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By Community Systems

# **Change Happens**

*Get On Top Of It!*

*By Community Systems (CSII) 2008*

*Dedicated to  
the citizens of Marfa, Texas  
and their spirit.*

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## *Introduction*

Social and health service systems can no longer be effective with the use of a service delivery model in which individual agencies determine the population they want to serve in the community and deliver services that meet those needs. The problems communities face are too complex for each individual agency to identify what the needs are and then attempt to meet those needs in isolation of other community institutions and organizations.

The impact of this fragmentation is that gaps are created which do not reduce problems but instead appear to create greater needs that require even more resources. As greater emphasis is placed on an accountability and performance measurement, social and health service agencies appear particularly ineffective at reducing broad scale community problems. In reality, few are well positioned to respond strategically to complex social problems.

Developing effective solutions to complex social problems requires that social and health service organizations continue to provide services to the community, but the measure of effectiveness of those solutions is no longer whether the service was provided but instead whether the service contributed to a reduction in a problem and its related causes experienced by the community.

Yet no single agency can be expected to accomplish these goals by their actions alone. This means that community agencies must think of themselves not as a provider of a service or as meeting the needs of a particular subgroup in the community but as elements of a system designed to reduce problems that diminish the quality of life for the community.

The ability of organizations and those who work for them to adapt in a changing environment, maintain stability, and still achieve professional and personal goals does not happen by accident. Rather, it happens by intentional design. The design emanates from a vision of attainable community problem solving that is supported by individuals across the

organization. All aspects of the organization are aligned to support and accomplish this shared vision. Administrative structures, policies and procedures encourage actions throughout the organization that are aligned with the shared vision of effective community problem solving. Internal linkages among staff facilitate effective communication about organizational actions and their effectiveness. Resources are allocated to support actions that contribute to the shared vision, not just the financial health of the agency. Staff have the appropriate expertise to effectively address complex social problems and are encouraged to collaboratively apply their expertise. Such design assures an organization's ability to be an effective support to the community's social and health system.

# Transformation

We live in a fast moving, constantly changing world. In fact, the only thing that we can be certain of is that change happens! It is not about how, when, why or where the change first began or what can be done to prevent the change – it is about harnessing the transforming power of ever present change. The dilemma is to be either constantly tossed by the unpredictable sea of change or to chart a course and navigate with the winds of change riding the waves and harnessing its power so that we arrive not just safely, but in a consistently healthier place. How can we ensure that we have the ability to navigate change in our personal and professional lives?

Just as a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, organizational effectiveness in a challenging environment relies on people who are mentally and physically healthy, able to maintain balance in their lives, and align their actions with the organization's purpose.

Your ability to make positive transformations in your professional world depends on your ability and commitment to make parallel changes in your personal support system. To the extent that your personal world is disorganized without clear direction; filled with unsupportive, difficult relationships that do not have clear, healthy boundaries; lacks resources or skills needed to be successful; it will be difficult for you to consider making transformations in your professional world.

Similarly, if there are inadequate structures within your organization, the linkages do not ensure effective communication and commitment among organizational leadership to support the mission of the organization and its effectiveness; if your role in accomplishing that mission is unclear or unsupported; if it seems that the purpose of the organization is not to accomplish its mission with the greatest effectiveness possible but instead to seek out continually more resources for the sake of increasing the budget; or if the organization lacks crucial expertise in guiding the organization toward

maximum effectiveness, it will likely be confusing and chaotic to determine what actions you can take to best support the organization and its mission.

Consider how you can leverage the power you have to respond to change, to make choices each day that will bring about a difference in your personal and professional effectiveness. Consider how your choices can serve as a model for your family, friends and professional peers, and that through your position you can inspire, motivate, create incentives for change, as well as hold those accountable and responsible for their roles in creating organizational effectiveness.

As individuals and organizations we need to be flexible and have the capacity to adapt to this changing landscape. In particular, both need to be able to function within a community's social and health service system in order to impact the quality of life for the entire community.

How can community organizations become more agile and effective in accomplishing their mission? Even more importantly, perhaps, how can those who commit their professional career to work in the public sector, be they social service agencies, schools, public health departments, etc balance their desire for professional success with personal fulfillment?

Those who work to provide these services must themselves be able to adapt quickly to the changing complexity of community problems as well as the larger environment in which the service system must operate, balancing their personal needs and professional goals. Individuals that recognize this reality and choose to position themselves to monitor the winds of change, appreciate their direction and potential impact, and harness their energy are more likely to remain healthy and sustain positive benefits than those who simply react to change as it happens, letting its effects fall to chance. But it is not about controlling the change- it is about *harnessing* the effect of the change.

What promotes agility and surefootedness on such a shifting sea? Such balance requires that organizations align and balance the personal needs,



aspirations and actions of the individuals who lead and carry out the mission of organizations with the organization's mission, vision, values and actions of the organization. Where this alignment is absent, organizational effectiveness and personal health are greatly diminished. Healthy people cannot function well in unhealthy organizational environments; similarly unhealthy people cannot effectively create well tailored solutions to complex social problems that will lead to service and organizational transformation. Such effectiveness requires highly functioning systems comprised of agencies and organizations with a healthy, highly functioning workforce that expects change and has the skills necessary to be effective in the face of it.

In a changing environment, we can either transform our organizations and ourselves in response to change or be transformed by others. While some may prefer to leave these changes to chance, you may consider it more preferable to increase the influence you have to determine what the change looks like and the effects it has on you professionally and personally before that chance is lost.

## Beginning the Transformation Process

Change happens; make the effects of change a choice by you and not a chance you live with floating until change occurs again.

You cannot just change thinking but have to put the structure in place to change and reinforce action. Step back and think about power, politics and position, your own and those around you.

Guiding questions:

- Are your actions aligned with the changes you desire to see in your personal life or in your professional world?
- How do your thoughts constrain your actions?
- Do your assumptions appear to limit your options?

We may find that we are prisoners on our own islands of thought. Our perception may be that we can not change the way our organization operates or how others in the organization act because we lack authority and power. We become held captive by the vast oceans of our perceived disempowerment. More often than not, we disempower ourselves, robbing us of our capacity to use our voice to ask questions that will help others see the need for change.

Additional guiding questions:

- What choices are you making each day that constrain your ability to be more effective?
- How are your thoughts constraining small actions that when taken together can lead to substantial impacts on your effectiveness and the effectiveness of your organization?

The answers to the initial questions may lead to more questions and so forth as change begets change. So develop a process that is responsive to change and produces the outcomes you desire. There are five basic steps to putting this process into motion.

## 1. Use Data to Guide Understanding

Preparedness for change requires not only the capacity to monitor the conditions and needs of the community you live in or serve, but the larger environment which affects your community. You and your organization must have the ability and the opportunity to receive information that truly informs your understanding of the dynamics that may require you to adjust both thought and actions. You must also have the expertise to understand the information in order to respond effectively. Relying on data to develop an objective assessment of a situation rather than past understanding, or what appears to pass for common knowledge among your closest peers will help both you and your organization take actions that are more likely to influence the situation toward your desired positive outcome. This does not mean that you should not trust your intuition, which can provide you with reams of information in the blink of an eye, but ensure that your intuition is well informed rather than biased by the blinders of past experience or erroneous assumptions.

To dig deeper in such a manner allows you to look at the full complement of community environmental, social and individual factors that are contributing to the problem, not just at the problem itself. *Creating Capacity for Effectiveness* (CSII, 2004). The process helps to define the nature and extent of need by the population you serve or to whom you connect.

### *Adaptive organizations*

- Base assumptions on plausible theory and sound evidence;
- Develop data collection systems that can provide up-to-date, useful and meaningful data;
- Experiment to determine which is most effective among a set of potential strategies before committing to one or implementing it on a large scale;
- Identify interventions shown to impact the cause of the problem;
- Look to research and practice evidence to help understand the relationships between problems and their causes; and,

- Use simulation exercises to gain new insight into situations and remove the blinders of emotion and bias that can limit understanding.

### *Adaptive Individual*

- Allow for some trial and error before an effective solution is devised;
- At the macro, integrate a broad understanding of how conditions have contributed to similar problems in other places;
- At the micro, appreciate the conditions within the specific context at hand revealing clearer understanding of the appropriate actions to be taken that address the causes of the current problem;
- Base your understanding of a problem, and respond to it on objective information;
- Rely on a variety of tools to help collect, manage and use relevant, valid and reliable information; and,
- Step back and observe the situation from several levels at once.

## **2. Identify what is being done and how it is working or not**

As the old saying goes, if the only tool you have is a hammer then every solution will look like a nail. Organizations and individuals must have the wherewithal and willingness to identify and set aside mindsets and practices that do not yield desired results. Data provides the information about whether the actions we are taking or contemplating taking are likely to produce their intended results.

Assessing the capacity to continue to be effective in changing environments takes more than just knowing the facts - so to speak. Organizations and individuals must have a clear understanding of the actions they are taking and why they are taking these actions. Further, they must understand the effort that must be in place to sustain those actions. Your capacity and the various types and levels of resources that your organization has at its disposal will dictate what you are capable to sustain at a given moment in time. An absence of those resources, critical to continued success, will almost certainly jeopardize your efforts.

What is important is that people and organizations do not allow change to direct them because they are hiding in the shadows of imaginary obstacles, but instead, seek to appreciate the causes that limit their ability to direct change. Identifying and addressing these causes can help organizations and staff develop a commitment to problem solving by aligning actions to address the underlying causes of problems.

#### *Adaptive organizations*

- Accomplish the organization's vision;
- Commit to taking actions that contribute to that vision;
- Discontinue actions that do not move towards the vision.
- Learn from the mistakes;
- Be not afraid to change course when evidence suggests that the current course is inadequate;
- Take the steps to assess your assumptions that underlie your actions;
- Know how assumptions connect logically so that you fully appreciate how the desired outcome has been achieved; and,
- Know as well your human, technical and financial realities including the organizations skills of communication, effective decision-making, administrative tasks, conflict resolution, cultural competency and technological needs. *Creating Capacity for Effectiveness* (CSII, 2004).

#### *Adaptive Individual*

- Be willing to make the sometimes difficult decision to change course, to discontinue doing things that are not helping us achieve our desired outcome;
- Allow consideration of changing with all out abandonment practices that are not getting you where you want to go;
- Increase readiness and commitment to this different path and then gradually implement a different approach;
- Create professional and personal relationships that appreciate the gifts you bring, accept those items with which you struggle and allow you to effect the relationship.

### 3. Have a clean, crisp, concrete plan

Solution focused organizations and individuals must have more than just a verbalized commitment to align their actions with the organization's vision. A plan, which builds on the information gathered in steps 1 and 2, will strategically position you for success. Such a plan helps to make intentions concrete, achievable, and the outcomes of the actions measurable. *Creating Capacity for Effectiveness* (CSII, 2004). Do not write the plan in isolation of whom it will affect. Create a real plan that can help you adapt to and even harness change. Make the plan broad to cover a long period of time, 3 – 5 years for an organization, 1– 2 years for an individual. It takes time to adapt and time to know if your response was effective. Give yourself the gift of time.

#### *Adaptive organizations*

- Go outside the perceived management team and include through a deliberate process all the members of the organization and whom the organization serves so that the plan will be enriched by diversity of thought and perspective;
- Define the problems that need the plan to address;
- Explore the causes of these problems;
- Determine the outcomes you have the capacity by addressing these cause; and
- Let the plan establish and guide the scope of work of all members of the organization.

#### *Adaptive Individual*

- Go outside yourself and ask those you connect with for their insight or perspective about what you think are the problems that keep you from realizing your full potential and desired outcomes; and,
- Take that first step... and know that the only failure is the failure not to try to live a life by choices not chance.

#### 4. Find partners to whom you will be held accountable

Do not plan to plan and not do. Do not invest the time it will take if you do not intend it to be real. This type of detailed planning helps organizations and individuals be clear about their assumptions, the actions required to achieve targeted changes, available time and resources, the order in which actions and outcomes are expected, the established timeline, *and* who is responsible for each needed action. *Creating Capacity for Effectiveness* (CSII, 2004). An annual implementation plan, for an organization, ensures that all steps of your bigger plan will be implemented when appropriate and provides a means of identifying the work of each member of the organization needed to support the plan. The plan also helps to determine the resources needed by the organization and the skills and expertise necessary to carry out the plan. For individuals, a monthly “to do list” may be sufficient to meet the mark.

##### *Adaptive Organizations*

- Organizations and individuals within these organizations are more likely to implement a plan if they know they will be held accountable for its results;
- Establish shared commitment to a set of expected outcomes also creates opportunities to establish joint accountability for ensuring the plan’s success;
- Commitment to a shared vision and a plan for achieving it must be reflected in the desire to monitor the fruits of the effort; and,
- Creating accountability measures to monitor your progress and reporting success as well as improvements needed to the organization helps build greater support for the plan and its success.

##### *Adaptive Individual*

- Accountability is also critical for succeeding at personal change.
- Find a coach, a partner, or a friend that you can be accountable to for the outcomes you desire to achieve;
- Track your progress as well as feelings, thoughts and actions that may be facilitating or undermining your success;

- Share your progress with your accountability partner and ask for his/her help in identifying ways to address the causes that seem to impede your progress;
- Celebrate the accomplishment of each milestone along the way; and,
- Create incentives to stick with the plan and take the next planned action.

## 5. Reassess, reflect, and revise

If our plan was effective, then conditions will have changed. Just as conditions change, plans must also adjust to meet them. What may have been an effective response several years ago may no longer fit the situation or be effective.

Communities and funders today want results. They want outcomes. Evaluation helps us understand whether or not we are reaching our goals. Reassessment helps to regularly monitor aspects of the problem and its causes. This information helps us develop an understanding of how the new reality of the problem has been impacted by the solutions we implement. This is the opportunity to reflect on lessons learned, re-evaluate our vision, and ensure our mission continues to support the broader system and address community problems. Extensive evaluations can cost tremendous funds however, to the extent that you use the outcomes-oriented approach recommended in this publication to engage in evaluation tasks, you will have minimized both your reliance on, and the cost of, outside evaluation. *Creating Capacity for Effectiveness* (CSII, 2004).

So if those are the steps, why do we, more times than not, not embrace change but instead hide from it? Too overwhelming? Easier to let life happen by chance? Afraid of knowing the truth?

### *Adaptive Organizations*

- Show that the changes taking place are meaningful and reach the intended effect;



- Opportunities for reflection by individuals and organizations are critical in our fast paced environment and these moments give perspective and serve to keep us grounded;
- Opportunities for reflection should be open to all members of the organization to avoid group-think; and,
- Commitment of time and resources should be provided so you can know what is and what is not working and why it is so.

### *Adaptive Individual*

- Be reflective; it will help you be better at what you want to do and to accept what you can not do;
- Remember it is about balance and addressing the causes for these potential barriers that is a key to unlocking the power of transformation; and,
- Be willing to be the one who transforms you.

### *Sustaining the Transformation*

Utilize a process that ensures an adaptive effective system that achieves and maintains desired long-term results that ultimately maintain positive outcomes in the community. So inherent assumptions that stand in the way of our organizational or personal transformation include:

- An effective process or practice can be easily integrated into my life or the life of an organization,
- The organization is receptive to change,
- The organization's infrastructure has capacity to adopt or deliver effective processes, practices or policy changes, and
- That individuals, organizations and communities can change without the influence or support from other organizations or systems.

There are three salient aspects that must be given attention to and assured of for on-going sustained transformation. The aspects are: first, to assure that an organizations and/or individual has the ability to support the work that needs to be done in order to adapt to a changing environment; second, to assure an alignment of world view, individual view and the intended effort

so that there is a desire and support to do the work; and, finally, to be able to add value to the community by the work and therefore cultivate the support and linkages needed to sustain the work.

### *Ability To Do The Work*

Assuring the ability to support the work that needs to be done in order to adapt to a changing environment is one of three crucial building blocks for sustained transformation. For organizations, this may mean having the appropriate administrative structures, policies, procedures, resources and expertise to ensure that there is a strong foundation that can not only support the work but is able to adapt to change or even creating the change. An assessment of the skills of the staff, access to computer and other technology, workspace and funding is a critical step to reveal foundational strength. Even on the personal level, one needs to take a realistic assessment of his/her own skills and abilities to meet these new needs.

Sometimes, just as crucial is the level of leadership involvement. The organization may need to change, but the leadership may not even notice or be willing to address the changes. The power, position and politics of the leadership will directly effect the viability of the organization. Even on the personal level this is true. The heart may want something but the head has not thought how to get it, or even if it is committed to getting it. What is your will to risk your own power, position and engage in the politics necessary to make changes in yourself?

### *Desire And Support To Do The Work*

Assuring the effectiveness and alignment of world view, individual view and intended effort so that the work excites not only the organization and its board of directors but the staff that comprises the organization is the second crucial building block for sustained transformation. This collective responsibility requires a shared belief that together a difference can be made and change can be harnessed to continue to sharpen the effort, and not threaten to tear at it.

The problems and conditions to be addressed are complex and require complex responses. Fostering positive relationships among those that have a stake in the outcome can help to increase interest and commitment. These individuals must believe that the organization will be able to accomplish its vision. Even on a personal level if we have demonstrated to our family and friends that we do not believe in our own power, we cannot expect them to continue to believe in or support us either.

This belief in the organization and its vision will be strengthened if the role of the agency is clear; that there is a sense that the organization respects the community it serves, produces results for this community, provide rewards and strengthen relationships. We demonstrate that we appreciate our stakeholders when we allow them to express their view and accept their perspectives as a truth that we need to listen to, not defend against. And perhaps most essential, that the organization recognizes that its purpose is not to sustain itself but to sustain a vehicle for helping the community address its needs.

To assure this transformation, the level of leadership involvement, both inside and outside the organization becomes a vital aspect. These leaders are those individuals that because of their role in the organization, or in the community which the organization serves, can make or break the support necessary to sustain the ability to adapt to change. These leaders must come to view themselves as stewards of not only the community but the organization because of its vital role in the life of the community. They, in turn, become the inspiration that continues to motivate the desire to do the work.

#### *Adding Value To The Community By The Work*

Assuring the quality of the implementation and effectiveness of an organization's services and work is the third crucial building block for sustained transformation. Staff does not want to work endlessly without knowing they are making a difference. Supporters, whether funders or members of the board of directors, will not want to continue to provide their name and support to something that does not add proven value. The community the organization

is intended to serve will not support an organization that is not achieving its vision and the shared community outcomes.

Communicating clearly about what is intended, what has been accomplished and what is next to be done is the key to engage and maintain the support needed from staff, supporters and the larger community. This occurs when the organization operates from a transparent perspective, providing information when the intended outcomes are reached as well as when it has missed the mark. This transfer of information will increase the trust of the stakeholders in the ability of the organization to accomplish its vision and the shared community outcomes. When the work does not meet the community's need and cultural context, say it and ask for assistance in realigning this work. Work to paint a clear and compelling picture of your work and your effect on the community, and distribute this information through as many channels as possible to reach them.

Quality of life is essential for all us. For us personally, we must feel that we offer something that is important to the world around us. For us professionally, we must feel that we offer something to those whose connections to us are at best tangible and many times unforeseen.

## Common Transformation Crossroads

The common crossroads captured herein are uniform across communities, organizations and individuals. The factors may be different; the reasons for the problems, and most importantly the processes are very compatible. See what you think. Appreciate what seems pertinent to you and your situation right now. Accept what you do not have the capacity or ability to address at this point. Allow yourself time to reflect and relate these concepts by answering the questions. Set the answers aside and a month later take a look - keep what seems true and begin to address them; leave the others for another day. But to move forward, be aware of your own self power to influence the change, the position in life you are now that can transform the change and grasp the politics that will best direct you where to begin.

### **1. Lack of clear, compelling vision.**

Organizations and individuals often fail to build a vision that is compelling enough to encourage commitment necessary to harness change. A compelling vision helps set not just the compass point direction, but the whole reason for the journey in the first place. While achieving the vision may at times be fraught with setbacks and ambiguity about the best course as conditions change, the vision must provide a sense of purpose and serve as an anchor for their actions, a community's direction, an organization's mission, or an individual's decision.

Organization leaders must not only establish a clear and compelling vision of the future but must strive to communicate the vision repeatedly and build shared support for it across the organization. In order to build a sense of momentum for embracing the vision and changes in the organization needed to accomplish it, those leading must lead by example and model the behaviors and actions they expect others in the organization to adopt. This requires consistency between words and actions, otherwise members of the organization will not believe the changes are a priority and are unlikely to

implement them with any enthusiasm. In fact, many may try to make it appear as if they are implementing the changes, when in fact they continue to act in the more familiar, comfortable patterns. Their assumption may be that eventually leadership will be overwhelmed with the effort to monitor everyone and will simply stop paying attention. Then everyone can go back to what they were doing before.

### Questions To Consider

- What is your vision of personal and organizational effectiveness —what problems would be reduced, how would you be able to more effectively deal with change as it happens?
- How have you worked with the leadership of your organization to communicate this vision in order to build commitment to it across the organization?
- How can you create a coalition within your organization that shares your vision of effectiveness and recognizes the actions needed to accomplish it?
- How can you create a personal network to whom you can communicate your personal vision and that can support you as you pursue your personal effectiveness goals?
- What barriers are keeping your organization from adjusting to the demands in its environment in order to achieve and sustain success?
- What barriers may be limiting your ability to adjust to the demands around you personally and professionally? How do you know these are barriers?

### Three Possible Actions To Address Barriers

- Take a long-term view; recognize that the results of pursuing a vision do not always occur in direct proportion to the time and effort invested.
- Develop a plan that balances short term results with long term vision.
- Communicate and celebrate milestones and successes as they are achieved with your coalition or network to reinforce commitment.

## 2. The benefits of change do not seem to outweigh the costs.

The decision to adjust our actions is often based on a cost-benefit analysis: what are the expected risks associated with change and what are the benefits. When the benefits appear to outweigh the risks, we are often more motivated to move forward with change. Perhaps we should turn the question on its head, however, and assess the risks and benefits of choosing not to change. In reality, this is not a choice since change will happen. A decision not to change is in effect allowing the change that is inevitable to control you. Only if luck is on your side—which the odds are most decidedly against—will your failure to understand and embrace change and harness its energy to your benefit land you in a position more desirable than the one you could make for yourself with intentional action.

Difficult changes can be made with the right mix of adept skill and experimentation. The point is not to be perfect but to become continuously adaptive experimenters who constantly seek better ways of achieving the vision. And innovations need not require huge investments of resources. Often small changes, strategically identified, when taken together can have large payoffs.<sup>1</sup>

Often the purported costs of change - too difficult, too expensive - are in reality the shadows of imaginary obstacles that we are simply hiding behind to mask our real fears of the costs of change. When we find ourselves or our organizations no longer able to point to these as reasons for eschewing change, then what may be at work in reality is the fear of losing something important to our identity such as status, position, power or fear of loss of resources such as money or time over and above that required by the change. The potential for experiencing these costs may in fact be real, but they must be weighed against the long term value of accomplishing the personal or professional vision.

### Questions To Consider

- What are the potential personal and professional costs and benefits of change in the short term and in the long run?

<sup>1</sup> Gladwell, Malcolm. *The Tipping Point*.

- Is the vision of the future that could result from change compelling enough to you or your organization to adopt changes that could mean some short term losses? What will effectiveness look like?
- What is the best outcome that could happen as a result of change? What is the worst outcome? What is the worst outcome that could happen if you do not embrace the change? What is the likelihood of each these scenarios happening?
- How can you re-frame these potential losses as opportunities to achieve balance and alignment?
- What can you do to soften the potential impact of such losses?

### Three Possible Actions To Address Barriers

1. Stage the implementation of changes so that the impact of real losses is not experienced all at once and mark the passage of desired changes with celebrations that honor the task, the accomplishment as well as the impact of this work and accomplishment.
2. Articulate an honest assessment and costs at regular meeting times and places for updates - and allow these to be times for airing insecurities and struggles thereby allowing individuals to confront their fears.
3. Articulate and share a compelling vision for why the change is critical to organizational or personal success across the organization or among your personal network.

### **3. Lack of clear leadership commitment to the transformation**

Organization leaders often fail to invest the effort required to ensure that everyone within the organization recognizes the need for and benefits of change and the commitment to change on the part of organizational leaders.

Those leading the change process must not just talk about their desire for change or their commitment to it, but must “walk their talk” by aligning their own behavior with the new approach and modeling the desired new behaviors for others in the organization and across the system. Inconsistency



in leaders' words and deeds will likely produce confusion, frustration, and cynicism and ultimately a demise of the sought after changes.

Leaders must ensure that organizational infrastructure also aligns with and supports the actions needed to accomplish the desired organizational changes and impacts. Infrastructure includes organizational structures, relationships within the organization and with system partners, policies, procedures, resource allocations, and expertise.

As you lead your own personal change process, you must also align your actions with the outcomes you desire to achieve. You need to ensure that you have adequate supports to be consistent with the behaviors needed to accomplish your goals. Model these new behaviors for others in your personal network that may also be striving to achieve the same goal. You may find that you are inspiration to many and this knowledge can provide renewed commitment on your behalf.

Organizational change initiatives that fail often falter at the first critical step of establishing a sense of urgency to build momentum for change within the organization. This requires a great deal of effort to ensure that everyone within the organization recognizes the need for change and the commitment to change on part of organizational leaders.

You can not change thinking but have to put the structure in place to change and reinforce action new actions and evaluate continuation of past actions based on new desired set of results.

Those leading the change process must not just talk by aligning their own behavior with the new approach and modeling the desired new behaviors for others in the organization and across the system.

Leaders must be consistent in their support for the new behaviors, assessing how organizational structures, relationships within the organization and with system partners, policies, procedures, resources allocations, and expertise are

used within the organization and whether or not these are strategically aligned to support the desired organizational changes and impacts. Inconsistency in leaders' words and deeds will likely produce confusion, frustration, and cynicism and ultimately a demise of the sought after changes.

### Questions To Consider

- Am I the person to lead this change?
- What types of attributes do I need to lead this change?
- Who should be/needs to be involved to share the leadership of the transformation?
- Am I ready to make the changes needed to transform me, the agency, the team?
- How committed are the leaders of your organization to make organizational changes needed to more effectively support community problem solving?
- Do the actions taken by the leaders of your organization support the organization's mission and vision of community problem solving or conflict with it?
- If your organization's leaders are seeking to make organizational changes, have they clearly communicated what success will look like to everyone in the organization?
- Are your daily actions aligned with the vision you are seeking to achieve?
- Build a coalition within your organization that can advocate for structural or policy changes needed within the organization for it to achieve more effective community problem solving.
- Build a personal network around you that will support the changes you need to make in your daily actions.

### Three Possible Actions To Address Barriers

- Create a network of support as you learn the role of servant leader.
- Balance the need to stay on course with the need to assure that the weakest link in the team is not falling behind.

- Demonstrate your commitment to the transformation by being the first to make changes both professionally and personally.

## 2. Tensions of style and process

Research by Everett Rogers has identified several different orientations to innovation and change.<sup>2</sup> An innovation is something new, a new practice or a new way of doing an old practice.

*Innovators and Early adopters* can't wait to try the latest idea or may even create the new idea to solve a problem

*Re-inventors* watch and learn from innovators' experiences, improving on the innovation but may become paralyzed by the desire for more analysis

*Bandwagon riders* wait to jump on board until its clear that this is an idea whose time has come and they will be left behind if they don't change

*Foot draggers* resist change because of its discomfort, the loss of the familiar it requires, the investment of resources and effort it demands

Which of these characterizes you and your organization? Does your organization seek to be the leader in your field or among the community or does it seem to be the last to try anything?

According to Rogers, an adopter's willingness and ability to adopt an innovation depends on their awareness of the innovation, interest in it and perceived need for it, evidence of its effectiveness, opportunity to try it. The level and intensity of the information needed before making the adoption balanced with the desire to maintain the present status will directly correlate with which of the four orientations one may have at any given time. Any

<sup>2</sup> Rogers, Everett. *Diffusion Of Innovations*.

team needs all four perspectives – at least initially. For example the foot dragger will slow the process and thereby assuring that there is time and opportunity to develop broad based support for both the change outcome and the process to achieve the change. The Early adopter will assure that the team stays focused and keeps moving towards chosen outcome of the change. The challenge is the level of willingness to be comfortable with this tension and give it space to be debated.

Depending on your orientation to change, you may need a variety of incentives and supports to facilitate the transformation. Each has their benefits and their weaknesses. Understanding the orientation to change of the adopter—be it you or your organization-- helps to identify what incentives you and other adopters in your organization may need to help them overcome any anxiety associated with adoption.

### Questions To Consider

- What is your orientation to change--Innovator or foot dragger?
- What life experiences have contributed to this orientation to change?
- What information and/or experiences do you need to satisfy your need for awareness about the changes and appreciate the need for the choices made about the change?
- What would meet your personal standard for evidence in order to support the choices?
- How comfortable are you with change? Are you constantly seeking out new ways of doing things or are you often reluctant to try new approaches and ideas?
- What life experiences have contributed to your orientation to change?
- What will you need to do to become better prepared to adjust to the changing environment around you?

### Three Possible Actions To Address Barriers

- Do not be afraid to change what is not working by identifying ways in which you may be expecting a different result but continue to do this same repeated actions.
- State clearly your needs ( time, experience, information) to adjust to change that may occur and work to make the unknown known.
- Do not lose sight of the reality that change happens and transformation happens- so the choice is to either be empowered and harness the change or be disempowered and let it just happen.

### 5. Time, never sufficient time

Needing time to learn the skills, practice them and experience the rewards of having a life of choices will increase your ability to influence the effect of the natural current of change.

The value of experimentation to understand impact of change is critical in the process to harness and adapt to change by choice. Recognize that transformation is a long term process, particularly in a changing environment; the effectiveness of the transformation must be measured in the ability of the organizations within the social and health service system to respond to changing conditions and bring resources and expertise to bear in solving problems.

Be aware of the milestones expected throughout the change process and celebrate the successes that result from achieving these milestones. At the same time, don't assume that upon completion of the first milestone the process is finished and you can all go back to what you were doing. Keep practicing.

### Questions To Consider

- If I do not take the time to practice - how will I enhance my skill set to meet the demands of change?
- If I do not know what my benchmarks for change are (no plan just movement), how will I know that I have successfully harnessed the change?

- Have I set the stage for exploration and put in place a process that will help to balance the pace of responding to change with the desire to stay in the moment?

#### Three Possible Actions To Address Barriers

- Understand that failure is to allow chance to guide the change and not your ability to make and implement choices.
- Form a team and come out together to practice, until it is realized that life is about practice not perfection.
- Embrace the opportunity to be in constant flow- which is change- and not stuck in the whirlwind of hopeless powerlessness.

## **Balancing the Transformation**

### *Getting On Top Of It*

The end game is to have a healthy community, which is comprised of healthy individuals and not to lose our minds in the process. We must stay whole, stay connected and stay involved. What do you think?

#### Healthy People

*“Destiny is not a matter of chance it is a matter of choice.”*

William Jennings Bryant

The world is spinning, perhaps as it always has or perhaps not. In any case, many of us find ourselves lost within the demands of work and professional commitment. We keep quiet when focusing on ourselves for concern that we would be perceived to be self center- self indulged.

However, without constantly making surely each of us is healthy emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually, we will eventually meet that dead end... that unseen, but very real, wall that blocks us from going one step further. Before that happens take time to breathe, reflect and stay whole, stay connected, stay involved.

#### *Staying whole*

Assure your ability to adjust to the demands around you...

#### *Develop structures and linkages such as...*

A place in your home that is your space, it can be of any size or shape but one that is yours to mess up when you want, rearrange when you need and most importantly just be.

#### *Adopt supportive policies and procedures such as...*

Create a plan and start small, such as you will not answer the phone after

a certain hour of the day or taking time during the day to go for a walk, workout at the gym; do something that is for your mental, emotional, physical and spiritual health.

*Secure resources such as ...*

Create a budget which is the lowest income you need to live with peace of mind... not all the extras but the amount of “stuff” to make sure you have shelter, nutrition and safety. Any extras are blessing not needs.

*Acquire appropriate expertise ...*

Learn the difference between needs and wants, begin to know yourself and become your best friend. That friendship and you will become irreplaceable.

To do this well you must find your path to believe that you have the **power** to love yourself, that you have the **political** will to make the necessary changes and that only you are in **position** to take care of yourself, do not expect anyone else to do this for you.

*Staying connected*

Assure effectiveness and alignment between your world view and that of those you work with and for by....

*Developing and nurturing positive relationships through ...*

Taking the time to get know your co-workers and appreciating them for their diversity of thought and opinions and holding out the same standard for them.

*Supporting your co-workers to become systems leaders and champions through ....*

Celebrating that we all have different roles at any one time and thereby accepting when yours is to support and not lead.

*Ensuring ownership of the work as a joint effort of all not by your strength alone through...*

Allowing all those around you to be who they are, as they are, with no need to provide approval or to even understand.



To do this well you must find your path to believe that you have the *power* to build **relationships** that connect you to others **respecting** your differences, that you have the *political* will to embrace the **role** you play and the roles of others **recognizing** how without their contribution, your contribution would be less, and that only you are in *position* to **reward** others with the gift of your time, talent and treasures and be a constant reminder to everyone of the **results** that happened because you have each other.

### *Staying Involved*

Cultivate community support for you and your dreams by ...

*Assuring implementation quality* of each step of your personal plan that engages in your community with gusto, integrating your gifts with the needs in the community in a transparent manner that transfer knowledge, attitudes and beliefs.

*Assuring effectiveness* of each step by holding yourself accountable... that is right look in the mirror and come to terms with your part in the disconnect and learn to trust who you are and who you desired yourself to be.

*Assuring the reach* of the plan brings about the change you desire with the truth that destiny is not a matter of chance it is a matter of choice.

To do this well you must find your path; to believe that the **quality** you have to provide to yourself, your co-worker, your community will move to strengthen not only your connectedness to them but theirs to you as well and thereby bringing about an enriched quality of life - embrace change and be the first to start.

### Healthy Organizations

Against the backdrop of constant change, healthy social and public service organizations are able to provide stability in addressing basic needs for themselves, their workforce, the community and the people they serve.

These organizations are able to ensure desired outcomes are being produced despite changes in population, problems and resource realities.

However, meeting the expectations of funding sources, practitioners, and the community in a constantly changing environment is not easy. Maintaining organizational stability requires the ability to stay whole, stay connected, stay involved.

### *Staying whole*

We live in an event focused society – a project misses the deadline, a machine breaks down, etc. Solutions are immediate and short-lived and do nothing to alter the fundamental structure that caused the event. Focusing on events is like wearing blinders. An agency that stays true to its vision and mission is not blind-sided by unexpected events. Therefore, healthy organizations operate within a strategic plan anchored by their vision and mission and focused on outcomes.

### **Assure your agencies ability to stay focused on outcomes not events by developing administrative structures and linkages such as....**

- Adopt supportive policies and procedures
- Secure resources that address the outcome
- Acquire appropriate expertise.

To do this well the agency .....

Utilizes its' **power** to make decisions based on targeted outcomes, **political** will to hold to the vision and mission and **position** itself to ensure the success of all involved – the funding source, the agency, their staff and the community.

### *Staying connected*

An organizational system is made up of groups of interacting, interrelated and interdependent workforces. The culture of an organization – shared values and norms – guide the behaviors of the workforce and provides a context for their aspirations and expectations. Healthy organizations ensure an equal focus be given to building and maintaining interpersonal support

and connections for an effective workforce with time allocated for solving problems in accomplishing tasks at hand not the persons involved.

**Assure agency effectiveness and alignment between the organization and its workforce by:**

- Developing and nurturing positive relationships among the workforce,
- Turn workforce members into systems leaders and champions, and
- Ensure ownership of the system among the workforce.

To do this well the agency ...

**Recognizes** that the workforce consists of individuals connected through positive **relationships** based on a **respect** for differences and an understanding of the critical **role** each plays in accomplishing intended **results** which are **rewarded** by the system. These connections will be strengthened at when there is an appreciation for the variety of perspectives available to guide the organization, that these voices are allowed to be heard and that when the dust settles, differences in styles and perspectives are not only known but accepted ;keep obtaining the vision at the forefront.

*Staying Involved*

Historically, agencies have interacted with partners in the community only when they have been assured a higher ratio of benefits to cost. However, community agencies are social units that need to operate as a system in order to achieve and sustain maximum community health outcomes. Therefore, healthy organizations view their individual agency role in the community as stewards of resources and their partnership with other agencies within a shared leadership approach.

**Cultivate community support for your agency and your outcomes when you:**

- Assure implementation quality of each strategy,
- Assure effectiveness of each strategy, and
- Assure the reach of effective strategies to assure change can be achieved.

To do this well the agency....

Ensures a high **quality of service** and **products** which are part of a comprehensive, coordinated approach that results in a higher **quality of life** for the community. This is reaffirmed through a proactive transference of information in a transparent manner that builds trust.

### Healthy Communities

As much as we all live in our own worlds at times... like it or not we are affected by and affect the world around us. We are told every day messages that we should know instinctively... do not throw trash on the street or into the air from your speeding car... do not leave a fire burning unattended... do not shoot a gun while hunting without looking around first (may be we are not told *that* one all the time).

However, it is human nature to define ourselves into smaller and smaller subsets. We may be a part of the Brotherhood of Man, a neighborhood block watch, and a Boy Scout troop all at the same time. In addition, we divide ourselves over lines of choice, American Baptist vs. Southern Baptist, blonds vs. redheads, women over 50 vs. women under 30. This constant movement to divide ourselves by what makes us different may be a useful process to understand how we stand apart from each other. However, this process to separate ourselves can also lead to disconnects from those around us, diminishing the necessary core ingredients needed for community health by staying whole, staying connected, and staying involved.

#### *Staying whole*

A healthy community is one that operates in a way that meets the needs of each member. Administrative structures and linkages that serve its leaders and not its citizens are unhealthy and need to be refocused back to its original purpose. This can be achieved by:

- Adopt supportive policies and procedures that shares *power* among the many members of the community,
- Secure resources that provide for a way of life in the community

that focuses our individual *politics* to support the same target- a life in community, and

- Acquire appropriate expertise so that the community has individuals *positioned* with specific skill sets that can assist all community members to not simply endure any change within or from without the community that affects this life in the community; but thrive in that unending change.

A community striving for this transparent structure of support and decision-making is one that has leadership which focuses on addressing community weak points, open political debates that encourages broad based participation, and health and education systems that serve the community needs.

### *Staying connected*

A connected community is one that sees the differences within its members and celebrates them not because they are separate but because they enrich the strength of the entire community.

Assure your community's effectiveness and alignment between the community system and its people by:

- Developing and nurturing the creative spirit of its citizens by appreciating the diversity of thought and perspectives,
- Turn local community members into systems leaders and champions through allowing them to be who they are and to help them to channel those talents, and
- Ensure ownership of the whole community by every individual in the community by creating an atmosphere of acceptance.

This can be accomplished when the power of the community *relationships* are focused and create both concrete visible *results* for members of the community as well as *recognizes* the work of community members that helps to the connect the community. These dynamics may be as simple as an awards night that focuses on the good stewardship of individuals or local media coverage on hometown heroes.

This can be accomplished when the politics of the community process *recognizes* the need to *respect* each others differences but also to *reward* those differences with opportunities to come together and find and celebrate common ground. These dynamics may be as simple as parades and festivals that honor heritage that are sponsored by the entire community.

This can be accomplished when the position of each member of the community is to embrace the *role* as servant to each other. These dynamics may be as simple as search nights by individuals to assure the homeless are in doors during times of severe cold or heat or participation in a neighborhood watch program where we all look out for each other.

### *Staying involved*

Cultivate community creativity and commitment that produces a quality of life that includes adequate services and products that meet basic human needs with extensive reach and effectiveness but also provides a platform for its members to engage, thrive and celebrate together. The outcome is to have an alignment between the direction of the community as whole, all the agencies, organizations and businesses that serve the community and the community members themselves to pull together not pull apart. With this total involvement, the community has chosen to hold each other accountable by each other so that the:

- Implementations of quality community services are culturally competent,
- Services and products measured effectiveness is gauged by the overall health of the community members not the overall health of a particular agency, organization or business, and
- All members of the community are able to participate and benefit from being a member of the community.

This quality of life consists of individual persons and agencies who believe they can create good and find their place within the network of personal and professional connectors. These connections liberate not suffocate the

individual spirit in a manner that respects who and what they are and want to be, while reinforcing each individual person or agencies connection to the whole community. This interconnectedness requires constant nurturing through the transparent transfer of knowledge, attitudes and beliefs that trust that we shall do no harm.

## **Transformation by Change**

In a changing environment, we can either transform our organizations and ourselves in response to change or be transformed by others. While some may prefer to leave these changes to chance, you may consider it more preferable to increase the influence you have to determine what the change looks like and the effects it has on you professionally and personally before that chance is lost. And in effect, as you are transformed and organizations are transformed so will our communities be transformed from reactors to change to finding change the only constant that forces us to grow, become and continue.