

We See, We Feel, We Change

Power Stories from Real Change Leaders

The See-Feel-Change Dynamic

Help People to See: Compelling, eye-catching, dramatic situations are created to help others visualize problems, solutions, or progress in solving key problems.

Seeing Something New Hits the Emotions: The visualizations provide useful ideas that hit people at a deeper level than surface thinking. They evoke a visceral response that reduces emotions that block change and enhances those that support it.

Emotionally-Charged Ideas Change Behavior or Reinforce Changed Behavior: People act much less complacently. They try much harder to make a good vision a reality. They don't stop before the work is done, even if the road seems long.

STEP 1: **Push Urgency Up**

GLOVES ON THE BOARDROOM TABLE: A procurement manager identifies a major problem with the company's purchasing process. He decides to choose a single item-gloves-that all the company's plants use, and asks a summer intern to do a study of how many different kinds of gloves the company buys and how much each pair of gloves costs. The result: 424 types of gloves are being purchased at widely varying costs and from many different suppliers.

- **See:** The manager invites all the company's division presidents into the boardroom. He gives them not a report on gloves-but a dramatic, unforgettable presentation. Stacked high on the large, expensive, usually clean boardroom table are 424 pairs of gloves, each tagged according to price and the factory it is being used in.
- **Feel:** First people are shocked. Mouths drop, normally verbose executives are rendered speechless. Then, their gut-level sense of complacency begins to shrink, and urgency begins to grow. Purchasing costs must be drastically reduced-starting now!
- **Change:** The "glove story") quickly gains notoriety, and the gloves become part of a

traveling road show that goes to every division and to dozens of plants-reinforcing at every level of the organization a sense of "this is how bad it is:' A middle manager and a summer student launch an effort that radically changes the purchasing process in a large organization, ultimately saving hundreds of millions of dollars.

STEP 2:
Build the
Guiding Team

GENERAL MOLLO AND I WERE FLOATING IN THE WATER: An army officer is charged with leading a team to develop a vision, strategy, and implementation plan for merging seven armies-formerly enemies of war-into one National Defense Force.

- **See:** At their first meeting, the officer shocks the soldiers by taking a risk for the greater good. He openly admits that many of those in charge do not want to merge the armies, but to homogenize them-and the officer vows that he has no intention of doing so.
- **Feel:** The officer's fiery promise ("This is wrong and I will not do it!") hits the soldiers directly and emotionally. His honesty invites others to share their feelings in turn, and an environment of trust is born. Later, the officer arranges regular camping trips in which he encourages the soldiers to share emotion-packed war stories around an open fire. Members slowly get to know each other on a personal level, and trust begins to grow.
- **Change:** The members begin to pull together, people begin to believe and feel that change is possible, and a group of former enemies begins to act as an effective team.

STEP 3:
Create the Vision
and Strategies

THE PLANE WILL NOT MOVE!: An aircraft plant manager must get his people to develop ambitious strategies to carry out an ambitious quality vision.

- **See:** Foregoing the standard "quality speech:' the manager instead takes dramatic action. He brings the normal production process to a complete halt-forcing every- one to stare all day long at a gigantic plane stuck on the production line. At the same time, he expresses a rock solid confidence in his people's ability to do the job.
- **Feel:** People are shocked-but also strongly motivated by their boss' complete conviction that the "impossible" can be done. Pride in the work increases, as employees become determined that they will not be the reason that a plane is delayed in position. As they see others succeeding-and succeed themselves-their faith increases.
- **Change:** Employees begin developing all sorts of new strategies for leaping ahead in procurement, logistics, and quality control. Enthusiasm, excitement, and pride spur positive action. The company is transformed: quality goes up and aircraft are on time-even early!

NUKING THE EXECUTIVE FLOOR: An executive team presents a new vision of becoming a low-cost producer-yet behind the scenes employees grouse about the irony of the company's posh executive offices in an age of cutbacks.

**STEP 4:
Communicate
for Buy-In**

- See: Even though it would cost more to change the architecture and decor of the executive floor to make it look less excessive, the new CEO wants to show employees that executives are serious about "walking the talk." He "nukes" the entire floor-the personal bathrooms, the mahogany furniture, and the expensive art. In its place is built a more functional, far less showy workspace.
- Feel: The initial announcement shocks employees in a positive way. Cynicism goes down, faith in top management goes up.
- Change: People begin embracing the vision. When the new offices are complete, employees are given a constant reminder that the executive team believes in the vision-and the employees do too.

RETOOING THE BOSS: An "old school" manager is converted from an obstacle to change to an invaluable change leader.

**STEP 5:
Empower Action**

- See: Rather than firing, demoting) or "retraining" the manager) he is "loaned" to a customer for six months) where he is dramatically confronted each day with the quality problems the customer is having with his products.
- Feel: Pushed into the job) the man is at first angry and even afraid. But after a few days in his new position) he is surprised by what he finds and is convinced that things must change.
- Change: He returns to his employer a manager reborn. Approaching his job in a whole new way) he helps the firm make changes that benefit customers) employees) and owners.

THE SENATOR OWNED A TRUCKING COMPANY: A manager addresses an issue a state Senator cares deeply about in order to win the politician's support for a larger change effort.

**STEP 6:
Short-Term Win**

- See: Instead of presenting the Senator with graphs and charts on the change effort's progress) the manager sets out to reduce the number of cumbersome bureaucratic forms the Senator must fill out to run his trucking company. The manager's team spends a month redesigning the licensing process-and dramatically reduces the required paperwork from fifteen forms to one.
- Feel: When the Senator sees the results) he is surprised in the most positive sense. His faith in the larger change effort increases.
- Change: The Senator becomes one of the effort's biggest supporters.

STEP 7:
Don't Let Up

THE MERCHANT OF FEAR: A task force is charged with fixing the company's broken investment planning process-and top management's behavior is slowing down the change process.

- **See:** Instead of ducking the political barriers or sugar-coating the issue, they find a light-hearted way of getting a serious message across. They create a hilarious video with actors spoofing how people behave when they put a budget together--complete with characters like the Merchant of Fear, who increases his budget by working off of people's fears; the Glory Hunter, who chases only those initiatives that might make him look good; and the People Protector, who cares only about getting projects for his staff.
- **Feel:** Because the spoof hits the issues-and people's emotions-directly, the amusing, nonconfrontational video gives the change leaders a much-needed tool for legitimizing new top management behavior. People try to guess who the characters are portraying-and start wondering if it may in fact be them.
- **Change:** By exposing the types of behavior that go against the company's new, more shareholder-oriented vision, the old investment game is stopped in its tracks. The video is burned-but the message lives on.

STEP 8:
Take Change Stick

THE HOME MORTGAGE: After six years of explosive growth, a company decides it must revisit its values so that all 40,000 employees believe deeply in-and continue to act on-the vision.

- **See:** The staff hosts a four-hour event on a Saturday morning in which employees from around the world are hooked together via satellite. Beyond executive speeches and handouts touting company values--employees are also shown moving videos of customers telling stories about how the company has treated them fairly and compassionately through difficult situations. One man tells about how his ailing parents-who owed the company a large debt-were allowed to live in their house until they no longer needed it. Even after the house burned to the ground in a fire, the company helped the man's mother rebuild the house and live in it until her death-rather than simply collecting the insurance money to settle the debt.
- **Feel:** Employees sit up, listen more closely, and become visibly moved by the stories the customers tell. Some are in tears.
- **Change:** The inspirational first-person tales vividly show the consequences of living the company's values-and employees become energized to continue a powerful and meaningful tradition of making a difference in the lives of others.

The 8 Steps of Successful Large-Scale Change

What it Really Takes to Make Change Happen

1. INCREASE URGENCY

- Core Challenge: Get people out of the bunker and ready to move.
- What Works: Create dramatic presentations with compelling objects that people can actually see, touch, and feel; provide evidence from outside the organization that change is required; find cheap and easy ways to reduce complacency.
- Example: Show employees a videotape of an angry customer rather than handing out a two-page memo filled with negative "customer data."
- Desired New Behavior: People start telling each other, "Let's go, we need to change"

2. BUILD THE GUIDING TEAM

- Core Challenge: Get the right people in place with the trust, emotional commitment, and teamwork to guide a very difficult change process.
- What Works: Attract key change leaders by showing enthusiasm and commitment; model the trust and teamwork needed in the group; structure meeting formats that minimize frustration and increase trust.
- Example: Draft a large, diverse team made up of individuals at all levels and with different skills-rather than bowing to political pressures to leave the task of change in the hands of a small, like-minded "executive group."
- Desired New Behavior: A group powerful enough to guide a big change is formed and they start to work together well.

3. GET THE VISION RIGHT

- Core Challenge: Get the guiding team to create the right vision and strategies to guide action in all of the remaining stages of change. This requires moving beyond number-crunching to address the creative and emotional components of vision.
- What Works: Literally *seeing/visualizing* possible futures; visions that are moving; visions that are so clear they can be articulated in one minute or written up on one page; bold strategies that can be executed quickly enough to make the vision a reality.
- Example: Marshal people around a compelling service vision that can only be realized by drastically streamlining costs-(rather than) delivering emotionally depressing and anxiety-producing mandates about slashing expenses.
- Desired New Behavior: The guiding team develops the right vision and strategy for the change effort.

4. COMMUNICATE FOR BUY-IN

- Core Challenge: Get as many people as possible acting to make the vision a reality.
- What Works: Keep communication simple and heartfelt; find out what people are really *feeling* and speak to anxieties, confusion, anger, and distrust; rid communication channels of junk so important messages can get through; use new technologies to help people see the vision.
- Example: Create tools that help people tailor information to their specific needs—rather than forcing more generic memos and reports into over-stuffed email and in-boxes.
- Desired New Behavior: People begin to buy-into the change, and this shows in their behavior.

5. EMPOWER ACTION

- Core Challenge: Remove key obstacles that stop people from acting on the vision.
- What Works: Bring in experienced change leaders to bolster confidence that the job can be done; create recognition and reward systems that inspire, promote optimism, and build self-confidence; give constructive feedback; help disempowering managers to powerfully experience the need for change.
- Example: To recognize and reward excellence, stage an emotion-filled competition in Bali rather than a dry, cerebral event in a New York conference room.
- Desired New Behavior: More people *feel able* to act, and do act, on the vision.

6. CREATE SHORT-TERM WINS

- Core Challenge: Produce enough short-term wins fast enough to energize the change helpers, enlighten the pessimists, defuse the cynics, and build momentum for the effort.
- What Works: "Cheap and easy" wins that are visible, timely, unambiguous, and meaningful to others.
- Example: Focus publicly on four goals instead of fifty-and make sure no new initiatives are added until one of those goals is achieved and celebrated.
- Desired New Behavior: Momentum builds as people try to fulfill the vision, while fewer and fewer resist change.

7. DON'T LET UP

- Core Challenge: Continue with wave after wave of change, not stopping until the vision is a reality-no matter how big the obstacles.
- What Works: Eliminate or delegate nonpriority work; show people powerful reasons to keep urgency up; use new situations opportunistically to launch the next wave of change.
- Example: Replace a time-consuming and painstakingly detailed monthly activity report with a one-page summary that highlights only major milestones and key financial metrics.
- Desired New Behavior: People remain energized and motivated to push change forward until the vision is fulfilled.

8. MAKE CHANGE STICK

- Core Challenge: Create a supporting structure that provides roots for the new ways of operating.
- What Works: Refuse to declare victory too soon; use new employee orientation, the promotions process, and vivid stories to visibly and compellingly reinforce the vision.
- Example: When introducing new hires to the organization, use videos that contain heartfelt messages from customers whose lives the company has changed and touched-rather than the usual dry speeches and boring handbooks.
- Desired New Behavior: New and winning behavior continues despite the pull of tradition, turnover of change leaders, etc.

(Source: *The Heart of Change*, Harvard Business School Press; 2002)