



Getting Change Right the Workbook

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Chapter 1: Creating Rapid Widespread Engagement

To get change right, get *people's attention*. Once you have it, get them engaged, involved, and contributing. How? through effective communication using **social construction**.

Social construction is a model of human communication that points out we *build* our understanding of the world *together*. Unlike computers we do not simply take in information and store it. We must think *together*, talk *together*, and wrestle through implications *together*. Any communication initiative that relies more on monologues than dialogue will suffer accordingly.

As a change leader you must draw people into conversation, accept their experiences, allow their perceptions to improve your understanding of the world you hope to influence, and think together about the best way to get things done.

Since you cannot talk to everyone, you must carry out several important activities:

1. Learn to tell *springboard* stories that will spark conversations far and wide, covered in Chapter 2 ahead.
2. Choose the people you talk to wisely - identify your *most valuable* players. That is covered in Chapter 3.
3. Understand the challenges and opportunities your particular group faces – both psychological and logistical, as shown in Chapter 4.
4. Build communities of people who will develop new ideas and implement them appropriately. Look to Chapter 5.
5. Once you have all the above in place, you are ready to generate dramatic surges in progress. See Chapter 6.
6. Always be ready for challenges, using them to create breakthroughs. Logjams, bottlenecks, obstacles, and other derailments must be channeled constructively... and they can be to systematically and consistently wield powerful positive effect. Details in Chapter 7.
7. Stay in balance. Leading change is hard work. Take Chapter 8 seriously. If you are out of sorts, so is your leadership.

Enticing people to engage with your ideas is very difficult work. One of your first challenges is to penetrate the information overload your most valuable players suffer through. Exercise 1 below will help you with that.



Exercise: Five Ways to Penetrate Information Overload

A. Call a special meeting to address your stakeholders' concerns.

Who are your primary stakeholders?

What will be the topic of your meeting?
Articulate this so it is compelling to stakeholders.

B. Bring your most valuable players in to evaluate a critical decision you are facing.

To dramatize the importance of the decision, describe a likely negative consequence if you do nothing.

How can you make your presentation more dramatic?

C. Do something counter-cultural to catch attention.

Which individuals will likely show resistance?

How can you involve them, in order to join forces together?



D. Stage a concentrated series of highly visible activities.

Which constituents are most able to give your project high visibility?

How might you incorporate their contributions into a visible activity?

E. Go directly to the source of competing demands to win support.

What other operations or initiatives compete with your project? Who is in charge of them?

How does your idea generate value for these individuals?

Relevant Resources from the book

- ▶ Social Construction in a Nutshell, page 7
- ▶ Ken and Mary Gergen on Social Construction and Leading Change, page 9
- ▶ Six Techniques for Improving Flexibility and Responsiveness, page 13
- ▶ Five Techniques for Creating a Shared Stake in Success, page 15
- ▶ Eight Conversations that Create the Future, page 19
- ▶ Thirteen Techniques for Accelerating Buy-In, page 23
- ▶ Steve Denning on Operating Without Budget or Authority, page 26
- ▶ Principles for Creating Rapid, Widespread Change, page 28



Chapter 2: Communicating So People Get It and Spread It

When you create an interaction that generates other interactions, you produce amazing impact. The result grows exponentially and creates powerful increases in the speed and spread of change. Each conversation generates more conversations, exciting others with possibilities, inspiring them to action and showing them how they can contribute. Getting change right is a true paradigm switch, away from top-down communication toward cultivating relationships.

You might think project planning would be the place this process starts—but you'd be wrong. It's true that a project plan is useful and even necessary, but it's a question of appropriate emphasis. Project planning is a support process that should not occur at the expense of engagement. The right place for emphasis is on **sparking and leading conversations that engage**.

First, you must engage all the important players—everyone whose expertise is needed. Make your first contact by listening and learning about your area of focus, not propagating an agenda. Your purpose is to effectively weave new stakeholders into your process. I focus on the voluntary aspect of engagement because voluntary participation generates enthusiasm that spreads of its own accord.

You must **jump-start bold conversations** that reach far beyond those who initiate them. To do so, learn to make story your medium. Different types of stories have different kinds of impact. A springboard story is one that sparks action by illustrating where change like the one you are trying to create has already taken place. (See Exercise 2 below.)

Stories span cultures, while retaining context, and therefore their capacity to inform and influence. Take your stories to your stakeholders everywhere there is interest and make support materials available that enable others to become evangelists for your idea. As you do so, you'll interact with audiences of different sizes. Tailor your approach to ensure success in situations varying from one-to-one, small groups, large groups, and very large gatherings. You will bring people to your cause.

Exercise: The Six Characteristics of a Springboard Story

1. It communicates the specific change you want to initiate.

What is the specific change you want to initiate?

2. It identifies an incident where the change has already taken place, including time and place.

Where has the change already taken place? Be specific.



3. *It has a protagonist who your audience can readily identify with.*

Who is your story's hero? Can your audience readily identify with this person?

4. *It is stripped of unnecessary detail; i.e., is just the bare bones.*

Give just enough facts to make clear hero's predicament.

5. *It has an authentic, verifiable happy ending.*

Describe how the change you envision provided a solution to the hero's problem.

Relevant Resources from the book

- ▶ Five Consequences of Successful Engagement, page 32
- ▶ Eight Principles for Engaging New Stakeholders, page 37
- ▶ Five Questions that Trigger Professional Excitement, page 39
- ▶ Ten Questions to Engage Others in a Better Future, page 40
- ▶ Four Principles for Creating Cascades of Conversations, page 41
- ▶ Rick Stone on the Power of Story, page 43
- ▶ Seven Ways to Distribute Support Materials, page 48
- ▶ Ten Recommendations for Strategic Engagement, page 49
- ▶ Six Goals for Interactions with Others, page 51
- ▶ Interacting with Audiences of Different Sizes, page 52



Chapter 3: Energizing Your Most Valuable Players

A select group of people will bring your initiative to life; I call them your **Most Valuable Players (MVPs)**. MVPs come in all roles and functions—some from internal core constituencies and others from outside the organization. Spend time identifying your MVPs by category and individual names, and keep that list with you. (See Exercise 3.)

You—the change leader—must activate, equip, and energize your MVPs. Once you have made contact with them (by direct, face-to-face invitation if possible), engage them following my recommendations in Chapter 1. MVPs need three critical provisions: **skills, information, and relationships**. Equip them with these, and teach them how to have engaging conversations on your behalf, using my techniques from Chapter 2. Energize them by including them in activities that lift their mood, rouse their participation, and open up new horizons for them.

Cultivate three specific groups within your MVPs—your **Change Leadership Team, Champions, and Ambassadors**. Each of these groups plays a specific role in your change initiative.

The Change Leadership Team connects core constituencies, facilitates a shared understanding of the change effort, busts silos as needed, and steers transformation in a complex environment.

Champions excel at promoting, advocating, and supporting change within their home group.

Ambassadors represent you in their dealings with other groups, extending your reach.

Any good, strong idea or change program will have detractors—people who think you are on the wrong track. Difficult players can be MVPs too. They can be dealt with effectively through the processes I've described. However, if they begin to drag you into personal warfare, you and your program will suffer. In most cases, their opposition comes from issues with how they have been perceived and treated. By extending the opportunity to contribute and have an impact, you can win them over. Always remember your actions are visible to many people; how you respond to challenge makes a powerful statement in support of your eventual success. Do not let personalities stand in the way; stay focused on the merits of your program and your approach.



Exercise: Identify Your Most Valuable Players

For more detail, see the description of MVPs on pages 62-64 in the book.

	Titles	Names
Political Leaders		
Policy Makers		
Resource Providers <i>(time, people, money)</i>		
Influencers		
Thought Leaders		
Technical Experts		
Researchers and academicians		



	Titles	Names
Practical Visionaries		
Front Line Executers		
Partners		
Alliances		
Suppliers		
Competitors		
Detractors		



Relevant Resources from the book

- ▶ Categories for Identifying MVPs, page 62
- ▶ How to Activate MVPs, page 66
- ▶ Five Energizers for MVPs, page 68
- ▶ Characteristics of Change Leadership Teams, Champions, and Ambassadors, page 72
- ▶ Risk/ROI Matrix for Difficult People, page 81
- ▶ Techniques for Engaging Difficult People, page 82
- ▶ Options for Working with Toxic and Unredeemable People, page 83



Chapter 4: Understanding the Territory of Change

Mapping the territory of change must take into account varieties of intelligence. You need a map that is both psychological and logistical, showing where change will be slowed and where it can be accelerated. Use a systematic approach of scouting, gathering intelligence, and exploring the periphery.

Talking to people will allow you to map the territory of your change as it is perceived by your MVPs. This allows you to chart challenges and opportunities, and describe what may be needed to successfully navigate relationships, negotiations, and business processes. Even a number of short (half-hour) conversations with MVPs can add up to a much clearer picture. (see Exercise 4.)

Systematically listening to MVPs is a powerful tool for creating trust, engagement, acceptance, and buy-in. **Storylistening** is key. Storylistening means paying careful attention to another's storytelling. Stories carry more than words and facts. Stories carry hopes, desires, intentions, and other pieces of relevant information subtly connected to successful change work. By listening, you weave together the teller's experience with the intentions of your change process, transforming each so they incorporate the other.

At the conclusion of your storylistening, prepare a **Reconnaissance Report**. This should be a one- or two-page document synthesizing all you've learned from your interviews. It should highlight themes, concerns, educational needs, and opportunities shared by the group or critical to the change process. A six-step process will lead to an effective Reconnaissance Report. Five gems should emerge— **red lights** (showstoppers), **yellow lights** (cautions), **themes**, **educational deficits**, and **high-value nuggets** (major wins you had not noted previously).

Ideally, as a storylistener, you will project neutrality. Much will depend on your first contact with those you will interview, since people will base their expectations (right or wrong) on that first impression, and your stance as an interviewer will be taken to be the stance of the organizational change you represent. Be careful to embody the four qualities of professional inquiry in your stance right from the start and throughout the process. These are: Professionalism, neutrality, compassion, and passion.

Understanding the territory of change will help you deal effectively with the myriad challenges and options that will come with your change effort.



Exercise: Prepare to reap the benefits of reconnaissance

A. Prepare for successful implementation.

List the big issues and themes at play as best you can.

B. Increased ability to address needs.

Whose concerns do you need to address effectively in order for your change to be successful?

C. Identify possible risks

What risks are you aware of now?

D. Bring unspeakable or taboo topics into the open.

What important topics are people afraid or unwilling to address?

E. Gain feedback on critical issues. Create receptivity to solutions.

What do you anticipate will be difficult and what do you anticipate will be easy?



F. Identify high-value wins.

What potential high-value wins are you aware of now?

G. Clarify educational requirements.

Where is education required in order for your stakeholders to participate fully?

Relevant Resources from the book

- ▶ Eight Storylistening Skills, page 90
- ▶ Madelyn Blair on Storylistening for Reconnaissance, page 92
- ▶ The Reconnaissance Report, page 93
- ▶ Sample Reconnaissance Report page 96
- ▶ Four Qualities of Professional Inquiry, page 105



Chapter 5: Accelerating Change Through Performance Communities

To accelerate change, build an environment that leverages the power in groups of people who share a common set of goals. Communities form all the time inside, outside, and across an organization. Like bees in a hive, they carry out their tasks based on cues they receive from each other and the environment.

For a performance community to thrive, optimize three dimensions: **business benefits** that justify investment of resources; **community concerns** that bring people together and drive them to collaborate; and **participant payoffs** that reward individuals personally or professionally for their involvement.

Performance communities are examples of **social learning systems**. Four trends provide valuable insight into how these communities learn: **horizontalization** - learning through peer-to-peer learning; **partialization** - each community member holds knowledge and expertise that is part of the larger puzzle; **personalization** - voluntary engagement; and **individualization** - each person's unique constellation of experience, background, and know-how.

Performance communities flourish by providing individuals the opportunity to interact with others interested in the same area of focus, fulfilling their desire to engage in meaningful learning, alive with knowledge creation.

It is important to find ways to include people with varying amounts of time or effort to give. Performance communities meet people where they are and draw them toward greater participation by providing real value. A healthy community creates a current that pulls people along, encouraging them to create greater value, which can be measured in business benefits, community concerns, and participant payoffs.

In the course of building performance communities, management tasks change from supervising subordinates to enabling colleagues. Ten techniques give guidance on how to build communities that perform (see Exercise 5).

Community cannot be mandated from above, but they can be deliberately stimulated to accelerate change. To do so, let every participant know he or she is valued, and be specific; frequently summarize, support, and challenge the community in the context of business goals; and create opportunities for members of the community to address organizational leadership.



Exercise: Building a Performance Community

A. Share the idea with everyone who has a stake in success.

Who has a stake in the success of your performance community?

B. Interact with potential members.

What are the best ways to reach people who might join your performance community?

C. Identify a social architect

Name the person who will be best at understanding and facilitating interactions among your community's members.

D. Identify your experts.

Name the people who have deep knowledge and would be most respected for their expertise by the other members of your community.

E. Invite people to participate.

How can you design your invitation to get the best possible results?



F. Make it easy for members to contact each other.

How will you make it easy for members to contact each other?

G. Create an atmosphere that encourages open discussions.

How exactly will you accomplish this?

H. Communicate, communicate, and communicate!

How will you keep people in the loop? When will you start?

I. Stay open to continued suggestions.

What mechanisms will you employ to keep “fresh air” in the room?

J. Develop presentation toolkits.

What will you include in your toolkits and how will you distribute them?

Relevant Resources from the book

- ▶ The Three Dimensions of Successful Performance Communities, page 110
- ▶ Etienne Wenger on Communities of Practice, page 115
- ▶ Three Ways to Balance Vertical and Horizontal Learning, page 116
- ▶ Guidelines for Creating and Using Community Mandates, page 120
- ▶ Conversation Starters to Engage Participants in Generating Value, page 121
- ▶ Building a Performance Community: Ten Techniques, page 122



Chapter 6: Generating Dramatic Surges in Progress

Genuineness and excellence are at the heart of what drives people forward in dramatic surges of progress. From this powerful core, real transformation takes place. But people will want to test it. For this reason, I created **Touchstone Events**. These gatherings dive deep to make contact with what is real, essential, and core to the work of change.

A Touchstone Event moves the entire community forward, constructing the common beliefs and understandings that sustain coherent activity into the future. To design Touchstone Events, take your inspiration from rites of passage. These gatherings must be grounded in a community's beliefs, values, and social hierarchy. Therefore, they require great sensitivity to the nuances and needs of a particular population.

Avoid the usual conference agendas and settings. Shake off the mind-set of traditional meeting logistics. To hold someone's attention you have to **grab the gut** with a compelling attention-getter; then **give the head something to ponder**, such as relevant data; and finally **deliver the heart**—connect your message to what your attendees care most about. (See Exercise 6.)

Look for opportunities to harvest value after the Touchstone Event is over. Typically, the staff people producing the event crash afterward, having expended all their energy to make the event a success. Participants have a different experience. They come to the event, become energized and motivated, and leave with a strong desire to take action. If you want action to result from your meeting, catch people when they are ripe to execute. Deploy a second staff group to attend the Touchstone Event and follow up with participants afterward. A second team expressly designed to support participants makes possible the value the event was designed to create.

The single most powerful way to create a dramatic surge is to coordinate a **splash**—a set of events that can move a whole population of MVPs forward in a large, powerful rush. When people see evidence of your change program everywhere they look, they lock in their commitment to moving forward.

Storytelling will accelerate growth. Your Touchstone Events provide an opportunity to interview and videotape participants' stories. Edit these into compelling videos you can use to give momentum to your change initiative.



Exercise: How to Create Touchstone Events with Extraordinary Thrust

A. Customize the event to your audience

Who is your audience and what customization is required?

B. Create a great name.

Name your event.

C. Make the opening compelling and powerful.

How will you open your event? What will be your hook?

D. Provide real value as soon as possible.

What value will you provide? What's the meat?

E. Don't point people toward some other resource.

What will you deliver while you have people in the room?



F. Call people to action.

What will you ask people to do while you have their attention and their spirits are high?

G. Hit several fronts at once.

How will you tie your event to at least three major issues your audience is facing?

H. Engage your audience's peers in planning, delivery, and follow up.

Who will help you plan? Be on stage? Help you follow up?

Relevant Resources from the book

- ▶ Touchstone Events: the Jet Engines of Change, page 134
- ▶ Guidelines for Creating Touchstone Events, page 135
- ▶ Lesley Shneier on the World Bank's Knowledge Fairs, page 139
- ▶ How to Create Touchstone Events with Extraordinary Thrust, page 141
- ▶ Figure 6.1: Staff Members' Energy Curve, page 145
- ▶ Figure 6.2: Participants' Energy Curve, page 146
- ▶ Five Ways to Support Participation Following a Touchstone Event, page 147
- ▶ Seven Steps to Staging Successful Splashes, page 149
- ▶ Eight Guidelines for Using Storytelling to Accelerate Growth, page 152



Chapter 7: Breaking Through Logjams

Logjams are an unavoidable part of change in a complex environment. Once they happen, break them as quickly as is safely possible to reduce the costs they can incur. Prepare by anticipating difficulties, accepting that they are part of successful implementations. You can use logjams as opportunities for a breakthrough if you have a plan.

The **Breakthrough Session** provides a template for bringing people together to successfully address tough business issues. These sessions rely on face-to-face engagement, an expensive proposition. To determine if a face-to-face session is required, ask yourself about the magnitude of the risk, the need to create a high-trust environment, the complexity of the issues putting you in jeopardy, and the consequences if you fail to meet the challenge.

Because Breakthrough Sessions are both high-value and high-risk, they require sensitive and careful operation. You will be bringing people together to pool their know-how and experience to overcome an obstacle. Your ultimate goal is freeing up the energy locked up in that logjam, making it available to carry out work.

The Breakthrough Session has a carefully designed protocol consisting of six steps. (See exercise 7.) You must **get the scope right**, by considering how quickly you need a solution and what kind of impact you need to achieve. **Identify your MVPs**, paying attention to those who can help plan, execute, or enable the needed breakthrough. Also consider the peripheral repercussions; include those whose behavior will have to change as a result of the breakthrough.

Before the event, **conduct interviews** and prepare a Reconnaissance Report, as discussed in Chapter 4. **Set the session up for success** by sending the signal that a real breakthrough is taking place, for example by getting explicit endorsement from top leaders and providing relevant data. **Execute the session** carefully according to the fourteen principles discussed in this chapter in the book. **Provide support in follow-up** after the session. On the same day, give participants a rough outline of what took place, and within the next 24 hours, provide a more detailed account outlining responsibilities, time lines, and dependencies for follow-up activities. Copy this to all relevant participants.

The Breakthrough Session is one of the highest-value interactions you will preside over. Master this technique for overcoming logjams and you will dramatically accelerate the speed of change in your organization.



Exercise: Six-step Breakthrough Session Protocol

A. Get the scope right

What's your scope?

B. Identify your MVPs.

Who needs to be in the room? List them.

C. Conduct the interviews to map the territory.

Who will you interview?

D. Set up the Breakthrough Session for success.

What preparation will position you to win big?

E. Execution of the session itself.

What could go wrong?



F. Be ready to provide support in follow-up.

What follow-up will be required and how will you provide it?

Relevant Resources from the book

- ▶ When Not to Do a Breakthrough Session, page 158
- ▶ Anatomy of a Breakthrough Session, page 160
- ▶ Six-step Breakthrough Session Protocol, page 163
- ▶ Larry Forster on the Competency for Collaboration, page 172



Chapter 8: WorkLifeSuccess in the Midst of Change

Every change stems from the insights and actions of an individual—the change leader. As a change leader, you require a customized approach to self-care. Strong change leaders sustain their vision and energy, through challenge after challenge, prevailing until results are achieved. These high performance leaders integrate a successful approach to work and life that I have termed **WorkLifeSuccess**. They see the world in unique ways that give rise to a powerful framework for getting results and satisfaction on all fronts.

The work begins with **caring for yourself**, optimizing every set of circumstances to achieve an environment in which you can actively cultivate your physical, mental, and spiritual development. Part of that well-being comes from **caring for others**, since you see yourself as part of a larger community. Finding the time is a challenge, yet those who excel have found ways to make it work – as a result, there is a path to follow.

Nature is the original teacher, providing insights that can be used to craft solutions. By seeing nature as the foreground in which your life is lived, and seeing your work as an extension of your life, you increase your capacity for joy, enthusiasm, and effective performance.

WorkLifeSuccess requires that you **keep things in perspective**. Stress is a killer. Exemplary leaders make a point of alleviating it. When you invest the energy to develop and keep your close relationships in balance and participate fully in life, harvesting learning from all experiences, you increase your capacity to navigate adversity while having a positive impact.

Realize that solutions to challenging issues are often not obvious. Commit to wading into the complexities. Stay open to all options. Recognize that your understanding of the world is not perfect. Be ready to learn and adjust with the experiences and insights you gather. **Question assumptions!** It keeps your mind agile and maintains the openness required for innovation.

To achieve clarity of purpose, I recommend the technique of using **conscious dissonance**. This refers to intentionally creating a lack of harmony between the present and your desired future by clearly articulating both the existing conditions and the details of your objective, allowing the two to reside simultaneously in your mind. By intentionally highlighting the discord between current conditions and your goal, you create the structural tension that will lead to solutions.

Consider **bringing in an outside expert**. One of the most effective ways change leaders support themselves is by working with an advisor with extensive experience who can provide solutions and strategic reflection.



Exercise: Lower Your Labor Intensity

A. How can you be more effective with less effort?

Make a list of the most labor-intensive activities you are required to perform. Then, systematically attack each item on the list. Answer the question, How can I lower the amount of effort this requires?

B. Customize your experience to suit your needs.

What non-negotiable activities do you need to continue, regardless of how much things hit the fan?

C. Trim the fat from your life.

What can you jettison? Identify behaviors and routines that waste your time.



Relevant Resources from the book

- ▶ Thirteen Viewpoints for Generating WorkLifeSuccess, page 176
- ▶ Three Techniques for Realizing the Time You Need, page 178
- ▶ Four Ways to Learn from Nature, page 180
- ▶ Four Ways to Defeat Stress, page 182
- ▶ John Kotter on the Greatest Positive Impact, page 186
- ▶ Seven Questions to Unearth Assumptions, page 188
- ▶ Six Benefits of an Outside Advisor, page 191



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Seth Kahan is an executive business strategy expert that specializes in change and innovation leadership.

Seth has worked with over 30 executives including the supervision of large-scale change programs at Royal Dutch Shell, World Bank, and Peace Corps. He specializes in association leadership and includes over 100 association CEOs among his clients.

Seth is recognized as an international authority on innovation and change. He is the author of...

- ▶ *Getting Innovation Right: How Leaders Leverage Inflection Points to Drive Success*
- ▶ *Getting Change Right: How Leaders Transform Organizations from the Inside Out*
- ▶ *Building Beehives: A Handbook for Creating Communities that Generate Returns.*



Seth teaches over 25,000 professionals every year in conferences and professional seminars. His ability to teach techniques that spread change fast has won him high regard. He is the author of numerous articles on collaboration and change leadership, all of which can be downloaded from his website, VisionaryLeadership.com.