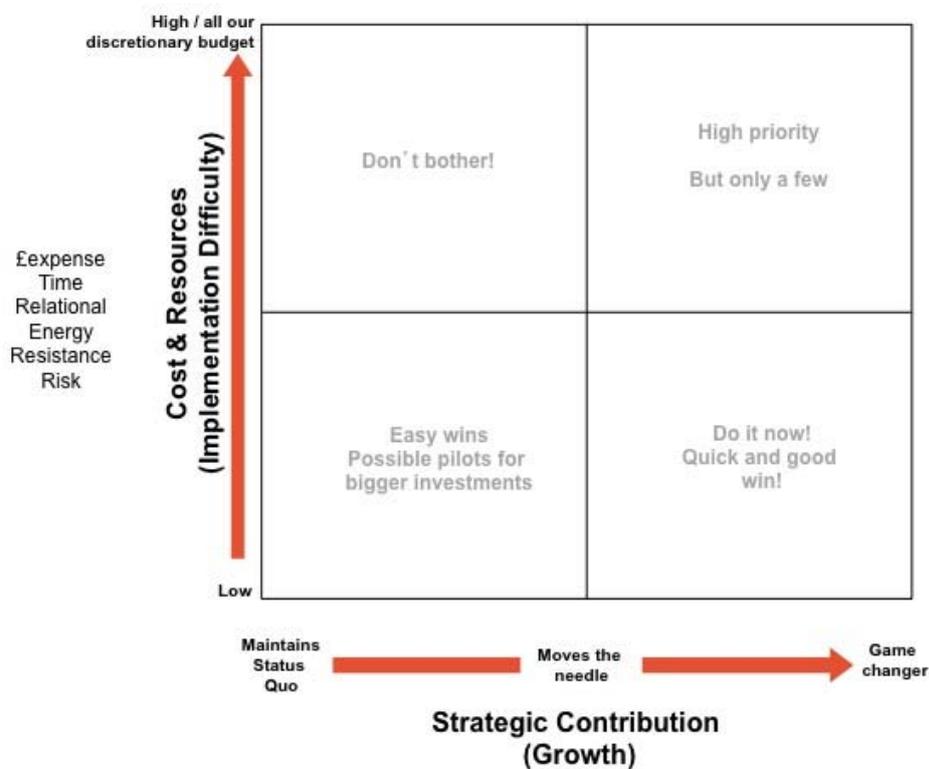
18. It is vital, within any plan for change, to identify who is an ally for reform; who is likely to block it; who you need to be champions. This requires using the sort of tool shown below to place those stakeholders of most importance to the process and outline how their position may change:

Making it happen



Blacknell Ventures

19. It is important also, in terms of building a supportive culture for a proposed reform, to identify some 'quick wins' i.e. some changes flowing from the process which will have fairly immediate impact. The following tool can help make an assessment of priorities:



Blacknell Ventures

20. Having identified the priorities, a concrete set of action plans can be drawn up for implementation. Elsewhere, the decisions may be to hold off action until a few years' hence.

Conclusion

21. This note does not pretend to give a definitive guide to change leadership and management. It does, however, highlight the importance of Church leaders having an intentional plan for leading change, when preparing significant reforms to develop the Church's mission and ministry. Some pointers as to how to do that have been set out in the note, as a resource for your diocesan leadership team. **At the very least, leaders need to ask themselves, when contemplating any change, whether they are going to avoid the issues that ruin the best laid plans for reform:**

- Allowing too much complacency (no sense of urgency)
- Failing to create a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition
- Underestimating the power of vision
- Under-communicating the vision
- Permitting obstacles to block the vision
- Failing to create short-term wins
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22. Please be in touch if you would like further information

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30 November 2013