

Change Management

PROFIL has edited a seven-part series of articles on change management. By means of a fictive change-project, the articles shall shed light on the various aspects of this topic. They accompany the protagonist Karla Strittmatter, who is in charge of rendering eight branches of her division competitive.



The Author

Astrid E. Frischknecht works as a consultant for management and organisational development at the SBB (Swiss Federal Railways). Her main focus lies on coaching executive managers, teams, and groups; and guiding team development, gender management, and moderation. As an economist, she worked in several management posts and as a journalist, inter alia for the Swiss news magazines *10vor10*, *SF DRS Next* and the Swiss national newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT – PART 1

Triangular Imbalance

Managing change with change management

Every day, you and your colleagues work hard to provide customers with faster trains, better connections, and improved services. There are many signs that the SBB as an enterprise are thriving more than ever: Divisionalisation, internationalisation, reorganisation, growth, and competition. Only superlatives can describe the achievements of the last two to three years. We constantly experience change – whether we want it or not.

Change Management:

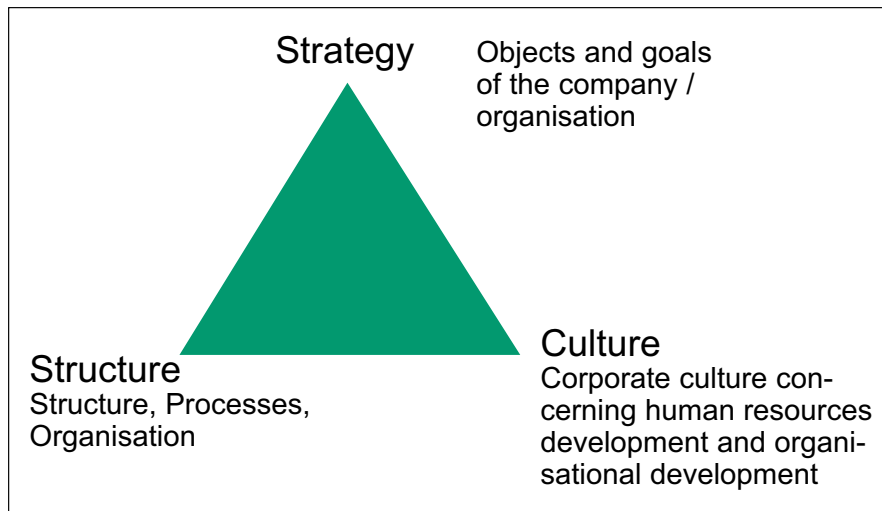
What Are We Prepared For?

Management knows several fundamentally different methods in dealing with change and development. They range from the strict implementation of decisions, to the specific information of those involved, to a guided process involving all those who are affected. Managers dispose different competencies to steer continuative changes alongside daily affairs. The fact that they themselves are always affected by the changes as well demands that a manager have a great deal of reflecting power.

A Common Vision

According to our understanding, an enterprise develops in three dimensions: strategy, structure, and culture (see graph page 2). These are

closely connected; changes in one of the dimensions inevitably “resonate” in others. Decisions based on a one-dimensional logic should thus be avoided: If only one “corner” is observed and developed, this will cause imbalance in the triangle. In fact, the developments of all three dimensions have to be linked and harmonised in such a way that a new, adapted balance results in the system. In this way, seemingly unavoidable concomitants of change – fear, insecurity, confusion, and resistance – can be anticipated and addressed in the chance process. As a result, these concomitants do not interfere with or put into question the achievement of objectives. It is essential to embark on a strategy that allows for a successful project realization but that also involves those affected. In order to cope with the complexities of such a matter, managers often seek assistance. A change consultant guides the actual change process and assures the success of the undertaking while focussing on the question of “how”. The success of such projects depends on whether, in addition to aspects concerning the content (“what”: automatisisation, expanding, reorganisation, economisation), there is room for the involvement, as well as adaptation, of affected employees. Or,



Source: Königswieser et al, 2001: SIMsalabim, Systemisches IntegrationsManagement (ISBN 3-608-94302-1).

viewed from another perspective, success depends on whether the necessary resources for involving employees are provided.

Involve People:

If development and change are part of our every-day life, managers should master changes well. However, according to change management expert Peter Senge, roughly two thirds of all larger change processes in companies fail to produce the desired positive effects. This failure is mainly due to the fact that despite new structures, people retain their old thought patterns and behaviours. It is a fact that the

planning of a change process by means of the understanding and tools of conventional project management isn't always enough. This is connected to the fact that people are the most important, profitable factor; changes have to be supported by people.

You and your 28,000 colleagues are also used to undergoing and managing development privately. Whether a person adapts to external changes internally as well depends strongly on how integrated she or he feels. If the conditions necessary for integration in the process of change are not

allowed for, you have to anticipate resistance. It usually costs more in time, resources, and productivity to overcome these resistances than to involve all those affected right from the start.

Nevertheless, it takes time and space to turn affected employees into involved ones. Especially when dealing with topics that bring about changes in your own profession, changes have to be implemented responsibly. In order that you succeed, change agents and experts are at your disposal. ■

CHANGE MANAGEMENT – PART 2

“Blind Man’s Bluff” or Change Management

Clarifying the mandate

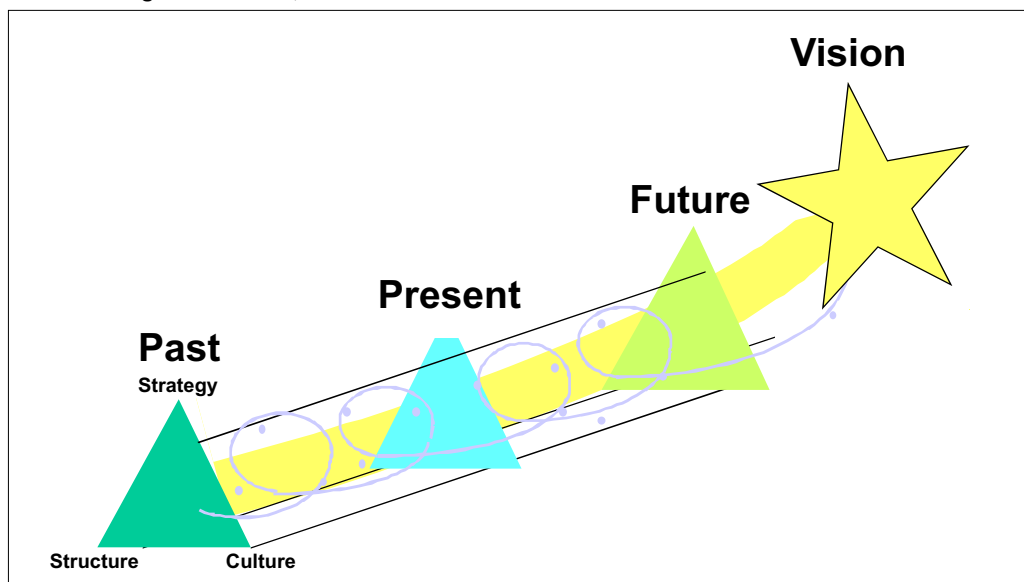
Karla Strittmatter stands still for a moment, the doorknob to the conference room still in her right hand. Then she lets go and walks through the corridor, takes the elevator to the 4th floor, goes to her room, and sits down at the open window.

This morning, she was asked to attend an unscheduled meeting of her division. The assistant to the division manager called her. “Please come to our conference room at 3.30 p.m. It’s about the strategic alignment of our business division. You don’t have to prepare yourself,” he told her. The call had pleased her, and at the same time the short notice of it had unnerved her. “What are the problems to be dealt with?” she asked herself, but other than assumptions and speculations, nothing concrete came into her mind. She informed her boss about her absence in the afternoon and asked him about his assumptions. He also didn’t know anything exact, and so she wasn’t able to prepare herself.

She turned 32 roughly a month ago, and got the job at the SBB just about one year ago. Her colleagues have told her a lot about the past years – about the many changes that came upon them suddenly, and which were usually beyond their comprehension. “Either you join in, or you’re out,” they said. Karla Strittmatter didn’t worry. She loved changes.

The spring air refreshes her and helps her sort out her thoughts. At this moment she understands the meaning of what her colleagues had told her. “We would like to give you the opportunity of managing this ambitious project. We are convinced that you will succeed in accomplishing the envisaged change process,” she still hears the voice of the division manager say. “The eight branches have to be made competitive, and you should assume the project management.” Competitive – sounds good. She thinks of the potency of a strong vision (see adjacent graph).

Different from strategy formation, the SIM (systems integration management) model views visionary work as a second element; it is the second essential driving force in development processes. Vision denominates a basic idealistic self-perception of the organisation and its staff, e.g., its competitiveness. It weaves in past, present, and future. As a lodestar, a vision ought to point the way forwards. Source: Königswieser et. al., 2001



“Not a bad job, this project management,” she thinks. She’s leaning back in her office chair and reflects on a successful project conclusion: “Do we make a party for all eight branches, or do we celebrate each on its own? How does this success feel? For whom is it a success if the branches are competitive? What does ‘competitive’ actually mean? And how do you identify competitiveness?” She can’t get this

Potential questions and leads to clarify the mandate

- Which problem must be solved?
- What led to the current situation?
- How do the involved or affected persons view the current situation? Do they consider it problematic as well? What is the extent of their psychological stress and/or willingness to change?"
- Project objectives (desired final state): What do we want to achieve? Why? How do we identify the achievement of objectives? Who measures the achievement of objectives (initiator, clients, suppliers, staff, and employees)?
- How do we measure success? How do outsiders recognize it?
- Who could put the objectives into question? Who could support them?
- What has been done so far to achieve the goals or to solve the problem, respectively?
- Are there any ideas on deadlines and requirements?
- What persons, groups, and committees are involved? Who has to be involved in any case? Who would be put off if he/she was not involved?
- What mustn't happen in any case?
- What do we want to maintain concerning the current organisation?
- Which expectations does the project manager have to live up to? Why has she/he been chosen?
- What would happen if nothing was changed?

last question out of her mind. She thinks about it the whole evening and wonders about the visible signs of competitiveness. The next morning, while she is brushing her teeth, she knows what step to take next.

Callbacks

She has just locked her bicycle, put her key in her pocket, and looked towards the path when she sees him.

"Ask him just now," she thinks "You have to take this opportunity. You know his calendar is always full. He'll never have time for you otherwise." Her inner voice is pressing her. She greets the division manager, and the pressing voice is silent.

"Good morning. I have a couple of open questions concerning this change project. I'd like to clarify them with you." He's looking at her. For a moment, she is insecure. Is it too bold to ask him just like this for an appointment, before he has even been to his office? He smiles and replies "I'm glad to see that you've already mentally started with your work. I'll suggest a time for a meeting once I've been to my office. I'd be glad if it was rather soon."

"Yes," she says and adds, "without a meeting to clarify the specifics of the project, where we define our notions of success and failure, a change project quickly becomes a blind man's bluff game. And this seems a bit too risky for me." He nods. "I'm glad you have taken over the project management for this. You'll get a date proposal in a quarter of an hour."

Karla Strittmatter says goodbye and goes to her office. And sure enough, within 15 minutes she gets

an appointment with the initiator of the change project, i.e., the division manager. To prepare herself for the right questions, she re-reads the SIM-Model by Königswieser, refreshes in her mind the seven core elements of Glas' theory (see PE-MOE homepage), and makes a checklist on the details to clarify concerning her mandate and other preliminaries. For this appointment, she can prepare herself.

She asks herself what level of information the eight branches have. They are located in different parts of Switzerland, and the business division does not have an internal bulletin. What she already knows is that the branch managers and the division manager get together three times a year for an all-day meeting, and that a couple of changes have already occurred. That is to say, she has found a couple of different versions of the division organisation chart. And the most recent one is in fact already out-dated. The thought suggests itself: "I wonder how you feel when changes don't cause satisfaction but frustration?" Karla can only guess and prepares herself mentally. It won't be easy.

The more important thing to do is to clarify matters right from the beginning, especially the mutual understanding of mission and roles between her and the division manager. For now, she is project manager and thus responsible for the success of a change project of a temporary nature. That means that she will put herself out for a fair implementation of the changes for the staff. She wonders whether her conceptions are in accordance with those of the division manager. ■

Reference:

Königswieser et al. (2001): SIM-salabim, Systemisches Integrationsmanagement (ISBN 3-608-94302-1)

CHANGE MANAGEMENT – PART 3: “Create Willingness for Change”

Ready, Steady, Go?

When you can't wait to get started, but have to exercise care...

After this clarifying meeting, Karla Strittmatter knows the division manager's expectations. Thanks to her preparations, she could address the critical issues and ask the right questions. She has one year to make the eight branches competitive. Then they should be capable of competing; be service-oriented and quality-conscious; think in an entrepreneurial way; and work professionally. One year for the affected employees and their seniors.

She is sitting at her desk in front of her computer. The programme is running, the document still empty. Sunrays dazzle her. There aren't any letters yet, nor are there sentences and paragraphs, nor is there a concept. What is the next step? Resting her head on her hands, she lets her mind wander.

“It is important that we have a clearly arranged project architecture.” She remembers her meeting with the division manager. “A clearly arranged project architecture without knowing the process,” she thinks. She shakes her head and smiles to herself. “Take one step after another,” she says, then gets up and walks around. Five steps east, five west, and two north.

Chaos, Order, Theory

Standing in front of the flipchart, she takes a black marker and writes down what she knows about the eight branches, the division manager, the branch managers, the employees, the planned duration of the project, and the available resources. Unsorted, chaotic, and jumbled, she quickly fills two sheets with her bold scripture. She takes a red marker and underlines the

attractors, i.e., the terms that seem important to her. These attractors support her in ordering the facts on a new sheet with a blue marker. Karla Strittmatter enjoys this chaotic approach. She designs a personal Strittmatterian project architecture with flexible planning and defines emerging milestones. She has knowledge on process oriented control and human psychology.

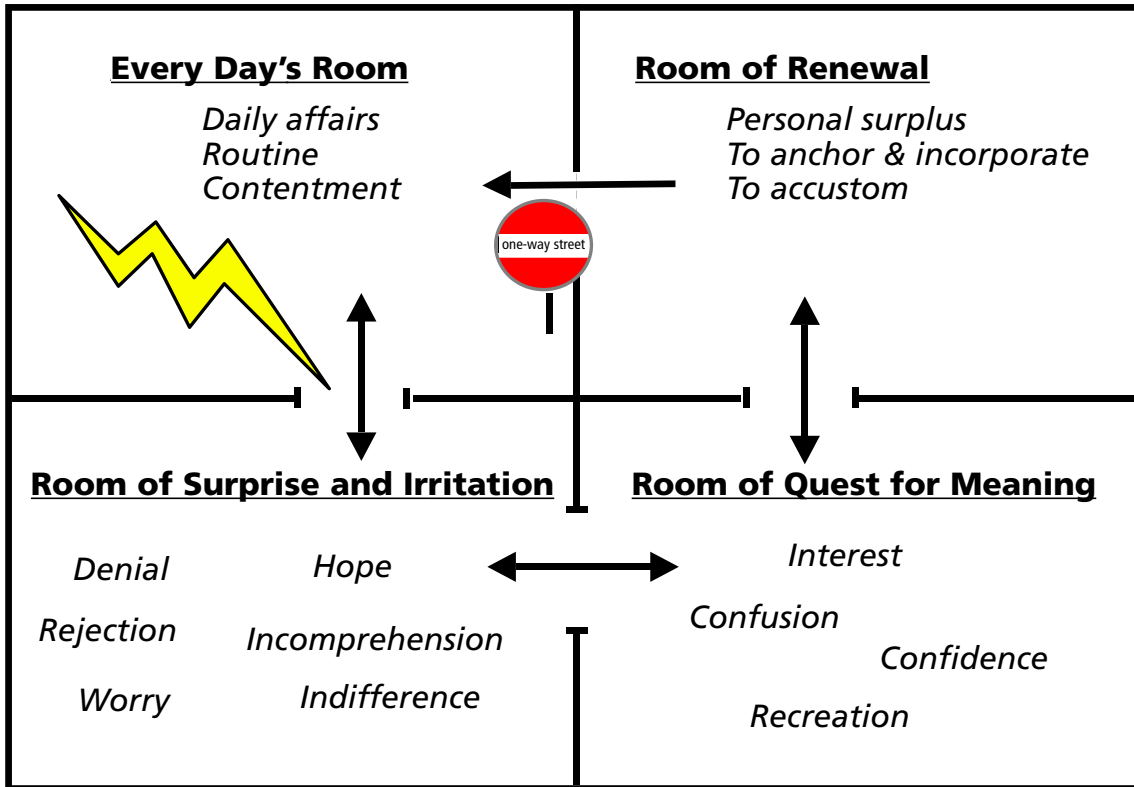
“Those who work with people and want to recruit them for common goals have to respect their constitution, their sentiments, and their moods. You don't need a magic wand for this. People send out signals that let you recognize their emotional situation. But you have to receive these signals, and you have to take them seriously – and, you also have to be able to stop and pause when tensions arise, or when people get weary.” She remembers a quote by Klaus Doppler and Christoph Lauterburg concerning change management. She types the last lines in her document and attaches it to the mail to her boss.

Getting Away from It All – But Where to Now?

“Management by wandering around,” crosses her mind when she walks down the stairs in the evening. She's looking forward to this warm early summer's evening and thinks of the regular and direct contacts with the employees: Talk to the people, answer questions, and ask questions. This “management by wandering around” is necessary to take the “temperature”, to feel the mood, and to convince people. Karla smiles. She thinks it's a wonderful development that she can employ her sociableness pro-

The Emotional Four Rooms Model

Adapted and expanded by Astrid Frischknecht and Philippe Staehelin



Counter-clockwise, the model describes the four emotional stages (rooms) that persons go through when they experience change. The resting time in each room depends on the person and on the control through the change management. The flash symbolizes changes in everyday life. The direct entrance from the Every Day's Room to the Room of Renewal is not possible. If change management is inadequate, people oscillate between the different rooms, without incorporating the renewal and without getting back to the Every Day's Room.

professionally, and she drives into the evening.

Karla had slept wonderfully and feels relaxed. She starts up her computer, checks her email, and reads the answer of her division manager. "I would like you to send me a clear and precise overview of your proceeding in the upcoming change process. The design seems to be too rough, and it is not clear to me what you would like to do in the respective phases." Karla turns on her chair and looks outside. "I guess there is a need for more information and knowledge on changes," she tells herself.

Raise the Spirit
Karla browses through her docu-

ments on change management. She finds the model with the four rooms and puts it on the table in front of her. "Somehow, there's something important missing in this conventional model," she thinks. "Nevertheless, it gives an insight into the emotional developments when we experience change. Of course, changes can also be positive. To win the lottery jackpot is also a change. You just have to evoke a similar feeling in the employees." She smiles at her overbold idea. "Actually – why overbold?" she wonders. She notices that all current models of and approaches to change associate negative feelings with change. "I'm amazed that not all change processes are bleak and dissatis-

factory if they only evoke negative feelings," she marvels. She reads that the majority of change processes are unsatisfactory for employees, and that the processes are usually not very successful. Bearing this in mind, her thought really seems to be a bit overbold. "But still", she says and focuses her mind again on positive implementations of change, "there's more to it." She complements the traditional "four-roomed apartment of change" model with her views, copies the article on change management by Doppler and Lauterburg, puts everything in a company mail envelope, and sends it to her boss.

In the evening, she doesn't take the elevator. She walks down the stairs

and remembers the note she wrote on the envelope: "I am looking forward to a professional discourse after you have read the material." She wondered whether or not he understood that change management was more about "steering in contact", that it was more about associating with people than running a logical-technical process. ■

Overview of a Change Process: Phases and Milestones

The time requirements depend on the respective projects. Here, they are exemplary for the discussed (fictive) change project.



Reference:

Doppler & Lauterburg (2005):
Change Management
(ISBN 3-593-37808-6)

CHANGE MANAGEMENT – PART 4:

Create a commonly accepted future perspective

Skin & Backbone*Sensitivity, communicative competence, and stability: the high expectations when creating a future perspective.*

Karla Strittmatter is sitting in her office chair and remembers this morning's conversation with the division manager. They had taken two hours to discuss the next joint workshop. Karla had worked out a special suggestion and had thus expected a hard discussion. She had also made sure that her boss had read the article by Doppler and Lauterburg (see part 3, page 5). Thus, both were acquainted with the necessary knowledge, and the discussion happened as planned.

They first talked about leadership and process guidance until Karla mentioned the communication theories by Schulz von Thun. Any information is only as good as it is received by the addressee, she explained. Karla talked of the concept of constructivism, where all human beings construct their own reality.

These topics are important to her. Of course, her work has an operational context and value. Neverthe-

at a certain place at a fixed time with a defined set of passengers. It is a very special train because the passengers have to produce their own energy. The more energy they produce, the faster the train is. But caution – immediately after arriving, the passengers have to fulfil other crucial tasks. The passengers are your employees, and as such they do not only move the train, but at achieving the goals, they also assure corporate success." She paused and looked at him.

The Journey Is also the Reward

"Yes, so?" he asked.

She continued: "It is your job as supervisor to not only provide the goals – but to explain why this journey is sensible; and you have to accompany it, at least partly. Of course the general framework, the trains and the tracks, the destination and the arrival time, have to be set. You, as a division manager, set these basic conditions and the necessary resources. After all, the train has to be able to run. The passengers, i.e., your employees, wait at different railway stations, and they are unequally quick in entering the train and in producing energy. Karla descended to the Emotional Four Rooms Model.

"With this knowledge of people and changes, it is easier to explain the benefits of the journey to the passengers, and to convince them of travelling with you. If you and I make use of this knowledge on change management, I can attain the targets and make sure that we perform well."

Thus, she has managed to bring out the sphere of action of change management, at least for a short

"If you want to build a ship, don't herd people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but, rather, teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

less, she is convinced that the actual effect of her work has to take place on the superordinate level. "What are you telling me?" the division manager asked her half an hour later. He assumed that he had given her a clear mandate. She chose another image: "Imagine you want a train to arrive

How Real Is Real?

Watzlawick, 1977

If a woman loses her husband in a shopping centre, and they have not previously agreed on where they would meet again in that case, their chances of finding each other again are nevertheless good. Most probably, they will both think of a meeting point that is so obvious that both are convinced that their partner will be convinced that this meeting point is obvious *for both of them*.

You are not just imagining where the other person will go because the other person will go to that place of which he thinks that you yourself will go, and so this goes on ad infinitum. So it's not "What would I do in her place?" but "**What would I do if I were in her place and asked myself what she would do if she were in my place and asked herself what I would do in her place...?**"



Ignore this sign

In order to follow the instruction, you have to read the sign first. In that case, you are, however, ignoring the order of non-observance.
(Watzlawick 1977, *How Real is Real?* ISBN 0-394-72256-6)

moment. She thinks of how difficult it is to move and operate in an intangible space. Often, there are no points of reference, and no clear "rights" or "wrongs". Luckily, she could discuss the different points of view with the division manager. This facilitates co-operation. And there's another thing that assuages and assures success: The constructive dialogue helped build mutual respect and trust in the expertise of the other person. With this starting position, the joint workshop with the motto "What do we want and how do we get there?" stands on solid ground. And everything is prepared for the day after tomorrow.

The Speech

The last two days were affected by organisational questions: Registrations and de-registrations on short notice, clarifying last details on lodging and catering. Now, all the invitees are here; each one of the eight branches has sent four to seven participants. Roughly 50 colleagues are sitting in the hall. The roles are clear, the tension almost tangible. Someone sneezes, and

for a few seconds, people relax. After the address of welcome and an overview of the schedule follows the division manager's information – the most important point on the agenda for many of the participants.

*Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,
In the last few days, I have given a lot of thought to how you are feeling in this situation. You know that our eight branches have to operate differently, communicate differently, and perform differently. You also know that we are convinced that only competitiveness saves us from closing. Rightly, you might be saying that you had to put up with a reorganisation for the same reasons one and a half years ago. And most probably, we will again face reorganisation in three, four, or five years. And you will again be right if you say that you have already heard of this. But you are not right if you are saying that it's all the same. There are always different conditions, different people, and different prerequisites. One and a half years ago, even you and I were not the same as we are today. Surely,*

you have made new experiences or furthered your education, you have been to a new place in your holidays, got to know new people, or friends have told you new things. On a personal level, people change; and the company changes on the level of tasks and services.

I know that all this is not just going to be fun. I too, have great respect for this mission, but I do not see an alternative that would secure both the economic wellbeing and the objectives of our company. We do not expect wild enthusiasm. I may also not hope that you are already convinced of our objectives. But I demand that both you and I will participate actively and that you do a good job before, during, and after the implementation of these changes – for without that, no train runs.

During the next 30 minutes, I will explain to you the targets of this reorganisation. First, I would like to say something about its pace. Of course, I'd like it best if we reach our target as fast as possible. I am, however, aware that you might have a different pace or that certain tasks might require a different tempo. The supporting guidance of change management takes these tunings into consideration and assures that we all attain our goals. It matters to me that you are able to set forth on this journey, and that the train can run. Please help me with that.

Overt Actions

The voice of the division manager vibrates when he says that last sentence. Karla watches how the audience attentively follows the speech. What the division manager said was frank and compassionate. No doubts, no insecurities. During the preparations of this workshop, they had talked about how credibility can be created. Karla had told him that his own critical voices would have to remain silent and hide. "Your multi-faceted personality and the different means and options for a solution are not sought after at that moment. You have to feel what you are saying. Thus, expose your skin, but show some backbone!"

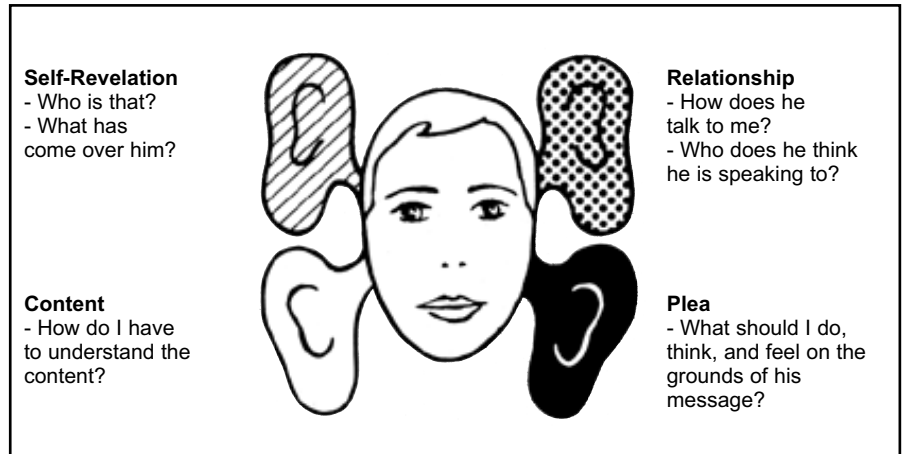
After the presentation of the targets, just when the last word is spoken, the first ones are already requesting to speak. Karla gets up: "Before we start the discussion, I ask you to remain silent for two minutes – get absorbed in your thoughts. Write down what you have been told and what is important to you. Think about what annoys you and what pleases you. And please consider what is really important to you, and which goals you have."

This intervention is a surprise. Some shake their heads and are annoyed by the fact that they have to wait for another two minutes. Nevertheless, the effect on the subsequent discussion is positive, and

"In life, there are no solutions. There are forces at work: we must create them, and the solutions will follow."

Antoine de Saint Exupéry

the targets for the eight branches are not dismantled immediately. Karla is convinced that these new ideas could unfold better like this. In the course of this workshop, Karla can't tell the employees that they have won the lottery jackpot (see part 3, page 6). But the persons in charge have shown up and have listened. People who before were just affected have turned into people involved in this change. Everyone has paid attention and now knows the common future perspective. But not everyone knows his or her personal perspective. ■



The four ears of the listener

(by Schulz von Thun (1981): Miteinander reden 1. ISBN 3-499-61964-4)

CHANGE MANAGEMENT – PART 5: “Conceptualize and implement changes”

Craft and Intuition

You have caught sight of the lodestar of vision. Now it is time for the craft of change. In order that the right thing is done at the right time, intuition and Kairos, the Greek god of the propitious moment, is needed.

It is evening. Karla is sitting in front of her living room window looking at the autumn clouds. Her strain is gone, and only a pleasant tiredness and silence remains. This morning at six o'clock, she had prepared the room for the workshop in the fourth branch. She had anticipated a difficult day. Indeed, they shared her view of the common vision as a lodestar of change and the new responsibilities were roughly clarified (see part 4, page 8), but she knows that the devil is in the details. The division manager had told her about the e-mails. The employees of this branch had been very critical and had announced active resistance against the planned implementation. There had even been rumours about a boycotting of the workshop.

High Pressure

This morning, Karla also knew that the fourth branch was thinking about alternatives to the planned reorganisation. The division manager had called to inform her yesterday morning. “Now, these employees are wasting precious time to work on something that no one cares about. We already know what the optimal solution looks like. And it will stay like this!” He seemed to be very annoyed at this open resistance.

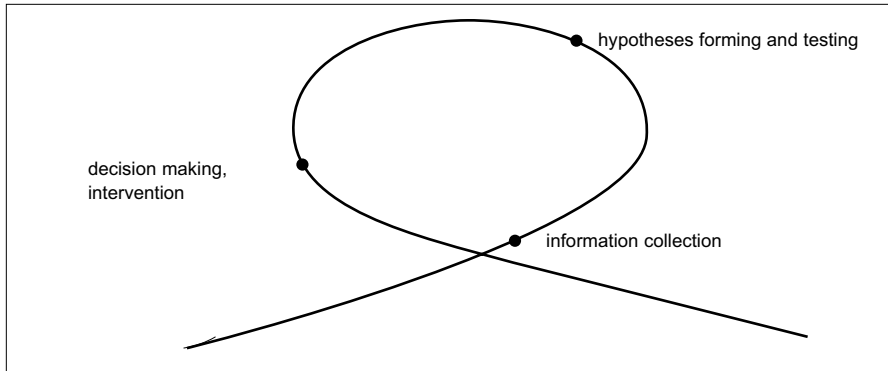
Karla understood his position. “Yes, maybe you are right. Maybe this really is a waste of resources,” she told him, but added, “but maybe the implementation and incorporation of the reorganisation will work better because of the intensive debate about the advantages and disadvantage of the new structure –

thanks to the criticism and questioning of the fourth branch.” The manager met this approach with little interest. In addition to these eight branches, he had other spheres of activity and responsibilities. He was under a lot of pressure. Because of that, Karla decided not to go deeper into that matter. In the remaining time, she rather wanted to fathom, and maybe expand, his own personal leeway. Their good relationship at work and their spontaneity allowed for such support.

Nobody Is Sitting Down

Dusk is slowly changing into night. There is a soft light on Karla's neighbourhood. At 8:30 this morning, the employees of the fourth branch had arrived. Nobody was missing. Karla Strittmatter remembers the feeling when all the employees were standing in front of her and were refusing to sit down. Karla and the co-moderating human resources manager also remained standing. In her head, Karla reviewed the options she had to interfere, and their possible consequences – the basics of her counselling competence. She knew: the next anchor buoy was at 10:30. At that point, the division manager was expected for a discussion. The design and the process of these workshops were planned like this.

The human resources manager glanced at her quizzically. She decided. Instead of the planned information concerning the relocation of the division and the possible consequences of the new structure, she chose a discussion at the emo-



Process loop: Karla Strittmatter's workshop between 8.30 and 10.30 from a counselling point of view.

Dynamic Process Loops (SIM-model, Königswieser et al.)

As a third element, following the triangle of company development and the vision as a lodestar, focus is put on process understanding. Hereby, and distinguished from business processes, processes are regarded as the conscious development of companies and organisations within certain regulatory frameworks. The process loop signifies bringing together as many as possible of those who are substantially involved in the development.

This basic understanding of the proceedings, mostly seen as a "soft" factor, results in "hard" decisions which significantly influence the further process. The seemingly "soft" is thus an aspect that leads to the seemingly "hard", i.e., the decisions. This is always about the interplay of strategy, structure, and culture, as described in the triangle of company development (see part 1).

tional level. She guessed that there had been some talking in the run-up of this workshop. She knew that this was an opportunity. "Does someone represent your interests? Is there anyone that speaks for the whole group?" she asked the group of employees. They looked at each other quizzically. Nobody said anything. "Good." Karla said after a couple of seconds. "In that case, I will represent your interests myself. I'd like to know how you are doing, and what apprehensions you have. Please write down two cues concerning your apprehensions on the blue slip of paper. On the red slip, I'd like you to write two keywords on things that you are looking forward to in the near future. This can also be things from your private life." The human resources manager and Karla distributed the material, and set a timeframe of three minutes for each task. The employees joined in. Six minutes later, Karla collected the employees' sensitivities. In this way, she could empathise with the apprehensions and joys and bridge the gap between herself and the employees. They were able to work again.

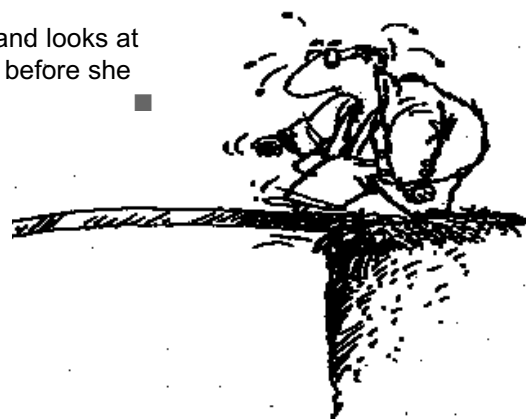
Backwards and Forwards

It has gotten dark in Karla's living room. Night has fallen on the valley. She is sitting there quietly and enjoys reflecting on the day. While she sorted the topics with the employees, the HR manager informed the division manager, who had just arrived, about the course of the meeting and the further pro-

cedure: he would have to listen to the employees first. The topics were prioritised, the employees were well prepared, and the business division leader could listen carefully. Karla took notes so that she could press ahead with the proceedings during lunch break.

The lunch break was important, both physically and emotionally. The two managers and Karla were searching for the red thread. In the afternoon, they decided, they would check which ideas from this morning's discussion could be incorporated in the new structure. The scope of action for the employees should be utilised. If certain suggestions – i.e. a laptop and a cell phone for every employee – could not be implemented, the employees would be informed. Karla is happy that the division manager appreciates and respects his employees. Their requests cannot all be granted, but they can be denied in a respectful and appreciating way.

Karla stretches, rises, and looks at the cartoon about trust before she leaves the living room. ■



CHANGE MANAGEMENT – PART 6: “Stabilize success, revise direction”

The Thrill of the Final Spurt

The process completion shall be successful. In the end, what is actually judged as a success depends on the person, his or her function, and the task. In fact, that which is criticised negatively is not always a failure. But we do sometimes need to be patient until successes become visible.

The alarm clock went off early this morning, very early. At 5 o'clock already, it woke Karla up. Now, she is already sitting in the train and remembers that cosy feeling of her blanket all too well. She shakes those thoughts off and focuses on today's tasks. "What is important and urgent now?" she wonders. She remembers the challenging workshop with the fourth branch, and the suggestions of the employees. "Königswieser's process loop was exemplary that day" she ponders. "It is always amazing what apprehensions and fantasies a reorganisation can evoke. No matter whether it's superiors regular employees, the requests are always the same: They want to be taken seriously and don't want to feel abused." She knows that thinking and acting are two totally different capacities, and that the differences are not always understandable.

Revising the Direction

While reflecting and pondering on these aspects, she arrives at her office. She looks at her watch: Still two hours until the meeting with her boss – the division manager – and the project group start. The reflections during her train ride help her to sort important from unimportant. She stands up, takes four differently coloured markers and notes: "Work on employee's suggestions!" Seventeen thematically ordered suggestions for improvement had been received. The fact that suggestions had arrived at all was due to the fact that her boss had recognized the creative potential of the

groups during that legendary workshop. Together with the branch managers, Karla had installed a simple suggestion scheme concerning the reorganisation process. Each and every suggestion would be read and answered. Karla will do this with her team today. She has drawn a red thread for their work on the flipchart.

Recognise Revised Directions

They have eight hours to analyse the suggestions, consider their effects, and formulate decisions, including a rationale. They have to smile at two suggestions, and one of them irritates them because it is so audacious. The other fourteen suggestions are ideas and considerations that objectively aid the team. Karla is leading the discussion and tries to find appreciating answers. The work is very demanding: The decisions must be in accordance with the current project as well as the division's and the company's strategy. And, of course, normative conditions, such as the collective labour agreement, cannot be violated.

At 14:45, they come across a suggestion that they like. There is something about this idea that maybe presents a substantial simplification of the process organisation. After half an hour of discussing intensively and vividly, they see a solution. Who would have thought that? With this suggestion of an employee, they could save 15% of the expenses in the value chain. Karla, her boss, and the project team are still sceptical. Is it

really a success? They put the work aside and take a coffee break.

"I suggest that we first complete the analysis of the other suggestions. Afterwards, I would like to focus on this potential improvement," Karla says. The other approve of her suggestion. The coffee tastes nice, but she cannot get used to the plastic cup. The atmosphere is heated, and everyone at the table knows: If this analysis is correct, this is in fact a huge success.

Stabilise Success

The analysis was validated by two experts. Up to two small corrections, the suggestion stands up to the test, and the expenses can in fact be cut down – however, not at first sight. And that is actually the difficulty, for superficially, one could think that the measure leads to additional expense. Karla and the project team have been heavily criticised for this during the past few days. "Did we really make the right decision?" she keeps on asking herself. The reactions unnerve her. "Was this a wrong decision?" Karla poses this question to the project team and the division manager. He had been criticized as well in the management's meeting. The other project team members have had similar experiences.

"However, I don't believe that we should do something about this now. I think we have to wait and see what effect the implementation of this measure has, and communicate with the staff in the meantime," the division manager says. The others agree. It seems to be clear. Stabilising successes also means facing criticism. It helps Karla and her team to know that different tasks and functions have to be fulfilled within a system. The predictable conflicts are not to be dispelled but negotiated. Karla does not want new resistances to perk up – neither in the eight branches nor with internal or external clients.

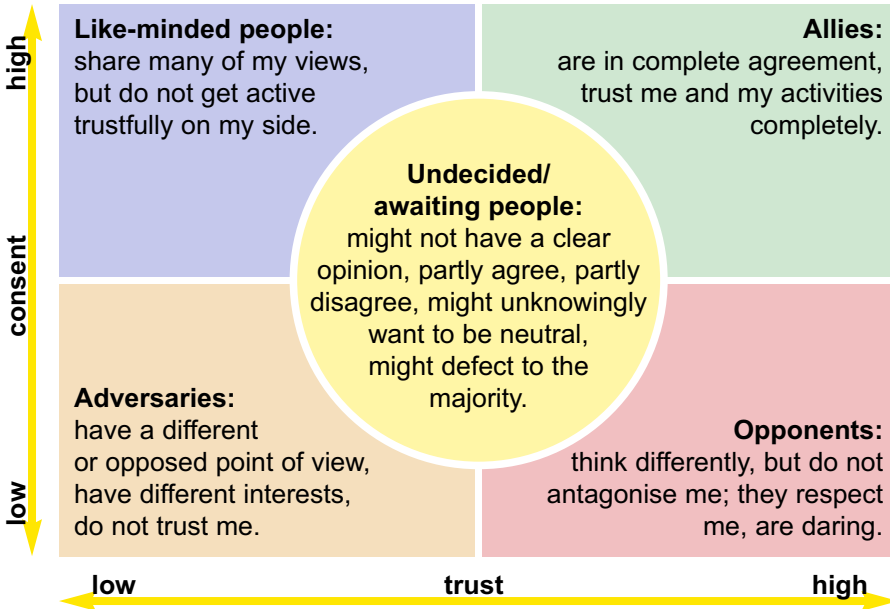
She remembers the "Emotional Four Rooms Model". It appears to her as if the project is in limbo

Team Mates and Adversaries in Change Processes

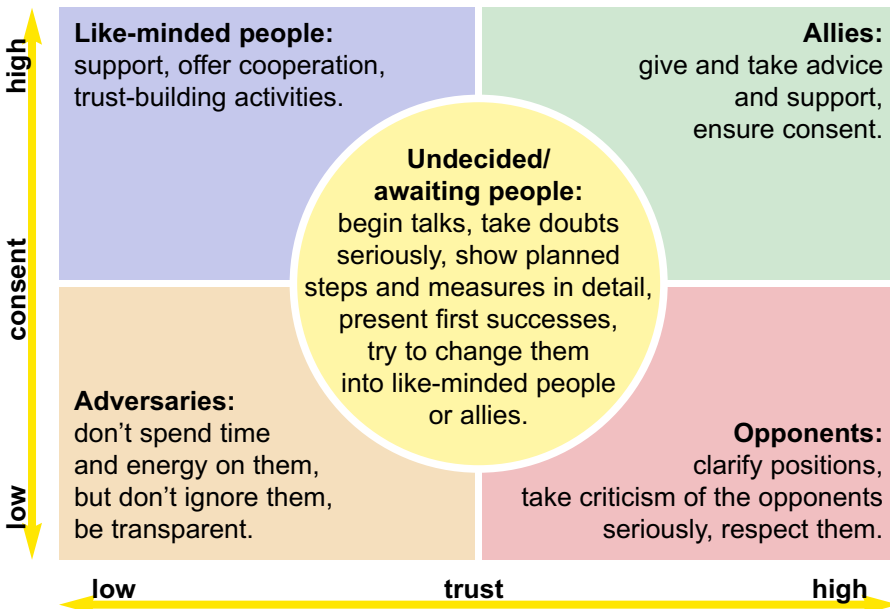
It is a function of change management to win sceptics and adversaries over to the change project and to mobilise allies. In order to do that, you have to know every-one's respective position.

The upper graph shows the attitude people can adopt – depending on trust and agreement.

The lower graph shows methods of working with the respective groups.



between the “Room of Quest for Meaning” and the “Room of Renewal.” She doesn’t want to go back; she wants to move forward, together with the employees. “We are on the right path,” she thinks when she completes the last reply to the employees. The superiors and the employees of the eight branches have arrived at a house called “competitiveness” by means of using their own energy. The first processes are incorporated; the first employees have joined in. Outside, you hear the critical voices. It will become apparent now, in the final stage of the project, whether the basis of trust established by Karla and her boss is large enough. Karla knows that a successful completion is not possible without the cooperation of the employees. At the moment, it seems, she has to remain patient. ■



CHANGE MANAGEMENT – PART 7: “Each project ends with conclusion”

The Art of Conclusion

The project is going on. In the course of the change projects, employees become co-thinkers and co-actors. Is this a good moment for conclusion?

The critical voices have become much more differentiated. “We made it!” Karla thinks when she steps out of the elevator. She is concentrating so hard that she almost overlooks her boss’ secretary. “I’m sorry, Ms Jäger,” Karla Strittmatter says and watches the tall, dark-haired woman amiably. Ms Jäger takes a deep breath and looks down. They have to know and appreciate each other in the course of the common change project. She is a cheerful woman, and Karla suspects that something is wrong. “Ms Jäger, can I do something for you?” she asks. “My brother died last night. Imagine, during his holidays. He had a heart attack.” No tears followed her words. She was a self-controlled woman.

“I’d like to offer you my sincere condolences, Ms. Jäger. I am very sorry. Do you know what would help you most at the moment?” “Would you mind drinking a coffee with me?” she asks. Karla nods. While they walk to the cafeteria, a thought on change management crosses Karla’s mind. “Yes,” she thinks, “trust and relationship building are also about allowing ourselves to make some room for emotions,” she further thinks, “and also being able to show them.”

The processes that should lead to a higher competitiveness in the eight branches are implemented and incorporated. All branches work according to them – even the fourth branch, though they had been very opposed to the changes in the beginning (see part 5, page 11). Due to the incorporation of the measures, the saving potential resulting from a measure sug-

gested by an employee slowly becomes apparent. Those who had opposed and argued heatedly against this measure have become more and more quiet. It was worth it to stand the headwinds and to be patient. Her work as a project manager slowly comes to an end. But before the conclusion, she would like to review the performance of the project (see boxed text):

Just Like this, in Everyday Life

Karla sits vis-à-vis her boss. He has invited her for lunch. “Sometimes, certain points are easier to discuss in an informal way,” he said when he called her two days ago. “So – how do you feel just before project completion?” he asks in between two bites of spaghetti.

Evaluation

The performance review of a change and reorganisation project can include the following questions:

- Did we achieve the goals in relation to content and time?
- Where did we achieve the goals in terms of change management? For example: Did we manage to maintain working capacity during the reorganisation process? Are we actually working according to the new process schemes? Which schemes have not been incorporated?
- Where is there still a need for action? Where do we have to push on with the implementation of these processes?
- What remains to be done? Who has to do it, and until when?
- What are the lessons learned? Where do we need to develop new strategies in terms of approaches to project management?
- Change management as part of the report on project conclusion?

Karla reflects on the question for a short while and then says: "I think it is again and again a challenge to let go of something that has absorbed us for months, something that has given meaning to our work and has been fun. For that reason, it is important to draw a line, both for that which we have already done and things that are to come." The business division manager looks at her quizzically. "But we can't draw a line now. That would be the wrong signal. It's not complete yet, we are only just starting." "Yes, it's going well," Karla says after waiting a moment. "It's going well because the employees were regarded as co-thinkers and co-actors. We have been careful and transparent right from the beginning, starting with the clarifying meeting at the beginning. I think it would be too bad if the conclusion would just be overlooked, and if no one noticed that the new processes are now part of everyday life. I think we have all earned a bit of appreciation." They continue to eat silently.

"Okay", her boss says, while he neatly folds his napkin and places it

next to his plate. "What do you suggest? I am sure you've given this some thought."

"Yes", Karla says. "I would like an open letter of recognition to the management and the employees of the eight branches – and an evening with some drinks and snacks for the project team." She smiles, and her boss joins in. They agree on the project conclusion.

And Now?

Two days of work are left for the project. Karla has made a suggestion for the open letter of recognition to the eight branches, and has sent it to her boss. The drinks and snacks for tomorrow evening are organised. All members of the project team are coming, and Ms Jäger will also be there.

"What about next week?" Karla wonders. She would like to take some days off and work on her personal visions and perspectives (see part 4, page 8). But she is a bit nervous. For, at the moment, she doesn't know what comes next. She sits at her desk and remembers her personal goals. She has written them down and can orientate herself by reading them. "I

have reached part of my goals," she ascertains, "but still, it is a strange feeling not to know what lies ahead. Just like the employees of the eight branches;" she continues her inner dialogue, "they also don't know what will lie ahead. Luckily, we could stop with the blind man's bluff and could start with change management (see part 2, page 3).

The telephone rings and interrupts her thoughts. "Strittmatter," she says.

"Kneubühler speaking. Good morning, Ms. Strittmatter."

"Good morning, Mr. Kneubühler."

"I am the manager of QP. We are currently trying to re-organize the head office and branches. Maybe you could help us with this. I would like to meet you some day next week to discuss the matter."

When the project team meets for drinks and snacks in the evening, there is lots of laughter. Even Ms. Jäger sometimes joins in. As the business division manager, Karla's boss doesn't have much time – but it's enough for a toast. The line is drawn. The future has started. ■



Change management creates the link between the old and the new. Picture taken from "Bridges - 3000 years of defying nature" by David J. Brown.