



Change Ability

Individual transformation
is the key to organizational
improvement

In 50 Words Or Less

- Accelerated change is the new normal in quality.
- Quality leaders' expertise in standardizing processes and establishing continuous improvement cultures must be complemented with transformation proficiency.
- Individual transformation is at the heart of organizational change, as individual spirits combine to form creative energy and leverage tsunamis of change.

AS COMPLEX SOCIAL, economic, technological and environmental forces converge at an accelerated pace, they are transforming the workplace, the marketplace—indeed, the world—and radically shifting the rules of the game for organizations everywhere.

Just as we begin to understand the implications of the latest tsunami of change, another giant wave is forming. We may feel increasingly frustrated in our inability—as individuals and as leaders—to anticipate the consequences, to shape the outcomes, and to control our own destinies and those of our organizations.



by Stephen K. Hacker

In this complex web of interdependency, our individual decisions have ramifications we might never imagine nor intend because there are so many more of us and we are connected in ways unique in human history. Developments on the other side of the world or in a different industry may threaten our jobs and businesses or offer unprecedented opportunities. Technology transforms how we work, and the learning curve only grows steeper. Sweeping economic change and societal trends are upending our expectations of family life and career.

In the face of these tsunamis of change, many of our organizations remain mired in their current states, frozen in old mind-sets, paralyzed by resistance to change and fighting each major wave of change as if it was a special cause. Leaders are unsure whether their organizations have the resolve to do the difficult work of transformation and remake themselves in the light of a new vision of their value in a new world.

Some organizations find the will to take action, but relatively few have mastered the ability to transform themselves in the face of these accelerated forces and to reliably and repeatedly enact radical change, in order to generate breakthrough results in effectiveness and performance.

Most respond piecemeal, adopting one popular performance improvement and leadership trend after another, which often leads to fragmented efforts, short-lived benefits and a dispirited workforce struggling to meet management's ever-increasing expectations.

The focus of many change efforts at the organizational level has largely been limited to organizational subsystems and key processes—using lean, Six Sigma, value stream analysis and other methods for incremental improvement—with the emphasis on existing problems.

Likewise, standardization efforts have been introduced to reduce variation and strengthen existing systems. Well-represented in business and professional literature, and globally in communities of practice, these approaches

work from within the existing vision of the organization. They are inherently inadequate for stimulating the level of group and individual creativity, innovation and passion needed to envision new opportunities inherent in these external tsunamis and to engage the entire workforce in the co-creation of a new future.

Transformational change represents a leap that results in a significant, step-function shift in the underlying system itself that then generates breakthrough results. Figure 1 illustrates the step-function shift associated with transformation compared with standardization or incremental improvement. The degree of transformation can be objectively observed and determined from the change in results generated by the individual or group.

The root of transformation

An expanding and important movement toward enrolling leaders as catalysts of significant change is clearly visible and centered mostly on the individual leader as the visionary for his or her group who mentors and coaches direct reports.

But transformation requires more than an effort by a charismatic leader with strong personal beliefs and practices. Individual employees are often left out of the equation. They may receive skill instruction—competency-based training and development that, on its own, does not prepare them to re-envision their work and make the deep personal changes needed to be more effective in a radically altered environment.

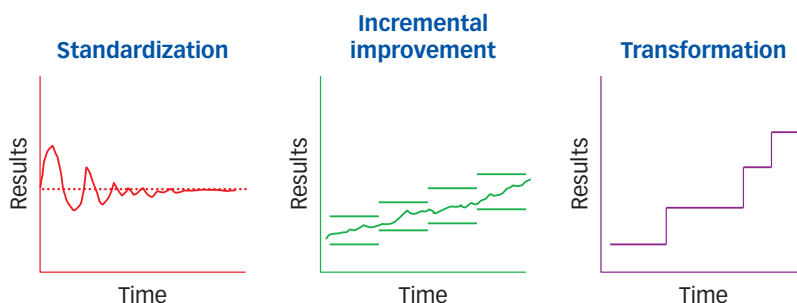
Building on the creative spirit of each individual joined with others is at the heart of transforming organizations so they don't just weather forces of change, but also capitalize on the immense energy inherent in the surge. It is time to welcome the whole person into the workforce—body, mind and spirit.

But to some, the mere mention of individual spirit can produce flushed faces concerned about imaginary

HR issues. The ease of discussing team spirit or *esprit de corps* is not replicated on the individual level. I have three words of advice to such leaders: Get over it. Having empowered spirits at work that are collectively focused on creating value-added services and products for the changing world is the new imperative.

Aside from the observable evidence it generates, transformation also has a subjective aspect in shifting internal reality. In the absence of awareness and consciousness, an individu-

Strategies for organizational work / FIGURE 1



al's external and internal realities are largely shaped by the body and mind-sets, which don't necessarily serve the best interests of the person, organization, community or society.

Learning to access spirit taps into a greater source of wisdom, brings more choices for how to act in the world and unleashes creative energy for building a new future aligned with one's purpose in the world and in work. In an unawakened (zombie) state of unconscious perceptions and reactions, the body-mind (in personal and collective senses) uses spirit as its instrument. Current beliefs or mind-sets direct the generative power of spirit toward preserving this constrained—and distorted—perception of reality.

With successive cycles of transformation, spirit that is informed by purpose increasingly becomes the driving force in work and organizational life, the interpreter of current reality and the architect of the desired future.

Without transformation at the individual level, organizational transformation is not possible. Beyond the isolated, individual work offered by some organizations, radical change on a broad scale requires that individual transformation be addressed in the context of transforming the individual's relationship to his or her work group (teams and other organizational entities, for example), and be integrated with a method for whole system transformation.

Effective individual and collective transformation in the workplace is built on three central ideas:

1. Radical improvement is possible only through a transformation rooted in expanding consciousness and bringing forth the strength of individual spirit, not just intellect. Purpose and vision then can be drawn from deeper wisdom and fueled from a larger source of creative energy—spirit-generated creativity.
2. Radical improvement in collective performance is not a top-down phenomenon. Rather, it hinges on individual members embracing transformation in their own lives and finding alignment between their own and the group's purpose, vision and values. Individual, team and organizational transformation are interdependent—thus, life planning is integral to team and organizational effectiveness.
3. Radical improvement can be implemented, sustained and repeated if it is pursued through a holistic, systematic yet practical framework that also incorporates solid processes for planning and implementing change and measuring results.

The work within the self begins with inquiry and

What is transformation?

The marked change in the nature or function of organizational systems creating discontinuous, step-function improvement in sought-after result areas.



discovery in the four spheres of transformation: being, knowing, relating and generating. These represent big areas for inquiry:

1. **Being.** Who are you? Why are you here? For what purpose do you exist? To have a meaningful purpose is an exceptionally strong motivating force that taps the deep well of spirit available to each of us. Each of us must discover our own answer through a uniquely personal search. Doing so often entails gaining a deeper understanding of the differences between being, doing and having, and the role each plays in our lives.
2. **Knowing.** What do you know? How did you come to know this? What is unknown to you? This entails examining what has been learned and how we learned it. What we know is influenced by how we were taught to think—not only within family, but also through societal biases for particular approaches to knowledge gathering, such as dominance of left-brain thinking.
3. **Relating.** What meaning do you attach to the various aspects of life, including work? Some of the key areas to explore in this sphere are relationships to possessions and money; accomplishment and failure; body, personal and professional relationships; and personal and work history. By understanding the meaning each uniquely holds, we begin to detect the shape and shadows of hidden mental stances and mind-sets behind our actions and responses.
4. **Generating.** What results have you created? What results do you want to create? We mobilize energy to take actions, which have outcomes that create our reality. Understanding how to direct creative energy toward better outcomes and a new future begins with honestly assessing what results we have already created in work and life, and how they compare with the results we want to create—our purpose for being here and the effect we want to have in the world. The gap between the two is the measure of our current level of effectiveness. The degree of present consciousness affects how much of a generative force each of us can be in the world.

The outcomes of individual, team and organizational actions rest on the intent or purpose behind the actions that produced the outcomes. The more conscious we are

of who we really are, and what we are intended to accomplish in our lives and our work, the greater the power that drives our actions. We are individually and collectively much more effective in the results we produce.

Likewise, the best intentions will not consistently produce the desired results unless hidden barriers to change are removed. Intentions (vision) are translated into meaningful plans for action, and executed with commitment and discipline, and their results are consistently and carefully measured and reviewed.

Together, the following elements comprise a high-level roadmap of transformation, which underpins the specific process for awakening at the individual and collective levels:

- **Developing and expanding consciousness.** Reflect on past experience and current results to expand consciousness, and develop an ever-increasing self-awareness about the effectiveness of individual and collective actions.
- **Defining the spirit.** Make and deepen a profound connection with spirit, discovering and refining the understanding of purpose. Discover in what way personal vision is aligned with shared purpose.
- **Casting vision.** Envision what individual or collective spirit will create in the world at this point to best express that purpose. In successive cycles of transformation, deepening awareness and increased effectiveness may lead to a new understanding of purpose and a re-envisioning of work and how to do it.
- **Choosing productive mind-sets.** Identify and replace nonproductive mind-sets and mental stances that are barriers to achieving this vision with more productive mind-sets that more fully align the creative energy of spirit with vision.

- **Living in the experience.** Plan what actions to take, execute the plan and measure the results or changes in effectiveness, thus internalizing key lessons, and positioning the individual and group for new rounds of transformational change.

Personal and group transformation are concerned with expanding consciousness—first individually and then collectively—to tap the creative potential of spirit, and allowing individuals, teams and organizations to be more powerful in fulfilling their purpose.

The goal is not to learn how to adjust to what the world delivers to our door, but rather to become an active force in shaping a new reality and a new future from among unlimited choices. We must deeply understand ourselves, our organizations and the connections among them, and consciously align our individual and collective energies toward creating the future we desire.

Looking ahead

Although transformation of self is essential to radically shifting an organization's performance, there are benchmarked methods to build high-performance units, plan and implement transformative initiatives, design contemporary measurement systems, build generative dialogue cultures to enable the collective process and even address societywide opportunities.

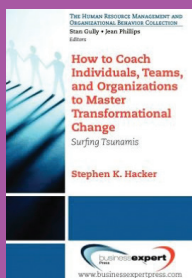
Transformation science crosses over to many arenas of thought and practice—from vision casting and leadership to individual-group-organizational psychology, systems engineering and new management approaches.

There is much work ahead. Developing expertise in how to lead transformation will produce a skill set increasingly sought after.

So, don't just return to the beach believing the last tsunami of change was an aberrant occurrence. Start by breaking into a new level of performance for self, and then join with others to explore how to best surf the tsunamis of change. **QP**

WAVES OF CHANGE

Transformational coaching by a person who has personally experienced transformation and has mastered a specific coaching method is a powerful catalyst for holistic change. Learn a proven approach for creating transformative change on an individual and collective scale in Stephen K. Hacker's book, *How to Coach Individuals, Teams, and Organizations: Surfing Tsunamis* (Business Expert Press, 2012), available in the ASQ Quality Press bookstore at www.asq.org/quality-press.



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