

WHAT IS YOUR CHANGE STYLE PREFERENCE?

As a leader, you will inevitably be responsible for implementing change. It may be a large-scale organizational change requiring shareholder approval or an all-out, urgently needed transformation that will propel you ahead of your competition. Or it may be a relatively minor change to increase productivity in your small business.

According to [McKinsey's recent Global Survey](#) on the success of large-scale change efforts only 37% of respondents report successful implementations.

Not surprisingly, the consistent aspects throughout successful change efforts almost always points back to strong leadership and communication that engenders employee buy-in. Our own experience with helping leaders successfully implement change supports this. We also find that leaders who know themselves – how they approach change and understand that their employees may not respond to change in the same way is invaluable. It opens the door to powerful, constructive two-way communication and commitment.

The Change Style Indicator is an excellent assessment tool for understanding your style and preference in approaching change. It can also be used with employees. It creates a starting point on the road to change. And if used with your employees, you can ensure your own style works with the myriad of conflicting change style preferences you will inevitably encounter among your workforce.

“Change cannot be put on people. The best way to instill change is to do it with them. Create it with them.”

– Lisa Bodel

Your change style is only part of the formula for taking change from concept to reality. Understanding your change style, and that of your employees falls under the heading of Change Management. Understanding the stages of transition and how each change style might respond is Change Leadership.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT AND CHANGE LEADERSHIP

The terms are often used interchangeably but they are quite different. Change management is something you do. Change leadership is something you feel. It's critical that leaders both lead and manage change, often while simultaneously keeping the way business has always been done moving forward.

- **Change management** on a broad scale is a logical, transactional process. It's all about planning, structures, systems, broad communication and detailed organization. It's an outside-in process
- **Change leadership** on any scale is a psychological and emotional process. It's all about the trust, caring, and honest communications that underlie all successful human relationships. It's an inside-out process

WHAT IS YOUR CHANGE STYLE PREFERENCE?

The Change Style Indicator*

The Right Reflection® is certified to use The Change Style Indicator® to identify an individual's preferred style in approaching change. It provides leaders at all levels with insights on personal preferences for managing through change and provides context for how those around them might perceive and respond to their preferred style. It is most effective when it is administered to the leader and their team with a full debrief on the results. However, you can also take a quick look at this summary to identify your own style and better understand the challenge of working with different styles that are likely to be present across the team.



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The Change Style Indicator identifies three distinct styles preferences for working through change: Conservers, Pragmatists and Originators.

Conservers	Pragmatists	Originators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accept the structure• Prefer change that is incremental	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore the structure• Prefer change that is functional	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Challenge the structure• Prefer change that is expansive

Following is a more comprehensive description of each:



WHEN FACING CHANGE, **CONSERVERS:**

- Generally appear deliberate, disciplined, and organized
- Prefer change that maintains current structure
- May operate from conventional assumptions
- Enjoy predictability
- May appear cautious and inflexible
- May focus on details and the routine
- Honor tradition and established practice



WHEN FACING CHANGE, **PRAGMATISTS:**

- May appear practical, agreeable, flexible
- Prefer change that emphasizes workable outcomes
- Are more focused on results than structure
- Operate as mediators and catalyst for understanding
- Are open to both sides of an argument
- May take more of a middle-of-the-road approach
- Appear more team-oriented



WHEN FACING CHANGE, **ORIGINATORS:**

- May appear unorganized, undisciplined, unconventional and spontaneous
- Prefer change that challenges current structure
- Will likely challenge accepted assumptions
- Enjoy risk and uncertainty
- May be impractical and miss important details
- May appear as visionary and systemic in their thinking
- Can treat accepted policies and procedures with little regard

WHAT WORDS CAME TO MIND?

If you were able to identify your own change style preference based on the descriptions above, what were your initial reactions as you read about the other styles? For example, if you're an Originator, did the Conserver description bring to mind words like unimaginative and bureaucratic? If you're a Conserver, did the Originator description bring to mind words like impulsive and disorganized? And if you are either an Originator or Conserver, what words came up when thinking about the Pragmatist? Indecisive? Noncommittal? If any of these scenarios match your thinking, you're not alone. In fact, here are some of the typical perceptions of each style:

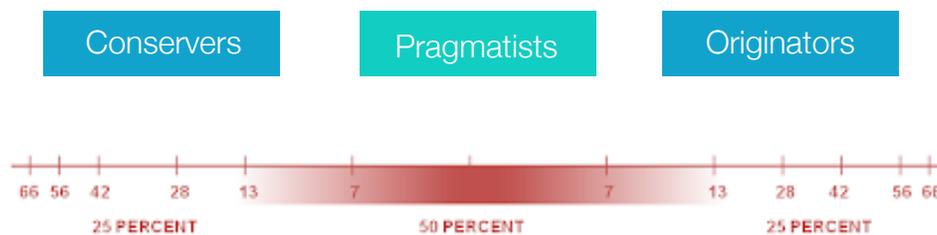
Originators see conservers as dogmatic, bureaucratic yielding to authority, having their head in the sand, preferring the status quo and lacking new ideas.

Conservers see originators as divisive, impulsive, lacking appreciation of tested ways of getting things done, not finishing projects or following through, and wanting change for its own sake.

Conservers and Originators see Pragmatists as compromising, mediating, Indecisive, easily influenced, noncommittal, and hiding behind the team.

THE TEAM

Not surprisingly, the change style continuum looks like this and the closer you and your team are to this distribution the more balanced you will be in ensuring that the change happens and issues that impede progress are surfaced early



Studies show that regardless of change style distribution, the shared results of the The Change Style Indicator creates an appreciation for change-style diversity across the whole team and reinforces the fact that there is no right or wrong change style preference. While the first summary briefly captured each style, the chart below summarizes the positive aspects each style can contribute to a successful change effort. For example, most change initiatives can benefit from making sure business as usual isn't unnecessarily disrupted during the change and to expanding the possibilities for implementing change. Conservers

and Originators can help both happen, while Pragmatists can keep everyone focused on shared objectives.

Conservers	Pragmatists	Originators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer to Keep Current Structure Smoothly • Focus on Relationships • Encourage Building on What is Already Working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer Balanced Inquiry • Focus on Shared Objectives • Encourage Looking at the Current Circumstances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer to Challenge Accepted Structure • Focus on The Task • Encourage Exploring New Possibilities

Understanding each other's change style preference can make a crucial difference between a successful and a failed change initiative. Nonetheless, even armed with knowledge, conflicts between leaders and their team and among the team itself can still arise. Here are some tips for staying flexible and moving forward when conflicts arise:

- Consult with the person you believe to have a change style different from yours before proceeding.
- Make efforts to understand the perspectives of those with styles other than your own.
- Imagine putting on a hat of another style
- Solicit feedback and suggestions
- Step back and be aware of your initial reaction in a situation, especially when you are aware of having an emotional response.

NAVIGATING CHANGE - THE 4 STAGES OF TRANSITION

As mentioned earlier, Change Management and Change Leadership differ. Change management is event driven and subject to scheduled steps. Change leadership is psychological and emotional. It's a transition. It happens gradually and differs from person to person. Defined below is the difference between Change and Transition. Successful change will always have both.

CHANGE

- An event - episodic
- Understood in terms of a beginning or starting something
- Happens in a specific time frame – time bound
- External and open for others to see

TRANSITION

- Psychological and emotional
- Understood in terms of ending or letting go
- Happens gradually and differs from person to person
- Internally and not always observable

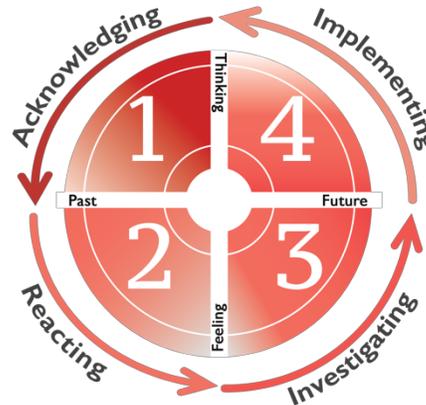
In an interview with McKinsey and Company, Stanford professor and author Chip Heath who wrote “Switch - How to Change Things When Change Is Hard” made a very strong case for paying attention to the emotional side of change:

“The core idea is that there are two sides to the way human beings think about any issue. There’s the rational, analytical, problem-solving side of our brains, which may think, “I need to eat less.” But there’s an emotional side that’s addicted to impulse or comfortable routines, and that side wants a cookie. At work, the rational side may say that the company needs to go in a different direction. But the emotional side is comfortable with the old ways of thinking and selling, and it has great anxiety about whether the company can change successfully.”

Research by Discovery Learning identified 4 distinct phases of transition:

1. Acknowledging
2. Reacting
3. Investigating
4. Implementing

Each has its own unique and valuable purpose. Knowing about these phases and responding to each appropriately will ensure that your change effort is successful and enduring.



STAGE 1 – ACKNOWLEDGING

This stage is the beginning of change and the process of becoming aware. Denial is common so information is critical. This stage is the beginning of building an understanding of need for and scope of the change.

Beginning Mindset: Comfort and Control

PEOPLE THINK	PEOPLE REACT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I’m in control. • I’m satisfied. • I’m doing okay. • I’m doing my job. • Hey, everything is good! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surprise • Uncertainty • Disorientation • Confusion • Disbelief



STAGE 2 – REACTING

Emotions like sadness and anxiety emerge in stage 2 and patience is critical in order to build acceptance and commitment

Beginning Mindset: Confusion, Disbelief, Disorientation

PEOPLE THINK

- I'm anxious
- I've lost control
- I'm worried
- I'm tired
- Hey, everything is in chaos!

PEOPLE REACT

- Sadness
- Shock
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Weariness



STAGE 3 – INVESTIGATING

This stage begins after feelings are vetted. Options are explored and anticipation is common. The process of exploring options begins. Honesty from leadership is critical to building commitment to the new reality.

Beginning Mindset: Openness to inquiry and new possibilities

PEOPLE THINK

- I'm skeptical.
- I'm encouraged.
- I'm searching for...
- I have expectations of...
- Hey, progress is being made!

PEOPLE REACT

- Curiosity
- Hope
- Caution
- Openness
- Inquisitiveness



STAGE 4 – IMPLEMENTING

This final stage begins after a direction is defined. Learning is expected and buy-in is critical to build new skills, behaviors and norms

Beginning Mindset: Readiness to learn and accommodate

PEOPLE THINK

- I'm back on track
- I'm encouraged.
- I'm more optimistic
- I'm energized
- Hey, I made it!

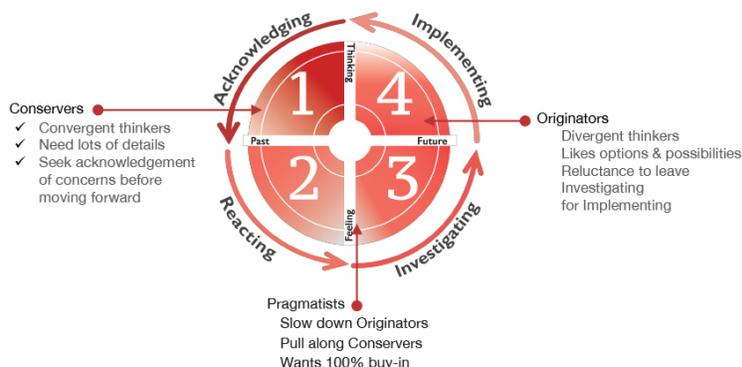
PEOPLE REACT

- Satisfaction
- Confidence
- Purpose
- Intention
- Commitment

Just as each of the 4 stages have their own unique characteristics, the leader's response to each must be appropriate for each transition phase.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Transition phases can become messy and overlap depending on each individual's change style. The example below demonstrates how the 3 change styles may respond in various transition phases.



Understanding your *change style* and that of your employees will help you better manage change. Understanding the *4 transition phases of change* and how each style responds within each phase, will help you better lead change. This knowledge isn't all encompassing. Successful change initiatives are multi-layered, occur over time and are unique to the goal, the company, the leader and the employees.

In a detailed [McKinsey Study](#) on organization and culture change, the researchers emphasize that successful change is more likely to occur in companies that engage in practices that "include communicating effectively, leading actively, empowering employees, and creating an environment of continuous improvement." However, finding that starting point for your change journey can be the most difficult step. We think understanding your own change style preference and that of your team is a very powerful way to get started. This is knowledge that will carry you through each critical phase of the transition and allow you to anticipate and address problems before they become obstacles to successful change.

The Right Reflection® is certified in administering the **Change Style Indicator**. *If you wish to take the assessment and receive detailed feedback on how to lead your change initiative, please contact me:*

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