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Changing the way we change

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Changing the way we change

Changing the way people think and behave is, in our experience, often put in the 'too difficult' box. None more so than when an organisation needs to undertake radical and deep reaching change, something that's top of mind in the public sector at the moment.

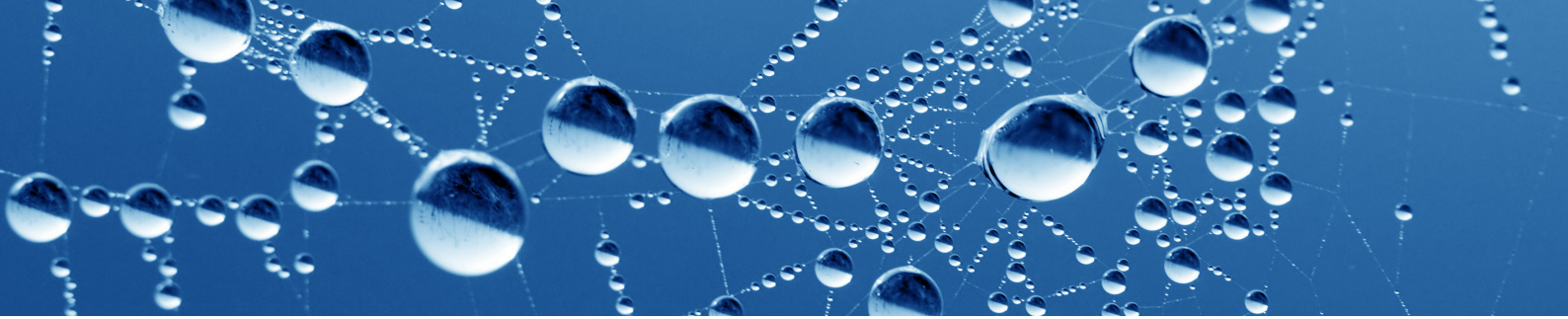
For many leaders in the private or public sector it's one thing to demonstrate a convincing rationale for change, show the graphs and numbers that justify your proposed strategy, draw up a new structure and win a mandate to make change. Yet this is only half the job. The other - perhaps most challenging half - is implementing this new way of working without your best people leaving, morale crashing, performance falling through the floor and dissatisfaction erupting among your customers.

It isn't just your staff who has to change, of course. It's your leaders too. Without leaders who show the way by 'being the change you wish to see', people cannot follow. Moreover, when changes are radical it's almost certain that leaders will have to engage outside of their organisations with stakeholders, partners, suppliers and customers or end users, but this is only when they're ready.

Starting the change journey

Implementing change requires a capability as well as the capacity to manage the change effectively so you realise the investment and outcomes that are desired. To start the journey to sustainable long-term change organisations need to have the capability to plan at an organisational, departmental and individual employee level.

It's not all about capability. Without effective change capacity it's like setting out to drive from London to Manchester with an empty tank and dodgy wheel bearing. You probably won't make it. That's why conversations about implementing change should start with a fitness assessment for the journey. Without attention to both change capability and change capacity organisations will fail to get the predicted return.



Common causes of failure

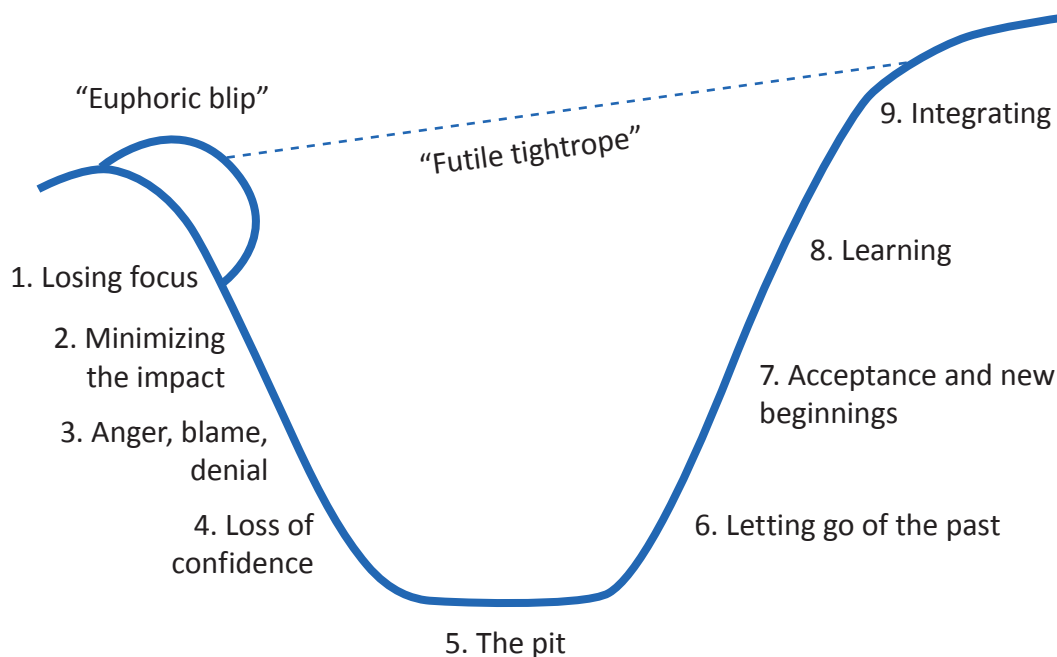
The big difference between success and failure is HOW change is managed, not the analysis of what changes need to be made.

There are three main reasons for failure. Firstly, front line people are not sufficiently involved in designing the details of the change. As it's often said the devil really is in the detail.

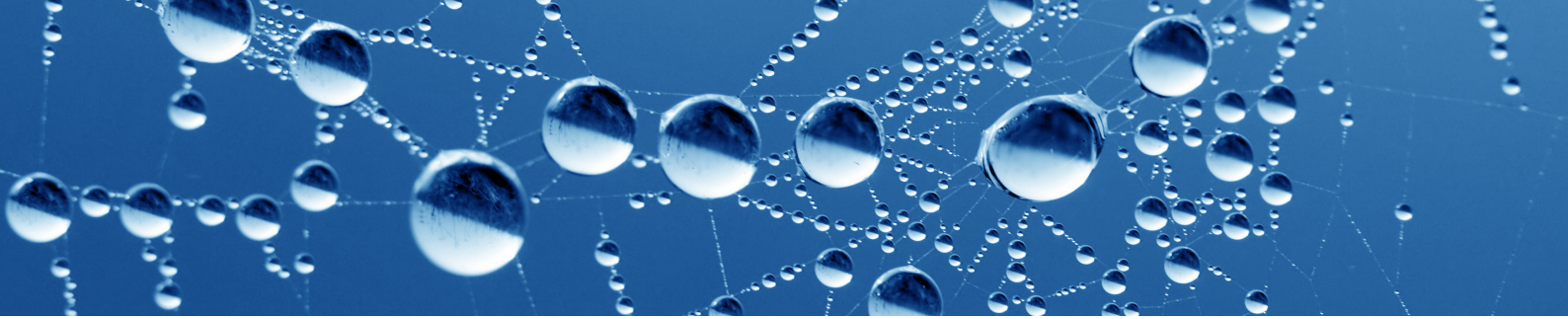
Secondly, the change programme itself is not synchronised and integrated, with the result that in a large complex organisation progress is slow and piecemeal.

The most common cause of all is that people see the change primarily as a structural one, not holistically and underpinned by a new mind set.

The stages of transition for individuals



This model has been adapted from Sabina A Spencer and John D Adams.



Changing the way people think and behave

Dealing with change is often traumatic at a leadership, individual, and organisational level. Leaders need to be the change they want to see. For this to be effective, means really assessing personal reactions to change. What is being said, felt or left unsaid and are these emotions being repeated or paralleled in the wider system.

It is also common for a leader to be ahead in the change transition curve (developed from Kubler Ross, Bridges). This shows how there can be a futile tightrope that leaders, having initiated a change and moved through the process, invite others to cross.

It is far better to let people go through the Transition Curve so that they can emerge stronger, more productive and engaged as they emerge on the other side. The leader though must maintain the vision of the future clearly and constantly with their people.

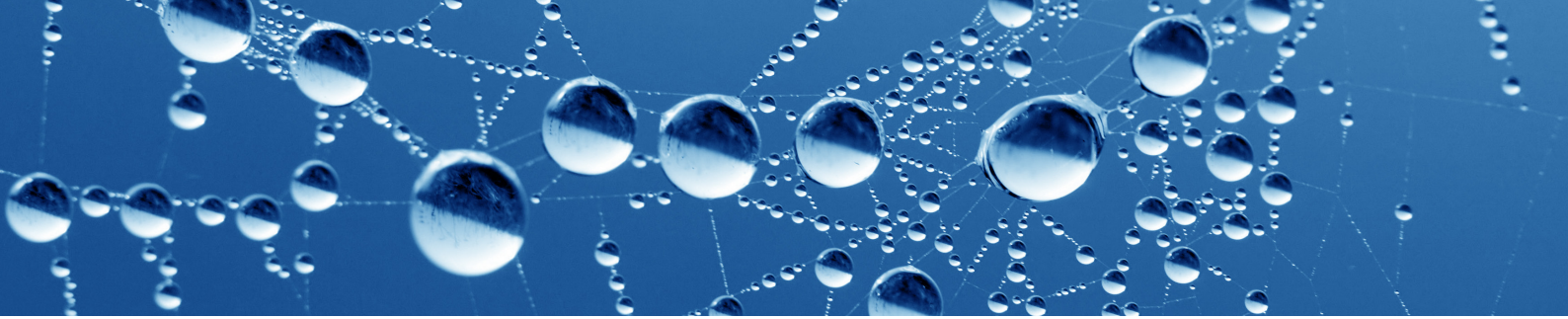
One aerospace company that we worked with had identified an emotional blockage to radical changes it was undertaking in its business. This blockage was keeping people in the 'pit' of the curve. There was a need to deal with the loss so mechanisms were identified that could help people personally and collectively express their grief. As people emerged in the upswing of the transition curve, they were ready to be engaged.

Job restructuring

Change, especially in this current climate, can involve organisational restructuring with resulting job losses and redundancies. It is surprising how often organisations pay more attention to enabling leavers to have a smooth exit than it is for the survivors to be helped to take on their new responsibilities. In the private sector it we have found that employers identify their best talent early on and give priority to a dialogue which motivates and supports the managers who will make or break the new structure. In the public sector at the moment people are undergoing huge transitions and recognise the need for HR to take on a role in supporting transition. Internal transition coaches whom we have trained in the civil service are now finding themselves coaching people on how to support those affected by change, rather than those new to the civil service but the skills are equally valuable.

Our experience shows that supporting senior leaders in their transition from one role to another has a significant impact on the success of the change project. In a reorganisation of the pan-African Sales approach for one organisation meant that Sales VPs had new demanding roles and needed support.

Rather than support this externally, HR professionals were trained as coaches with external coaching supervision. This not only added great value to the business it also created a new positive relationship between HR and business leaders.



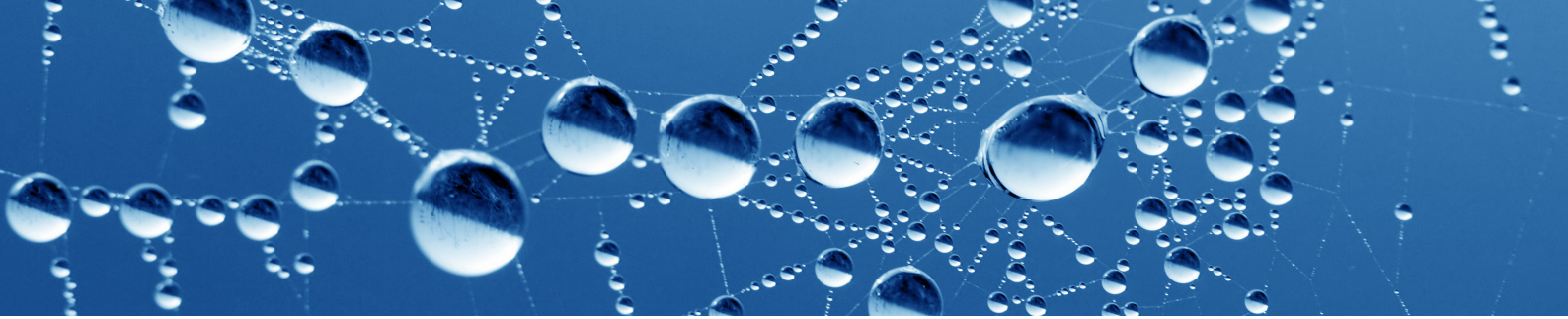
Leaders using this approach describe the benefits as:

- Time out to plan ahead
- Save time in future
- Get things right in new team start up phase
- Pay attention to change process
- Send signals about values/priorities
- Opportunity to unlearn
- Emotional resilience

Five practical steps are needed in times of transition

1. Facilitation of sessions with staff, partners or users where the manager needs to hear and give difficult messages
2. Personal and team coaching to help the manager stand back and focus on priorities as well as process what the changes mean for them personally
3. Extra capacity for communication, engagement and rapid problem solving so that difficulties don't become entrenched and everyone is active in solution finding
4. Enabling effective decision making processes where assumptions get aired and differences heard
5. Team development for new teams, where they take forward the best of the old culture and start to set norms for the new

This isn't rocket science, but it is highly skilled work.



Role of HR

The role HR professionals play in transition is extremely valuable. However, they are often going through transition themselves, potentially not knowing what their future roles are as they support others through change. Having some support to focus on the bigger picture can be very valuable to a team or a leader immersed in the day to day.

A challenge to a recent group of HR professionals from their own leader was, *“Are we as HR creating enough time with leaders to stop and focus on the key issues?”*

Focusing on the details of a reorganisation can become a case of not seeing the wood for the trees. During this period HR can assert themselves as a major player by helping leaders, teams and individuals focus on how the actual transition is managed. HR can hold up the mirror, call a ‘time out’ and help the whole organisation to slow down to speed up.

Case Study

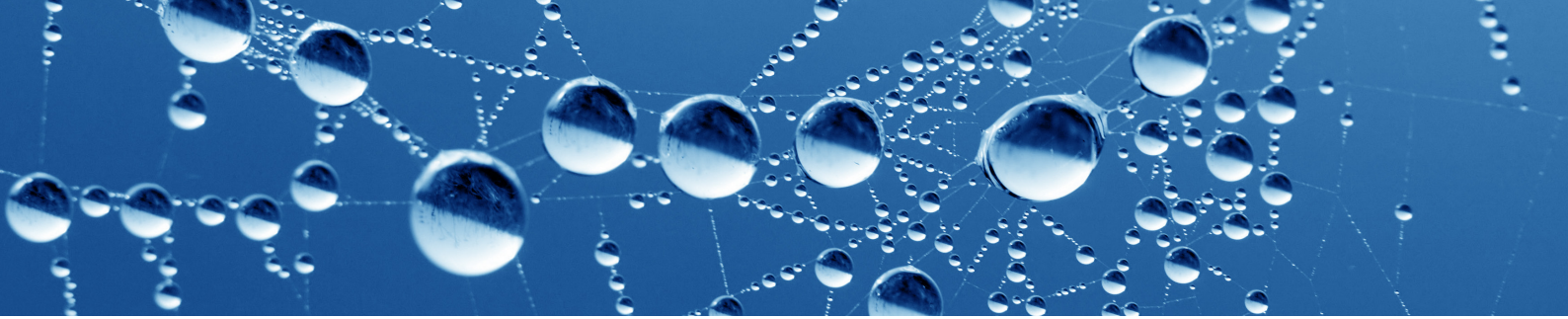
In the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), Bath Consultancy Group worked alongside the internal Organisational Change Centre of Excellence as partners on their change journey.

Building transformational change capacity post capability review

The first phase of the departmental Capability Reviews led to a programme of transformational change at DWP with the goals of improving customer experience, improving value for money for tax payers and improving staff engagement.

A team of consultants from Bath Consultancy Group worked in the Department from March 2007 to April 2008. There were three aspects to the work (as summarised below) but these initiatives were integrated so that insights from each part of the programme served to inform work and learning in other areas.

1. Providing “Team Coaching” to the DWP Executive Team and Board, adding value in four spaces: working together; working apart; managing the current business; and leading transformational change. This was linked the effectiveness of the Executive Team with the Change Agenda.



2. Working in partnership with the internal DWP team in Organisation and People Development (OPD) to enhance their capability to provide first class OD consultancy to the Department. This included working alongside them consulting on:
 - The structural review and re-organisation of Organisational Capability Centre of Expertise
 - Arrangements for reducing headcount
 - Advice on succession planning, transition support, talent management, and role assessments
 - Coaching leaders to manage change in their teams
 - Assisting with transition support to the new Director of OPD
 - Delivering three Organisation Systems workshops to the Change Team (using the Barry Oshry Systems approach) and providing supporting methodology
3. Providing OD coaching and consultancy to the DWP Change Directorate, particularly to those involved in the Culture Change workstream, working in partnership with internal OD consultants to change the culture and improve the customer experience and also worked with key leaders in the Change Directorate to help them recognise that how they personally led change would also model the new culture for the organisation. This included design and facilitation of key workshops, and Senior Civil Service (SCS) conferences.

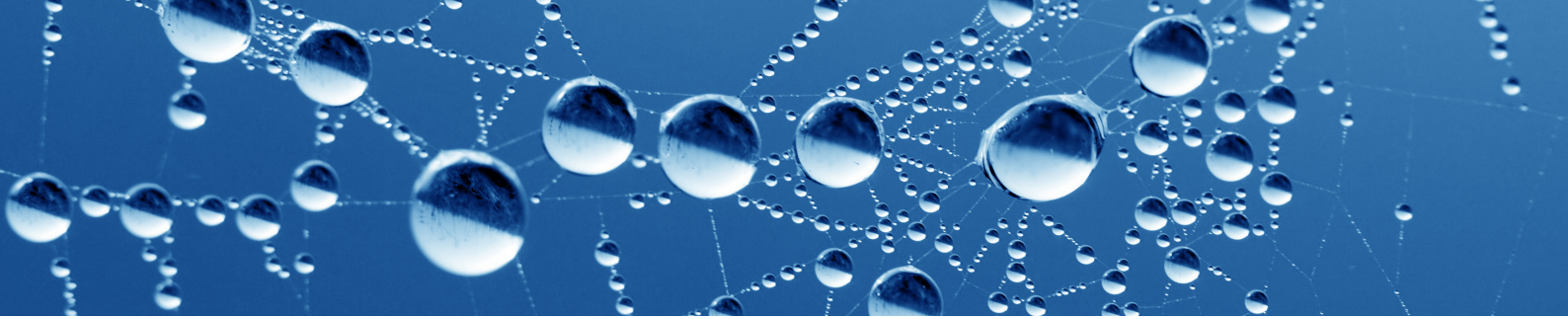
Skills transfer was a key element. Bath Consultancy Group worked with the internal change team through an explicit 'outside-inside' partnering on all pieces of work. At times, they were front of stage working directly with DWP leaders (e.g. designing and delivering a high impact and engaging Senior Civil Service conference) and in other circumstances, were coaching, co-ordinating and advising internal consultants to lead. This built the internal capacity to address change and identify cultural patterns blocking change. Feedback from the internal consultants about what they valued about the work included:

"Seeing the whole system in all aspects of work, even in one to one transition coaching."

"Diversity in the consultants, real people with different strengths and weaknesses, not clones."

"Willingness to think together."

"Strong relationships with the consulting team – of trust, respect and understanding - and commitment to see things through, however difficult they became"



Challenges and lessons learnt include the importance of working across the team boundary to improve the relationship between the Executive Team and its key stakeholders, in particular the Change team. The benefits of integrating different elements of the Bath Consultancy Group work and the wider programme were also clear. Finally, in order to work effectively with DWP top management Bath Consultancy Group needed to field highly credible consultants with technical, intellectual and inter-personal skills of the highest order, who had access to the top quality intellectual property.

The benefits realised from the assignment were tangible and appreciated by DWP. At the annual and two-year Capability Review it was noted by the reviewers that the effectiveness of the Executive team had improved significantly. Internal consultants became more capable and productive as a result, and were more effective as consultants to the Change Director of the multi-million pound Change Programme.

Jerry Arnott, Director, Organisation and People Development, DWP said: *“I was extremely impressed with the way in which Bath Consultancy Group consultants were able to slide alongside our senior leaders and create real positive impact so quickly. Their approach is testament to their expertise i.e. a fine balance of theoretical knowledge of organisational development and change coupled with quality skills in consulting and coaching. They helped lay the foundation for our ongoing transformation across DWP and, within my own functional area, ‘Organisation and People Development’, provided a real benchmark of excellence in developing and embedding internal OD and Change consulting skills. Their pedigree is strong, as a group of practitioners who bring enormous experience from across numerous sectors, both in corporate and consulting roles.”*