

THE CHANGE FORMULA

$$(V \times D) + F.S. > R = C$$

This is a transformational formula. In this formula the “C” stands for change. This change could be change professionally or personally. It could be change in an individual, a team or an organization. It could be changing our relationship to exercise or to our accounting system. It could be changing our marriage or changing our product launch process.

R = RESISTANCE

“R” stands for resistance. Resistance to change is the human condition. Change is almost always about letting go of the known and stepping into the unknown. It is risking releasing all that is familiar and stepping fully into the unfamiliar. Change is about letting go of control and it appears to always involve the possibility of “failure.” The kind of change we’re talking about is radical change. It is not just change at the margin. It is another way of being and doing in the world.

People are resistant to change. For most of us our resistance is “working.” We are accomplishing many of our goals and have created lives far beyond what we would have ever imagined. And, we have a sense of control. We say sense of control because one of the things we all are learning is that much of what we think is under our control actually isn’t. Our control plans are really an illusion. This resistance to change is always sourced in fear. When we think about radical change, when we imagine it, we imagine what we will put at risk if we change. This imagining brings up fear in almost everyone we’ve worked with, lots of fear. We don’t shy away from this fear and we don’t recommend that you do either. We invite you to answer the question, “If I changed what would I be afraid of?” Or put another way, “What would be at risk if I stopping being/doing the way I have been?” Typical answers to this query are:

- If I told the truth and stopped lying, I’d lose my marriage.
- If I dealt with my workaholism I’d be afraid I wouldn’t get as much done.
- If I felt my feelings I’d be afraid that I’d kill someone in anger or never stop crying or want to have sex with everyone I meet.
- If I faced the fact that I’m not living in my genius but am just getting by in my zones of excellence and competence. I’d be afraid I’d become a starving artist.
- If I began to see that the opposite of my story was as true or truer than my story, I’d be afraid that I would lose all conviction and become a wimpy relativist who didn’t stand for anything.
- If I started appreciating the people who work for me, I’d be afraid they’d lose motivation or want to be paid more.
- If I stopped living off adrenaline and started breathing, meditating and sleeping, I “know” I’d lose my edge and if I lose my edge, I’ll get eaten by the sharks around me.

If these questions, feelings and fears sound familiar, it's not surprising: everyone has resistance to change. Occasionally we meet a leader who says, "I love change. Change excites me." But what we discover is that the change that they're talking about is change that they initiate or change that allows them to stay in control. Someone might say, "I love eating at a different restaurant every night and going on a different vacation every year. Doing the same

thing more than once is boring to me. I love variety and change. I change jobs every 12-18 months because I want newness and variety. I shake up my team all the time. It keeps me and them on their toes."

What people are talking about when they speak like this is a form of change but not the kind of change we're talking about. In fact, to people who are wired this way - loving newness and variety and hating routine and boredom - the real change, change they would not be excited about and likely fearful about, would be sitting in their boredom and seeing what is on the other side of boredom. Ask them to stay at home and sit still with no distractions (computer, TV, reading material, music, etc) for 30 minutes and their skin will start to crawl. Ask them to face their compulsion to newness, variety and chaos and they will tell you they'd rather be dead.

The change that we're talking about is change at a person's core pattern and identity level. It shows up in a change in behaviors but it is much deeper than just a behavioral change. All of us have identities or personalities that have adapted as best they can to making our lives work as well as they do. Shifting these identities and the beliefs that support them brings up resistance, always.

In order to overcome this natural resistance and bring about change something has to be greater than the resistance. What is this something? The answer is $V \times D + F.S.$

V = VISION

The V in the formula stands for vision. Vision is a picture of a preferable future. If someone has a large vision, an inspirational vision, the vision alone can motivate them to face their fear and step into and through their resistance. It can motivate them to change. Great visionaries like Martin Luther King, Gandhi, Steve Jobs, Buckminster Fuller, Nelson Mandela and others can cast visions that are so inspirational that they motivate not only themselves but others to risk letting go of the familiar and the known to step into a new way of being and doing.

How big is your vision? How motivational is your dream? What is it that you want, really want, that you can't get by just playing the same game? What is your picture of a preferable future that is so compelling that it motivates you to overcome your resistance to change? It motivates you to let go of control and to step into the unknown. The answer to these questions is fundamental to whether you will be a To Me or By Me leader. By Me leaders have compelling personal visions and By Me organizations have motivational transpersonal visions that enroll others to take all the risks associated with change.

D = DISSATISFACTION WITH THE STATUS QUO

But even if you have this vision we find that it is rarely enough. Most people do not change because of vision. They change because of pain. The “D” in the change formula stands for dissatisfaction, specifically dissatisfaction with the status quo. Most people and organizations overcome the resistance to change by becoming extremely dissatisfied with the status quo. In most modern works on change theory and change management authors espouse some version of the “burning platform.” The burning platform is another way of saying we have to be dissatisfied with the status quo because it isn’t working and it won’t work in the future. Most change theorists say that one of the roles of leaders in organizations is to create this burning platform. Burning platforms are necessary in most organizations and for most people because they create fear. In fact the purpose is to create enough fear and anxiety of not changing that it outweighs the fear of changing, the resistance.

In our experience, most leaders in the To Me box avoid and anesthetize their dissatisfaction. They distract themselves from their deep dissatisfaction and pain by chasing the next bright and shining thing whether that’s a promotion, a new car, a new wife or a new challenge. If they can’t distract themselves from their dissatisfaction they numb themselves. They numb themselves with alcohol, drugs, TV, sex, exercise and all the other drifts; anything to keep from fully facing and feeling the pain. What’s interesting to observe is that the more successful a leader is the more tools they have at their disposal for distraction and numbing. This is true of organizations as well.

Relationships at home and work are often a collective collusion to deny dissatisfaction and pain. This, by the way, is one definition of co-dependency. People do this by not speaking candidly. They believe that if they really told the truth about how they’re doing and their thoughts and feelings about the other person chaos would ensue. They’re afraid they’d lose control and have to face their dissatisfaction and pain. They’d also quit protecting others in their lives from facing the truth of what is really going on in their lives. The collective collusion in organizations and homes is this, “I won’t ask you to face your truth, pain and dissatisfaction if you don’t ask me to face mine.” Often this collusion is unconscious. It’s just a given in the culture and in the relationship. It’s a way of doing business. For this reason when one person in the system breaks the pattern and starts telling the truth about themselves and others they are often ostracized and rejected because they are breaking the social contract. This, in fact, is often a gateway to allowing dissatisfaction and pain in, so that change can happen.

How about you? How is your pain level? How much dissatisfaction are you experiencing? If you’re like most people you’re still in the avoiding and numbing stage of pain management. You’re current choice is to avoid facing the truth of what’s really going on in your life. You do this in all kinds of ways and to some degree it’s working for you. But for some of you your defenses against facing reality are breaking down. Often this occurs in midlife. Some are fortunate to have reality come to them before their forties but many can insulate themselves until later in life. How are you avoiding facing your pain and dissatisfaction? What conversations are you avoiding having with important people in your life, and with yourself, so that you can maintain the status quo?

Someone once told us that life first whispers to us in a still small voice. If we don’t listen it speaks to us firmly and if we avoid those words it screams at us often in the form of a crisis or suffering. Life

tends to tickle us first, push us second and third, hit us in the head with a brickbat. We are huge fans of getting our learnings in friendly and easy ways. This is probably because, like many of you, we have been hit with some brickbats.

V and D (vision and dissatisfaction) are multiplied. The formula is $V \times D$. It's like you need 100 points of motivation to overcome R (resistance to change). This can come from 100 points of vision and 1 point of pain or ten points of each.

F.S. = FIRST STEPS

$V \times D$ are like the engine of a car. The engine creates the energy for propulsion but without a drive train the energy never gets to the wheels and the car sits still, stuck if you will. Many leaders have energy to change but no way to actualize the change and make it stick. They need F.S. ($V \times D + F.S. > R = C$). F.S. stands for "first steps." First steps are the drive train to get the energy of motivation into action. They are the "what." $V \times D$ are the "why." F.S. gives us the "what to do and how to do it".

In the original change formula created by Beckhard and Gleicher, and refined by Dannemiller, F.S. was a multiplier just like V and D. So the formula was $V \times D \times F.S. > R = C$. In our experience, this is not the case. First steps are not equal to vision and pain in their efficacy for overcoming resistance. They are necessary but not equal.

Many people want to talk about the "what" and "how" of change. If you don't believe this just go to a local book store and look at books on dieting. These books are filled with the latest F.S: loads of practical and powerful first steps. But the simple fact of the matter is that for most people it is not the F.S. of weight loss that is missing. It is the V and D. It doesn't mean that they don't have some vision and dissatisfaction, they do. But it is simply not enough. The world is filled with many great "how to" books on personal transformation and leadership but if these books require real change in a person or an organization they remain as good ideas with little actual traction, and even less results.

Often when we are coaching leaders they ask for the "how." The statement is something like this, "I'd like to change but I don't know how to change." We never trust this statement. Our experience is that where there is real willingness the how makes itself known. People avoid facing their lack of willingness by asking "how" questions. This is a subtle and serious trap because it keeps people thinking that they really want to change - if they only knew how - and not facing their real resistance to change.

WILLINGNESS TO CHANGE

Willingness is the whole game. Being willing to change is very different from knowing how to change, or further still, truly wanting to change. Many, many people want to change. Most people are not willing to change. Stop and let this soak in.

What in your life do you want to change? Make a list.

Now ask yourself are you willing to change? Are you really willing to change?

At this point you might find yourself saying, “I’m willing but I don’t know how?” And to this we’d say not knowing how is simply an excuse to not face your unwillingness. And if you’re like many people we work with you’d get angry when we say this, really angry. But in our experience, we don’t do ourselves or anyone else any favors by giving them temporary relief from their unwillingness to face their unwillingness. In fact, we think that one of the core commitments of a great coach is lovingly holding pressure to support others to face their unwillingness.

Remember the ego/identity is a powerful thing (and that’s good). It doesn’t want to let go of control. It doesn’t want to step into the unknown. It will do anything to keep from letting go of control because it believes that control equals security and safety. One of the ways it most likes to stay in control is to allow us to think we’re willing to change when in actuality we’re really not.

Another thing you might hear yourself saying is, “I’ll try. I’ll try to change.” Hale Dwoskin, our mentor and friend, says that “trying is wanting credit for something you never intend to do.” So true. When asked by friends if you’ll stop by after work for drink you find yourself saying, “I’ve got a lot to do before I leave, and my kid is not feeling well, but I’ll try to stop by.” You want credit from your friends for “trying” but you actually, at a deep level, never intend to stop by. You might even want to stop by, but the reality is that you’re unwilling to stop by.

This is such a powerful part of our work that we took the 15 Commitments and turned them into willingness questions. When we coach leaders and teams we often ask them these specific willingness questions in order to support them in facing their unwillingness to change. We, and they, find this to be of great service. In fact, we love it and see it as a very powerful stance when a person owns their unwillingness and simply says, “I’m unwilling.”

Think of an issue in your life. One that you think you would like to change, you might even really want to change. Read the questions below slowly. Let them sink in and see if you have a YES to each of them.

- Are you willing to take 100% responsibility (not more or less than 100% responsibility) for this issue? Are you willing to stop blaming and criticizing others and yourself?
- Are you willing to let go of being right? Are you willing to get more interested in learning than defending your ego?
- Are you willing to feel all of your authentic feelings (fear, anger, sadness, joy, sexual feelings)?
- Are you willing to reveal to others all of your withholds? Are you willing to speak unarguably? Are you willing to listen consciously to others?
- Are you willing to stop all gossip about this issue? Are you willing to clear up all past issues with all relevant parties using the clearing model?
- Are you willing to clean up all broken agreements related to this issue? Are you willing to renegotiate all agreements related to this issue that you no longer have a whole body yes to keeping? Are you willing to only make agreements about which you have a whole body yes and around which you have control?
- Are you willing to shift from entitlement to appreciation about this issue? Are you willing to place your attention on how this issue is here for your learning? Are you willing to let go of all past resentment and replace it with genuine appreciation?
- Are you willing to let go primarily living in your zones of incompetence, competence or excellence? Are you willing to prioritize living in your genius?
- Are you willing to let go of taking this issue seriously? Are you willing to treat this issue lightly and to play with it? Are you willing to have this issue resolve easefully and effortlessly? Are you willing to honor your rhythms of rest and renewal, sprint and recovery around this issue?
- Are you willing to see that the opposite of your story is as true or truer than your story?
- Are you willing to welcome and release all wanting of approval, control and security? Are you willing to experience no lack of approval, control and security? Are you willing to let go of seeking approval, control and security from the outside?
- Are you willing to let go of beliefs in scarcity? Are you willing to experience that you have enough of everything? Are you willing to quit playing a zero sum game regarding this issue?
- Are you willing to see that everyone and everything related to this issue are your allies?
- Are you willing to let go of win/lose (competing) and lose/lose (compromising) views regarding this issue? Are you willing to create authentic win for all resolutions for this issue?
- Are you willing to be the resolution that you are seeking regarding this issue?

CONCLUSION

Any place where you have anything other than a whole body YES is a lack of willingness. Lack of willingness is not a bad thing. The ego will want to make it a bad thing. It is not. It is just where you are and it's perfect. BUT if we don't face and own our unwillingness we can stay stuck forever. We call it being in limbo: thinking we are willing and not facing that we are really more committed to staying where we are than to shifting. We tell leaders all the time that the first step to willingness is owning, fully owning, our unwillingness.

When we own our unwillingness, our resistance, we see that we simply need more motivation; more vision or dissatisfaction. This is not a problem. It is just what is so in this now moment. Willingness is actually no better than unwillingness just as By Me is no better than To Me. They are just different states of consciousness and whatever state you're in, we believe it is perfect.

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