The Central Role:
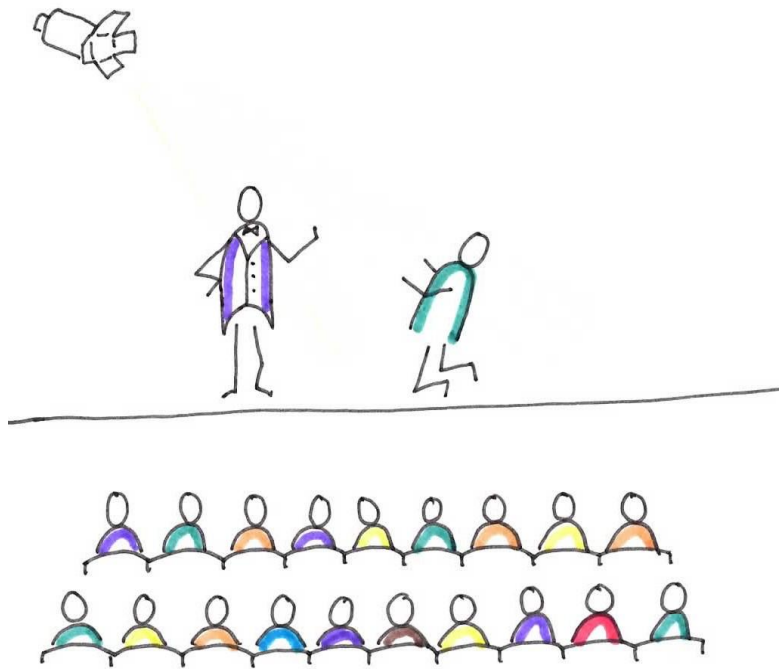## Driving
Business Change

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Illustrations by Bruce Rowling

Introduction to the model

Change management is a term used in various business roles. It encompasses a broad spectrum of activities across a variety of scenarios. These activities include implementing new IT systems, reorganisations, headcount reductions, establishing processes and improvements, outsourcing, behaviour change, culture change, coaching and team building – the list could go on.

Often compared to or expected to be part of project management, the people change manager role can cause confusion in organisations. The new model we introduce in this book treats change management separately because it focuses on the people aspect – and this is what distinguishes it as a role in its own right. Project management focuses on delivering a tangible product to the customer, often using a governed methodology. Team members have defined roles, and liaise with the customer to deliver measurable outcomes.

People change management is about producing an intangible product such as a change in attitude or behaviour, a shift in belief or a surge of confidence that aids the achievement of the required outcome. The benefit is often difficult to acknowledge or quantify because the softer, human outcome is not valued or measured in the same way as hard benefits like cost savings.

People change managers usually specialise in one or two activities, as described above, depending on their preference and experience. However, what unites all people change managers, regardless of discipline, is a need to interact with people, and more importantly, to make tangible change happen through people. This role needs to respond to and interact with others, often revisiting concerns until acceptance or a shift occurs. A key component is the dynamic of supporting people, and driving their thinking, behaviour, and attitudes to an end result. Sound tough? It is. It not only requires a level of personal courage, fortitude and confidence, but the people change manager has to draw on or build a number of skills and personal characteristics.

The Central Role Model identifies four core behaviours, focusing on the people change manager's capability to drive change at a granular level. These are not exclusive behaviours, just the core behaviours that need to be front and centre in order to achieve results. The model is not a methodology; it is a mindset. It could easily be used alongside a change management or project management framework.

The model is designed to help you, as the practitioner, think about your personal impact and how you can play a part in the success or failure of a project. Practitioners can also evolve their capability by using the model as a personal development tool, helping to focus and refocus different behaviours, and by trying out the practical approaches suggested in the following sections.

To introduce the central role model, the following text provides a summary of the four behaviours using the theatre metaphor. Further detail is provided at the beginning of

each of the sections exploring the behaviours. As you read through these chapters, you will build a fuller picture of what each of them means in practice.

The Behaviours

Performance: What you are remembered for

At the centre of every people change manager is Performance. This behaviour includes:

- The energy and urgency behind your actions and words.
- The personal intent that drives you towards the end result.
- The skills and tools that enable change to move forward.

Performance is summarised as the lasting professional and personal impression for which people remember you. It is the three to four sentences that someone would use to describe you to a stranger, focusing specifically on behaviours. Think back to a theatrical experience and what you remember specifically about an actor's performance. Is it humour, passion, intensity or physicality?

> The thing about performance, even if it's an illusion, is that it is a celebration of the fact that we do contact within ourselves, infinite possibilities.
>
> Sydney Smith
> Clergyman 1845

Individual performance is driven by a personal energy and a particular focus that is unique to you. This is not extraversion; rather, it is about character, persistence and how you physically and mentally move forward with a sense of purpose.

Ordinarily, performance emerges naturally from your experience, skills and personal preferences. However, personal intent – the true driver behind what you do – can cloud the objective of what needs to be achieved and ego can take over.

Tools, plans, facilitation techniques, and personal skills also influence how you will be remembered. They provide some formal structure that allows people to identify how you control and manage the work. In the theatre, rehearsals would be scheduled, and the theatre booked, but there are always some negotiations over dates and costs of using the space.

Dialogue: Asking the right questions at the right time

This behaviour includes:
- The exchange of words that drives new thinking.
- The relationships initiated and built through an exchange of thoughts and ideas.
- Clarity of message, intention and outcome for yourself and others.

Conversations should focus on encouraging and challenging people to think differently, and to help them gain clarity. This is done through listening, reflecting back and choosing the right words, questions and tone that are appropriate to the audience. A non-directive coaching style, helping others to come to their own conclusions, is a useful approach to adopt. There are times when a people change manager needs to carefully choose the topic of discussion, manage difficult conversations and be the spokesperson for fundamental issues that need to be addressed.

> Give everyman thy ear, but few thy voice
>
> Hamlet
>
> Shakespeare

Relationships are initiated and built through dialogue by exploring, listening to, and clarifying individual and group intention. Although dialogue is a two-way process, the people change manager has to take more responsibility for initiating and driving results through conversation in a change situation. As trust is established, people will start to initiate conversations with you.

Different communication styles can cause confusion, and understanding needs to be clarified. In a play, what an actor says and how he says it can either take the audience through the story or make them fall asleep.

Characterisation: Creating a safe place for individual change

This behaviour includes:
- Establishing a safe environment for others to experiment and explore different ways of being or working.
- Providing support and encouragement to the people impacted by the project.
- Challenging people to be different and reach their potential.

The people change manager has to establish a consistently non-judgmental approach that will enable people to grow and develop. This is about actively creating a physical, mental and emotional space with clear boundaries for acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. In the theatre, a director often rehearses with individuals, couples, and the company at different times to ensure that the actors get one-to-one time and can develop their character with support and discussion.

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Support is given through 100% attention to what is and isn't said and seeing the difficulties that people face. Talking through issues, their impacts and possible solutions will enable people to see situations in a different way.

Everyone is challenged by change, even people change managers, and each person experiences it differently. There is a need to acknowledge individual uniqueness in all its layers, and attempt to understand the current focus and meaning for each person. This is not an easy thing to learn to do, but watching, listening and putting yourself in others' shoes aids understanding. More importantly, the risk associated with exploring new ways of working can carry a lot of anxiety for individuals and, therefore, constant reassurance and support is required. In a play, the characters may be interpreted and presented in a variety of ways. The director provides space for interpretation and safety to experiment until there is agreement and consistent portrayal of the characters, and their interfaces, throughout the plot.

> As you have sown, so shall you reap.
>
> Cicero

Applause: Getting the results you want

This behaviour includes:
- Consequence management – ensuring that actions are rewarded or stopped.
- Driving decisions when problems could derail the vision and benefits.
- Measuring people's readiness for change.

At the beginning of a project, the vision and benefits need to be identified and articulated. The role is to identify expected behaviours and manage the consequences of team and individual behaviour. Often the project manager or senior stakeholders may keep people on track and ensure the vision and benefits are understood and reviewed when a project changes track. However, additional observation and support is required to ensure success.

Every new action or problem will have an impact on, or an implication for, the end result. The decision makers need to be coached in anticipating whether there will be a positive or negative result and in how they are going to manage the consequences. Strong facilitation and management skills are required to help decision makers identify the risks and summarise recommendations.

> It is not in the stars to hold our destiny, but in ourselves.
>
> Romeo and Juliet
>
> Shakespeare

Projects are often implemented without much consideration for the people who will need to adapt their ways of working. A 'just get on with it' attitude often emerges.
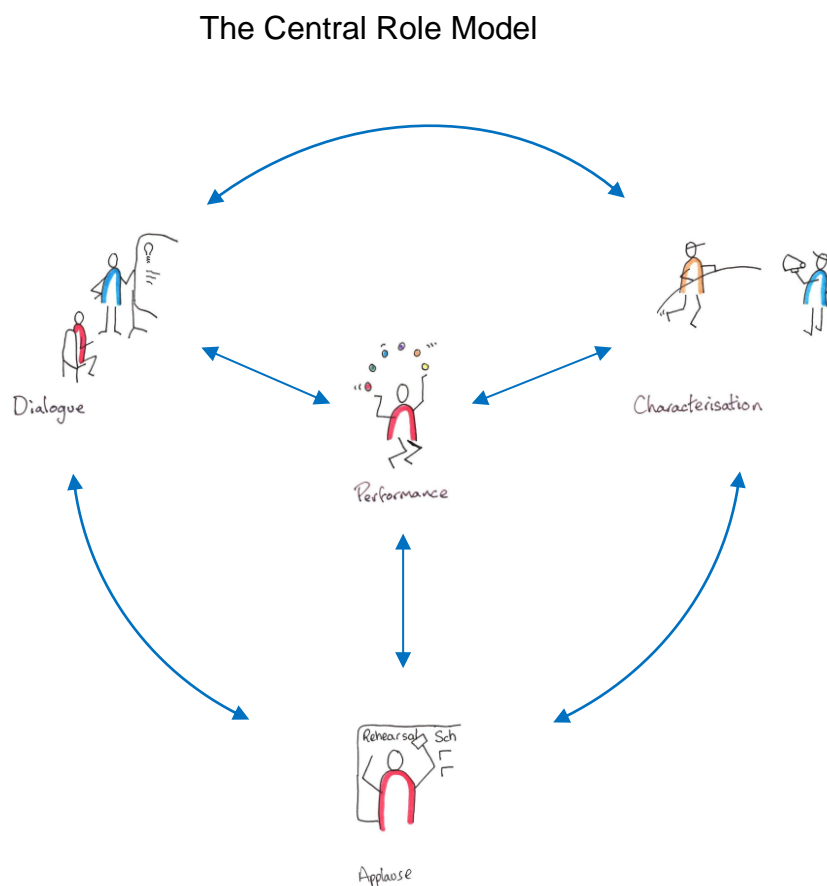
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Readiness means assessing people's need for communication, engagement and training so they can 'just get on with it'. If you were expected to take the lead role in a play after just one rehearsal, how nervous would you be? You need to know your lines, understand what other characters do, get a costume that fits and generally feel comfortable before the curtain goes up. As Oscar Wilde stated "success is a science; if you have the right conditions, you get the results"

Putting it all together

Individually, these behaviours are easy to describe and, in practice, should be easy to achieve. However, combining the behaviours can be difficult, as natural preference or circumstance can dictate where the focus goes. The next section will look at how these behaviours combine, and how they might work in practice.

The Model

The model puts performance at the centre because this behaviour is a blend of you as an individual, your skills, your experience and your intention. Usually dialogue, characterisation and applause are focused on the project outcome, and performance is the conduit to the outcome. All the behaviours could interact at any given time and in practice, they ebb and flow, as you shift from one to the other, adjusting your focus and energy depending on the complexity of the change environment.

The Central Role Model

Dialogue

Characterisation

Performance

Rehearsal Sch

Applause

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As with any change, there is rarely a perfect solution, and we acknowledge that blending these behaviours can be difficult. Describing exactly how to do this for any particular scenario would be almost impossible because no one can control or predict how others react. Also, mood or circumstance on any given day influences the outcome. The day-to-day environment is a moving feast of activity and reaction, and this model acknowledges the fluidity and creative use of the personal resources required to keep projects on track.

The behaviours are a blend of the internal and external. By internal, we mean the personal and individual change driven by an internal dialogue and feeling. The external is the hard, practical focus on business outcomes and actions.

The following table describes where the behaviours are focused during a change project.

External - business focus and action. Bringing things out into the open.	Performance is a blend of the person inside the people change manager and the person projected out to the world.	Applause is the business focus on the end result and managing the consequences of actions.
Internal - people orientation and the individual in the change environment.	Characterisation is a blend of support mechanisms within the people change manager that acts as a catalyst for personal change for others.	Dialogue is a blend of internal conversations within and actual conversations with others.
	Internal - people orientation and the individual in the change environment.	**External -** business focus and action. Bringing things out into the open.

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Some examples

To aid understanding, some typical examples are described below. All four behaviours do not need to be utilised in every scenario. Some scenarios, such as facilitating a workshop, can be planned ahead, but at the heart of your performance, you need to remain fluid and open, responding to external events, as well as to individual and group needs. The real challenge is in balancing and blending these personal behaviours to drive change.

1.   An individual resists change

An employee says he does not have time to attend training in a new process. If the people change manager is known for finding solutions and having authority (performance), then a relationship with the employee needs to be established (dialogue), to discuss what is stopping the employee, without judgment, and address concerns (characterisation), while reminding him that the department is moving on and he will not be able to do his job if he does not attend training (applause).

2.   Keeping the project to scope

A group of stakeholders want to include a new piece of software functionality. Clear and direct communication (dialogue) with stakeholders is required, to understand the relevance and benefit of the change. This needs to happen before assessing how the new functionality fits with the vision, the scope already agreed to, and the consequences of new scope creep i.e. going outside of the agreed deliverables. The people change manager will then need to facilitate a definite decision either way (applause).

3.   A formal briefing to those impacted by the project

The focus is on telling people what they need to know in a direct and succinct style (dialogue), and on providing specific examples of how employees are to be supported all the way through to the end of the project (characterisation).

Can people really change?

People can only change themselves. With the right skills, knowledge, desire and support, a good people change manager can help them along the way. Some people just do not, or decide that they cannot, change. Supporting people through change can only happen through a genuine interest and focus on others, a respect for individual differences, and a quiet ego that enables the right intent to shine through.

The following section will look at the behaviours throughout the life cycle of a typical project, articulating how people could behave in a change environment and provide a practical approach on how the people change manager could respond. It is then followed by sections on each of the behaviour as it progresses through a typical project life cycle.