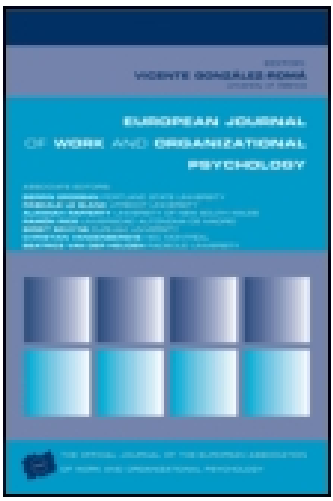

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Change management: Time for a change!

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Change management: Time for a change!

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We discuss some core issues in the field of change management. We use these topics to identify some mindsets that dominate the practice of change management, and argue that these should be replaced by some alternatives. The alternatives are drawn largely from operations management and socio-technical thinking. We characterize existing approaches as partial, and speculate that this may be one of the reasons why so many change initiatives are ineffective at meeting their goals. We identify some of the reasons why existing mindsets are sustained. We also point to some ways forward, focusing on changes in the mindsets and language we use. We speculate that these would improve the effectiveness of change initiatives.

It is something of a cliché to state that many organizations are at the same time facing, engaging in, and promoting increasing rates of change. Increasing uncertainty and competitiveness in market places, changes in technology enabling and supporting new ways of working, trends towards globalization, the reduction of barriers to entry in some markets as a result of the internet and e-business, the perceived need to reduce costs, improve quality, and be more responsive to customer needs, are all held to promote change. Whilst there may be a self-fulfilling element to this organizational and cultural dynamic, it is clear that organizations are engaging in a wide variety of changes.

For practical instances we need look no further than the catalogue of change initiatives commonly on organizational and managerial agendas. Consider, for example, initiatives concerned with quality management, supply chain partnering, information and communications technologies,

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just-in-time working, business process reengineering, teamworking, teleworking, e-business, empowerment, and the like (see, for example, Cairncross, 1998; Hackman & Wageman, 1995; Hammer & Champy, 1993; Holman, Wall, Clegg, Sparrow, & Howard, 2003; Leadbetter, 1999; Storey, 1994; TUC, 2000; Waterson, Clegg, Bolden, Pepper, Warr, & Wall, 1999; Womack, Jones, & Roos, 1990; Wood, Stride, Wall, & Clegg, 2003). There will be few, if any, organizations without experience of many of these changes over the last, and indeed over the next, five or so years.

At the same time, the evidence from case studies, expert panels, surveys, and economic analyses suggests that the effectiveness of such changes, when considered against their organizational objectives and/or their economic performance, is often disappointing (Buchanan & Badham, 1999; Clegg et al., 1997a; Gibbs, 1997; Holman et al., 2000; Landauer, 1995; Willcocks & Grint, 1997). Rates of failure appear to be high, and rates of success low.

For example, a survey of 898 manufacturing companies examined the rates of use and effectiveness of 12 different management practices and techniques across four countries, namely the UK, Australia, Japan, and Switzerland (see Clegg et al., 2002b). The practices included total quality management, just-in-time working, integrated computer-based technologies, concurrent engineering, team-based working, supply chain partnering, empowerment, and business process reengineering. The conclusions from this study are that "there has been considerable uptake of these manufacturing practices, especially during the early and middle parts of the 1990s" (p. 185), but that "overall rates of success of the practices are moderate, with some successes but also high rates of failure" (p. 186).

The reports of high failure rates are common in what may be termed the operations management and sociotechnical literatures, where much of the focus has been on the introduction of new technologies, management practices, and ways of working. What then of the literature on organization development? Here we draw on a review by Porras and Robertson (1992), who analysed findings from 72 empirical studies of the impact of a range of organization development (OD) initiatives. These included changes in organizational arrangements (e.g., changes in structures and rewards), social factors (e.g., management style and teamworking), physical setting (e.g., layout and design), and technologies and techniques (e.g., new technology, work flows, and job design). A requirement for inclusion in this review was that each study must: describe the research design, participants, and methods of evaluation; collect and report on quantitative data and statistical analyses; be conducted in the field (rather than be laboratory or simulation based); and involve an intervention, minimally for an intact work group. To the best of our knowledge this represents the most comprehensive and rigorous evaluation of the impact of OD. The main findings were that across the studies overall, 53% of the dependent variables showed no change as a

result of the OD effort, 9% revealed negative change, and 38% demonstrated positive change. Furthermore, in all the overall categories examined, the instances of no change and negative change in the dependent variables exceeded positive change.

As such the evidence from the operations management, sociotechnical, and organization development literatures points to two main conclusions. First, change initiatives are common. And second, their performance appears to be disappointing. This seems to imply that a third conclusion may also be warranted—that, despite having a great deal of practice, many organizations are not very good at change management.

In that context, the objectives of this article are to:

- examine some key issues in the practice of change management
- use these to reveal and summarize what we believe are some problematic mindsets in this area
- offer some different perspectives
- reflect on underlying partialities in this area, identify some of the reasons why these are sustained, and speculate on their impact
- point to some ways forward.

To these ends, the article is organized in four further parts. First we offer some background contextual remarks on the domain. Second, we examine a number of key issues in the practice of change management, and use these to reveal what we believe are some dominant and problematic underlying mindsets, in each case offering an alternative. In the third section we argue that each of the existing underlying mindsets reflects partial views of the domain. We identify some of the reasons why these dominant views are sustained, and we speculate that these mindsets help explain why so many change initiatives are disappointing. Finally, we offer views of some potential ways forward. Throughout the article we draw heavily on our experiences of working in organizations, and try to relate these to theoretical issues and concerns as appropriate. We draw primarily on ideas from the operations management and sociotechnical literatures, adopting a polemical tone, which we think appropriate given our criticisms of the area, and our advocacy of the need for change.

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

To set this article in context we wish to make four interrelated points. First, there have been vast amounts of work conducted in the fields of organizational change. Some of this is practice based and draws attention to some of the lessons learned in this area. What represents good practice, and, perhaps just as importantly, what represents bad practice, form the

focus of some of this work. It is evident that there is a vast amount of craft-based expertise, and this is as one would expect given the rates and scope of change mentioned earlier. At the same time, there have been numerous more theoretically oriented approaches to change management, and many texts summarize some of the leading approaches. This area is not short of material. (See, for example, Argyris & Schon, 1978; Buchanan & Badham, 1999; Buchanan & Storey, 1997; Burnes, 2000; Cummings & Worley, 2001; Hartley, 2001; Porras & Robertson, 1992; Steers & Black, 1994.)

Second, this is an area of interest populated by many different interest groups, some of whom make strong claims of the effectiveness of their particular chosen change initiative. Inevitably perhaps, there are elements of fad, fashion, and hype associated with various changes (Abrahamson, 1996), and the long-serving spectator of this field can discern phases of interest. We recognize that many of these fashions can be interpreted as temporary devices through which various interest groups pursue and reinvigorate their various agendas. It is hardly surprising to observe that the different groups take the opportunity to use such initiatives to promote and further their goals and interests, whether they be consultants, managers, academics, or whatever. At the same time, we acknowledge that some organizations and employees are suffering from initiative fatigue (Holman et al., 2000), captured we thought rather neatly in the plaintive cry "BOHECA" ("Bend Over HEre Comes Another"), used openly in one organization in which one of the authors has worked.

Third, it is also apparent that many of the initiatives in this area comprise both technical and/or technique-based innovations, at the same time as human and organizational changes. For example, new forms of working such as e-business involve new ways of working, new working practices and changed relationships between members of the supply chain, and this is enabled by innovations in technology, in this case based on the internet and world wide web. The general point is that all changes comprise a systemic rearrangement, which crosses the perceived divide between the technical and the social (see, for example, Cherns, 1987; Clark, McLoughlin, Rose, & King, 1988; McLoughlin & Harris, 1997; Mumford, 1994; van Eijnatten, 1993).

And fourth, it is clear that this literature does identify some generic points of relevance. For example, the literature on technical innovation reveals the political and systemic nature of change. Different parties may view initiatives in quite different ways, often as a function of their roles. A further issue to emerge here is that there is an evolutionary element to such changes, and that this continues after implementation and into use (see McLoughlin & Harris, 1997; Williams, 1997). One implication is that we should consider such changes over their life cycle (i.e., from strategy through to use and adaptation).

KEY ISSUES

In this section, we examine six key interconnected issues in the practice of change management, and apply to them ideas from the areas of operations management and sociotechnical thinking. The six issues are concerned with:

- a business process perspective on change
- change as ''push'' or ''pull'' systems
- the roles of users
- a systems perspective
- the functions of change management
- the language of change management.

A business process perspective on change

One of the major innovations in organizational thinking and operations management since the early 1990s has been the emergence of a business process perspective (Hammer & Champy, 1993). Thus, most organizations now recognize the need to simplify and integrate their core business processes as a way of providing effective services. In part this is an attempt to counter the longstanding domination of functional vertical hierarchies and ''silos'' in organizations, and to try to think and organize laterally across the organization. It is now commonplace, for example, to argue that we should not separate out and fragment the ordering process from the billing process, assembly from test, or design from manufacture. The reason for such a change in emphasis lies in the longstanding dissatisfaction with separate, fragmented processes (see Womack et al., 1990). For example, the separation of design from manufacturing can lead to designs that are difficult and/or expensive to manufacture. Costs, delays, conflicts, and customer dissatisfaction in such circumstances are common. Whilst the coordination and integration of these activities may be difficult to achieve in practice, in part because it usually involves some organizational restructuring, the logic is commonly accepted (for example, see Bevan, 1996).

We think it salutary to ask the question: How well has this way of thinking been adopted in the practice of change management? Unfortunately our experiences are not encouraging. In the area of software development, for example, the use of ''waterfall methods'' is common. Using such methods, a software development project works through various sequentially organized stages, typically including strategy, feasibility, conceptual design, detailed design, programming, implementation, use, and maintenance. Whilst the precise labelling and organizing of the stages varies depending on the methods adopted, the broad thrust is consistent.

There are several problems with such approaches. First, different people tend to be involved at different stages—for example, the people undertaking the strategic thinking tend not to be the ones undertaking the design, and these again are different from those who end up using the system. Second, fragmentation is almost always accompanied by differences in goals and objectives, and this can often lead to conflict and turf wars. Third, the opportunity for feedback loops in the process is limited (and hence the label "waterfall" methods). And fourth, this lack of continuity and feedback means it is difficult to influence, and learn from, one another. Bearing in mind that software development processes of this kind may involve many people with different forms of expertise, moving in and out of this system over a period of months and years, we can see how problems might arise. Viewed from a business process perspective, such an approach is unduly fragmented—it is a poor organization design for the provision of learning, collaboration, and effective solutions. (For a fuller development of these arguments, see Clegg, Waterson, & Axtell, 1997b.)

It is our argument that this fragmented approach to change is not limited to the field of software development. The lack of continuity between the people who set the strategy, design the new way of working, implement it, use it, then maintain or adapt it, is common. The difficulties of building in feedback loops in the process are also common, and these are often manifest in a lack of "user participation" (see later), and the widespread lack of evaluation of such changes (two potential mechanisms for providing feedback) (Holman et al., 2000).

The generic point we are making is that change processes in organizations are commonly fragmented, and appear not to have been designed bearing in mind the powerful logic underlying business process thinking. This fragmentation can be revealed in a number of ways, one of which is brought home to us in the assumptions that people undertaking change management appear to hold concerning the potential role of social scientists in this process. Indeed, as social scientists we have, on occasion, been consulted on change initiatives, often relatively late in the day. A common perception is that the "people problem" is one that arises during implementation, and furthermore, that social scientists can help get people "on board". For example, we can help devise communications strategies to assist readiness for change and commitment to it. Putting to one side the potentially manipulative aspects of such requests, they are also fundamentally mistaken in other ways. In particular, such perspectives separate the design of an initiative from its implementation, and this has implications for the role of users to which we return later.

To summarize, the critical point is that many change programmes are unnecessarily fragmented, having failed to adopt a business process logic that lays stress on continuity. One major problem with fragmented

systems of this kind is that they provide poor opportunities for learning and collaboration. On the other hand, fragmented systems are excellent for generating conflict! It is very easy in such systems for one interest group to blame another for any failure or shortfall that may occur. We need to replace fragmented approaches to change management with a more continuous and process-based view. This will have a number of positive consequences and some of these are described in the following sections.

Change as ''push'' or ''pull'' systems

Here we wish to make a distinction common in manufacturing operations and often associated with just-in-time thinking. The distinction is between manufacturing systems that ''push'' products through the process, as opposed to those that ''pull'' through products at such time as they are required by customers. The former approach is supply driven, whilst the latter is customer focused (see, for example, Goldratt & Cox, 1984; Ledford, 1995; Womack et al., 1990). The principal benefits of the latter approach are that inventory levels (and thereby costs) are lower, that lead times are reduced, and that customers have their needs met more effectively. Many manufacturing companies have made efforts since the early 1990s to move towards ''pull'' systems.

We now wish to apply this logic to the field of change management. In the section above we argued that change management should be seen as a continuous process, but the point here is that such a process could be dominated by a push logic or a pull logic.

Our experience is that most change management initiatives are push systems in which senior managers and various types of expert push change initiatives into parts of their organizations. In the example used in the previous section, waterfall methods are push methods. Whilst we accept that user requirements may be ''captured'' in the early stages of a change programme, many change initiatives are pushed through until such time as they are handed over to their users during implementation and use.

Our argument is that those undertaking change programmes may have much to learn by adopting a pull perspective. In this logic, the users of the new way of working are responsible for pulling through the changes that they need to undertake their work effectively. This has massive implications for the role of users, and also for the adoption of a more systemic approach to change, two issues to which we return later. We note that such pull approaches would be greatly facilitated by the proactive climate described by Fay, Lührmann, and Kohl (2004 this issue).

It is important to note that the term ''user'' is applied here (and throughout this article) in a nonhierarchical sense. The users include the

recipients of change (i.e., the end users of some new practice or initiative) and those managing the areas in which the changes have been introduced.

To use an example, one of the authors worked with Lyons Confectionery. The company make confectionery products for sale through retail outlets, and this involves the distribution of a range of products nationally using a fleet of several hundred delivery vans. The Sales Director (i.e., the end user responsible for this function) was keen to improve various aspects of the performance of the van sales and delivery operation, and was planning to introduce hand-held computers for use by the delivery staff. The potential benefits were quicker and more accurate sales and stock information, improved manufacturing and delivery schedules, and increased sales. The Director decided to run trials of various hand-held computers available on the market, but first he and his team spent time working out how they wanted the new way of working to operate. To do this, he involved his regional sales managers, some delivery drivers and depot workers, and people from sales administration, customer services, and manufacturing (i.e., all the groups linked in the process). The company's information technology specialist was involved in the project, but as one of the experts advising the project team. In the language used above, the Sales Director and the people in his division were the prospective users of the new system who pulled through the new working arrangements (and technology) that they needed to meet their operational needs. This proved to be one of the most successful change projects we have ever witnessed. We now consider in more detail the role of end users.

The roles of users

We have argued above that most change initiatives can be characterized as fragmented push systems. This has various implications for the roles of users and, in our view, helps explain some of the issues that dominate the change management literature. There are two issues that we wish to address here. The first is concerned with the whole notion of ''user participation''. The second is focused on the topic of ''resistance to change''.

One of the features commonplace in the literature on change management concerns the plea for user participation. The argument is that users need to have information, interaction and influence concerning the changes they will be experiencing (see, for example, Heller, Pusic, Strauss, & Wilpert, 1998; Wall & Lischeron, 1977). This is one of the enduring foci of change programmes in practice, and the change management literature (for recent examples, see Antoni, 2004 this issue Kujala, 2003). The main benefits of user involvement are held to lie in improved design and improved commitment to change, with, usually, more emphasis on the latter. The

common lament is that user participation is "a good thing", but that it happens too infrequently in practice.

Here we wish to take issue with the ways in which this debate is often constructed in organizations. Unfortunately, if we examine these pleas for participation carefully they are usually couched and phrased in a particular way. Thus, they usually can be paraphrased to read something like: "We, the experts in some new technology or technique, are having difficulty getting you (the users and recipients of some kind), to participate in this change programme—please join in."

Note here that the legitimate owners of this change initiative are assumed to be the experts who, in the language used earlier, are pushing some change initiative at the user, who is being asked to join in.

We note that this debate is rarely, if ever, constructed the other way round. How often have you heard the issue of participation presented in terms such as these: "We, the users and managers of this new way of working, are having trouble, getting you (the experts in new technology or technique or way of working), to join with us in developing our new way of working—please come and join us."

Note here the reversal in mindset, one that flows directly from the notion of a "pull" system for change. In this view, the people who end up using and managing the new systems are the owners of it, and they are asking various sorts of experts to participate with them in its development.

The widespread approach to user participation reflects an important underlying mindset about change programmes. In this perspective, the experts appear to own the change programme, and they (may) spend time seeking to find ways to get the end users to participate, usually in its implementation. The legitimate owners of the new technology, technique, or way of working are the experts, usually until such time as they hand it over for operation and use. At that stage, the users and their managers take over, and the experts move on to other projects. As we argued above, this runs counter to all the received wisdoms regarding the need for process thinking and for continuity. It also fails to acknowledge the potential power of pull systems in which the customer is king.

Our argument is that we need a new mindset, one that moves the debate on from the current concerns and arguments regarding user participation. The new ways of working (involving new technologies, techniques, social systems, or whatever) should be pulled through and owned by the people who will manage and use them. At various stages in the life cycle of these new ways of working, other expertise is required. The new mindset replaces push systems with pull systems, and the issue of user participation with user ownership. The problem now becomes one of finding ways of getting various forms of expertise to contribute to the effective design, implementa-

tion, and use of the new way of working. The legitimate ownership of the new systems rests throughout with the user community.

We do recognize the irony here of social scientists arguing against the notion of user participation. Esteemed colleagues have invested considerable energy and expertise in trying to persuade organizations and their managers to take users seriously. They have fought long and hard in this territory (us too!). We do not do this lightly, but we do believe the mindset underlying the notion of user participation includes the seeds of its own downfall. As such we now prefer the notion of user ownership in a pull system.

Related to much of the above, one often hears and reads of the problem of "resistance to change" (for example, see King & Anderson, 1995). This appears especially the case when organizations are introducing radical new ways of working, typically involving new technologies. Usually when one hears this lament, it is by "innovative" managers whose subtext appears to be something like: "We have all these wonderful new technologies—but people don't like change—worse, some of them actively resist it—what can we do about them?"

This ongoing managerial lament deserves some challenge. It may be the case, for example, that the employees have experienced a range of managerial initiatives over the previous few years, and that, as a result, they are not sanguine (BOHECA!). They may believe they will lose out as a result of the change, for example through job losses or work intensification. They may believe that management are incompetent and have a history of ineffective and wasteful change programmes that do not meet the needs of the company. They may be somewhat cynical and believe that some managers are promoting particular changes for personal career reasons (see later). There may be many reasons why the employees resist change. Indeed, if we put users in the position where changes are pushed at them at the end of a fragmented process, and where they have little influence over design, as we have argued above is often the case, then one might argue that "resistance to change" is one of the few ways in which they can exert some control. Indeed it seems somewhat ironic to allow users relatively little say over, and control of, change, and then blame them when they display adverse reactions.

Interestingly too, this labelling is usually projected "down" the organizational hierarchy, and rarely "upwards". Very rarely is the accusation of "resistance" laid at the door of senior managers. We find it helpful to think of this topic using conjugating verbs. Consider the following as a demonstration: "*I* am an honest sceptic." "*You* are a tad cautious." "*They* are resistant to change." Thus, it is OK for me to be sceptical when faced with change, in fact the adoption of the position of "honest sceptic" is laudable. But when "they" display such attitudes and behaviours, then I interpret these as "resistance". Of course, it has to be said that the use of this

language can be purposeful in that it serves to put pressure on employees to accept the ''legitimate'' drives for change on the part of their managers. Resisting change thereby is cast as negative, backward looking, self-serving, and based on emotional, and thereby inappropriate, reactions.

It will be clear by now that we do not like this term, and that we believe it serves little useful purpose (except for those trying to push changes through). Again a new mindset is required. Part of this will be achieved by the suggestion above that the end user community and their managers become the legitimate owners of the work system in which they are engaged, and that change should be construed as a pull, rather than push, process.

Another irony exists here—the people who develop and implement new systems and ways of working sometimes talk about the users (who in effect are their internal customers) in ways in which they would never dream of talking about their external (paying) customers. For someone in a sales or marketing function to describe their external customers as ''moaning minnies'', as ''resistant to change'', as ''failing to understand what is on offer'', and argue that ''they will get used to it in time'', would be regarded as professional suicide. And yet, we have heard all these descriptions of internal customers of change, i.e., the users. A genuine leap in mindset would be achieved if we started treating our internal customers like we do our external ones.

A counter view should be addressed here. We have been asked whether or not this change in logic simply moves the problem into another area. This could happen in two ways. First, it could be that the problem of ''resistance to change'' becomes ''resistance to ownership''—thus, what if the user community does not choose to act as owners of a work system who actively pull changes towards themselves? Of course, this is entirely possible. However, we have seen successful instances of this approach (see above), and furthermore, there are strong theoretical grounds for hypothesizing that users are more likely to engage in changes over which they have some determination (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1992), control (Cherns, 1976), or autonomy (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), than they are with changes in which they are cast in a largely passive role. The second problem concerns those people who previously were the ''pushers'' of change. They are now cast in the role of supporters to the user owners, and they may regard this as a diminution of their status (as was potentially the case for the IT expert in Lyons Confectionery above). This is equivalent to the inclusion in manufacturing cells of people, such as quality inspectors, who previously did not necessarily see themselves as part of the shopfloor. This can certainly be a problem, but it may be relatively short-lived, and it should be counterbalanced by an improvement in system performance.

To summarize here, we wish to argue that we need to replace our existing mindsets about the role of users, currently dominated by concerns over user

participation and resistance. In our view, the "problems" of user participation and resistance to change are the inevitable outcomes of the widespread adoption of fragmented and push-based approaches to change. The logical corollary of adopting a process and pull approach to change, is that the end users of change initiatives become the owners of the new way of working. They are the owners of the change who pull through the changes they need to undertake their work. Other experts, whether they work in IT, or with whatever form of expertise, are there to support the users in getting the new ways of working that they need. This is not without its problems, but it has the further benefit that it helps engender a systemic approach to change, and we develop this argument below.

A systems perspective

At the beginning of this article, we alluded to the view, prevalent in the academic literature, that change initiatives are systemic in nature, typically involving changes both to the technical and the social system. In practice however, the majority of organizational change programmes pay most attention to new technologies, techniques, and tools, as opposed to the social (human and organizational) aspects of change. (We accept this is more likely to be true in the general management and operations management field, than it is in the area of organization development.) To take the example of companies introducing new information and communications technologies, they usually focus most of their attention and resources on the technology, rather than on getting the human and organizational issues right. For example, Clegg et al. (1997a) reported that "IT remains technology-led ... IT is not seen in an integrated way as raising sets of related business and organizational issues" (p. 859).

A related study by Holman et al. (2000) examined a wider range of change programmes, including total quality initiatives, supply chain partnering, teamworking, empowerment, new technology, business process reengineering, and others. Their conclusions (p. 128) are similar:

> change tends to be technology or technique led ... other aspects of the organization, such as human resource practices, job and work design, accounting systems, and supply chains, are often considered late in the change process, or only when it is clear that a problem has arisen. One result of this is that changes to these systems are rushed through with little consultation and participation. Another outcome is that the resource implications of such changes are not costed in the project plan. A consequence being that such changes are under resourced and inadequately implemented.

And finally here, a study of e-business by Clegg et al. (2002a) found that the overwhelming majority of a group of leading experts from a variety of

backgrounds agreed that it was either imperative or very important that companies adopt a total systems approach to e-business. However, most of these experts reported that, in practice, companies focus mainly on the technology when developing their e-businesses.

The evidence over time and across instances points to a general finding. In most companies, and for most of the time, the technical commands more attention than the social. The focus of much change management is unduly partial.

Earlier we argued in favour of an approach to change involving pulling rather than pushing, and this will have a further benefit. We have on several occasions been involved in change programmes where there has not been enough attention paid to the human and organizational aspects of the change. We have then tried to persuade project managers of the need to take on board issues concerned with new working practices, new job designs, new business processes, and the like. This has often proved futile. Trying to persuade busy and overwhelmed people, usually heavily focused on technologies and techniques, that their projects and problems are more difficult and complex than they realized, is not well received. This is easier to understand when we recognize that project managers usually are not expected to address these issues, are not rewarded for doing so, and have no particular expertise in these areas. This is not a recipe for success.

But if we adopt the position argued above, that it is the end-user community and their managers who are pulling changes towards themselves, then the logic is different. These same issues are interesting to this community, because they are critical to future success and they are issues with which they will be dealing every day.

An example helps illustrate the argument. One of the authors undertook some projects in a large company manufacturing computers. Managers in this particular factory were used to introducing new technologies and new ways of working into their production processes, but they were also used to disappointing results from such investments. As a result they changed how they managed their change projects. For each major change project, the line manager who was to become the customer/recipient of some new technology and/or way of working (and thereby responsible for its use), was made the project manager responsible for its design and implementation. If, for some reason, this were not possible, the project manager of the change would remain with the change after implementation, and would be responsible for its line management once in use. In one way or another, the same person became responsible for the design, implementation, and use of the new way of working. As such, continuity and a process-based view were promoted, and the users experienced some ownership. One direct result was that change projects were no longer geared to, and managed against, the problem of getting some technology or technique implemented. Because responsibility

now extended to actual use, the focus became much more systemic. Project teams were now much more interested in the detail of how the system would work once it was operational. Working practices, work organization, and user issues now became critical. The company believed this alteration in project management was the single most important innovation it undertook to improve the performance of its change initiatives.

To recap here, we have argued that many companies focus too much on the technical aspects of change, and do not adopt a sufficiently systemic view of the changes they are undertaking. This more systemic orientation is entirely consistent with a mindset in which change is a continuous process pulled and owned by the users.

The functions of change management

Implicit in much of the work on change management is the assumption that changes are pursued to meet various valued organizational goals. Thus, for example, a company may introduce a new way of working to reduce costs, to improve quality, and thereby to increase the company's competitiveness. These may be seen as the manifest goals of the change initiative. Of course, in practice, other goals may also be important, and further, these may vary depending on the particular stakeholder group involved.

Let us illustrate this argument using the technique of Soft Systems Analysis, developed by Peter Checkland at Lancaster University (Checkland, 1981). Part of this technique involves the analyst in deliberately searching for different ways of looking on a complex system. Take the simple example of a British pub. A pub can be seen in a variety of ways, for example as a system for: enabling friends to meet and socialize; providing entertainment; initiating adolescents into adulthood; attracting tourists; making profits; scheduling the work of the police; providing work for taxi drivers; dispensing drugs; relieving stress; providing employment; and so on.

All of these, and more, are possible ways of construing the simple pub. Let us use that same idea and apply it to a change programme in a company, using the example of a company trying to introduce e-commerce. The change towards e-commerce could be seen as an initiative for: improving organizational effectiveness; keeping ahead of the competition; impressing the City and the shareholders; creating an image of modernity and customer focus; learning new ways of thinking and working; providing development opportunities for key individuals; enhancing the careers of managers in key roles; reinvigorating existing managerial agendas; attracting resources and power to the project team; and so on.

The point we wish to make here is that change management usually has the manifest agenda of improving organizational performance in some way. But any change initiative may well have many other latent functions. Thus,

career-conscious managers may see the opportunity to be centrally engaged in a major change programme as a good way of developing their expertise and their careers. Large change programmes are excellent ways of attracting significant organizational resources, of generating power, and building up useful networks and alliances. Senior managers may also engage in successive change programmes to keep getting home to employees enduring messages regarding the need to raise quality, reduce costs, etc. The precise nature of any particular change programme is less important here than is the continuing rhetoric and education on organizational competitiveness. Certain change programmes may also be important ways of demonstrating to the City that the company is taking an issue seriously, that it is engaging in appropriate behaviours.

One can elaborate this argument further but the general points are clear. Change management initiatives are multifunctional endeavours that involve the different interest groups and stakeholders in different ways. Pluralism is the norm (Fox, 1974). It is oversimplistic just to focus on the apparent manifest goals, especially as stated in some change programme and investment case. Other goals will also be present and these need recognition and attention.

We have been challenged as to whether or not such pluralism becomes any easier to manage in a continuous pull system (of the kind we are advocating), than under the normal ways of managing change (that we have been criticising). We acknowledge that pluralism is inevitable, but argue that the problems of different objectives are reduced in two ways. First, the organization of work using continuous (as opposed to fragmented) processes reduces the scope for conflicting objectives. For example, look no further than the conflicts that used to be common between design and manufacture, or between assembly and test. And second, the move to a pull (as opposed to a push) system is likely to give primacy to the objectives of the group of people who will operate and be responsible for the new work system. This is equivalent to the sociotechnical notion of handling variances at source (see Cherns, 1976).

The language of change management

Several references have been made in earlier sections to the language that we use in this field. Here we have chosen to draw them together because they help reveal the mindsets which we believe underpin this area. We also believe the language that is used helps create and sustain some inappropriate mindsets (Argyris & Schon, 1978). As such we argue that several of these terms should be dropped from common usage, or, at the very least, should be treated with *considerable scepticism* when they are adopted. More positively, we advocate that these terms are replaced with other phrases that

reflect different underlying mindsets, of the kinds we have proposed earlier in this article.

In particular, the very phrase "change management" seems to us inappropriate and potentially misleading. It conjures up a focus on the implementation phase (i.e., the change) and rarely appears to embrace a concern for the design of the new working system. Too rarely do change management debates involve discussion of the full life cycle incorporating strategy, design, implementation, use, and evolution, and yet these are part of a continuous process.

Change management also places the focus on managerial issues. Whilst managerial concerns and issues do arise in this area, and are both interesting and legitimate, surely there are other issues and perspectives of equal validity and concern. Why stress the managerial issues? As we have argued, other stakeholders are implicated directly or indirectly in change processes, especially if we adopt a longer life cycle, process-based and multifunctional perspective as we are advocating.

One clear implication here is that we drop the label of "change management" because it betrays too limiting a mindset, one too focused on one part of the life cycle of an initiative, and on one particular (albeit important) interest group. Two alternative phrases seem improvements to us. One alternative would be to use the term "system design and use". This helps capture the (inevitable) systemic nature of changes, along with the continuous processual (or life cycle) aspects. It avoids undue concentration on managerial issues. A second alternative would be to use the term "organization development" (we are grateful to one of the referees for this suggestion). This stresses the open-ended and evolutionary aspect of change. Either alternative seems to us an improvement. The underlying point is that the very term "change management" both reveals and helps sustain several partialities (concerning timing, focus, and interest group) that do not seem useful in what should be seen as a systemic issue.

We also advocate that we should challenge the use of terms such as user participation and user resistance to change when they are used in this area. In line with the arguments above, we prefer a concern for user ownership. Resistance to change seems to us a term of limited usefulness.

PARTIALITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

At the core of the each of the above issues lies the notion of partiality. We are claiming that the practice of change management in many organizations reveals and reflects too limited a view. More specifically, organizations are often too partial in their practice and thinking of change management, in particular regarding the way they fragment the process and manage it as a push system, the roles of users and experts, the lack of a systems perspective,

and the functions of change. The language that is used reflects, reveals, and helps sustain these partialities.

We believe that a recognition of the existence of these partialities and their underlying mindsets helps reveal why many change initiatives are so often ineffective in meeting their organizational goals. Indeed, we would argue it would be very surprising indeed if the use of fragmented, push-based systems of change that do not address systemic issues, nor treat their users appropriately, were actually able to deliver effective new ways of working.

We have been challenged on whether or not the ideas presented in this article are any less partial than those we are criticising. In answer, we believe that the emphasis we have placed on a continuous process through the life cycle of change, on a whole systems view, and on multiple goals and the recognition of pluralism, are all less partial than the existing practices we have described. In these ways we believe our approach is less partial. We do accept that the replacement of push-based with pull-based systems replaces one owner with another, but we believe this will be more effective and we return to this argument later in the article.

We also predict that change will get harder and more complex to manage. Thus, we do not believe these issues will go away or resolve themselves of their own accord. To illustrate this argument, we use a product analogy. One of the authors is working with a large aerospace engineering company that designs, manufactures, and supports very complex products. The company is persistently having to improve the performance capabilities of its product lines to maintain and enhance its market share in a highly competitive environment. As it does this, it finds that it has to learn of new interdependencies within its products. Thus, as it extends the performance of its products, the company has to learn of new ways in which the product behaves under more challenging circumstances. In systems language, new interdependencies have to be learned as slack is taken out of the system. We predict that the same things will happen in processes as is happening with products. Thus, as the changes we make in our new ways of working get more complex, perhaps involving increasingly global activities, as they increasingly incorporate more complex interactions between people and advanced technologies, and as we continue to try to reduce lead times, then we will need to understand more of the systemic complexities with process. Our speculation then is that processes will get more complex, more tightly coupled, and involve less slack (see Clegg, Icasati-Johanson, & Bennett, 2001). Because these are the very circumstances where partial perspectives on change will be especially ineffective, these problems will become more, rather than less, important. The implication is that change management activities will get harder to manage and rates of failure, of the kind discussed at the beginning of this article, will get higher.

At this stage, the interested reader might reasonably ask two questions:

- How are such partialities sustained?
- What can we do about them?

We try to address the second question in the next section. As for the first, we have found useful parallels with the analysis presented by Karl Weick (1996). He was exercised by the need for experts in a domain to take stock of the tools that they carry and use. He considered why it was that two sets of fire-fighters in the USA failed to drop their heavy tools when running away from forest fires out of control, when, with the benefit of hindsight, this would have saved several of their lives. He uses this as a vehicle for analysing the situation facing scholars of organizations, arguing we should periodically take stock of our tools to ensure we are not too heavily laden to cope with dangerous and fast-changing circumstances. He argues: "There is no shortage of candidates for tools that weigh us down and preclude lightness" (Weick, 1996, p. 312).

Weick (1996) was not focused specifically on the area of change management, but his points do apply. Furthermore, we have added some of our own views to his original list. Thus, people are likely to persist with their tools and mindsets when:

- there are no clear, unambiguous reasons to change
- they don't trust the people telling them to change
- they are under pressure and they choose to trust in the familiar
- replacement tools are not proven (or worse, do not exist)
- dropping existing tools seems and feels like failure
- everyone else is using the same tools
- the tools are part of the group's professional identity ("our tools are us")
- use of the tools conveys power and legitimacy to their users
- the tools serve and further the interests of their users.

If we use the argument that our mindsets about change are part of our professional "tools" in this area, we can begin to see how difficult it may be to enact changes of the kind we are advocating. Weick argues that "people have multiple interdependent, socially coherent reasons for doing what they do" (p. 308).

Overall, we are advocating that the people who undertake change in organizations need to change their mindsets. In keeping with the arguments in this article, we believe this will be easier to achieve if such changes are pulled into this domain by their users (i.e., by people like ourselves engaged in system design and use).

WAYS FORWARD

We have argued above that our thinking and understanding about change management is too partial on a number of issues, and speculated that this helps explain why such change initiatives so often disappoint.

Before discussing the ways forward, we wish to address the issue of whether or not the views we have offered are any more likely to be successful if adopted. Here we offer three defences of our views. First, the ideas hold good currency in the fields of operations management and sociotechnical thinking. For example, to the best of our knowledge, no-one in the field of operations management is advocating the abandonment of continuous pull-based systems. We are simply arguing that these principles can usefully be applied to the field of change management. Second, we have described some case-based instances of where we have seen these ideas successfully put into practice. And third, these ideas do have some theoretical rationale. For example, the advocacy of pull-based user-owned change is entirely consistent with a long tradition of theoretical and empirical work stressing the importance of self-determination (Deci et al., 1992), autonomy at work (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), handling variances at source (Cherns, 1976, 1987), and empowerment (Wall, Cordery, & Clegg, 2002). We believe there is a logical coherence to these arguments, though, obviously, we do accept that they should be subject to serious empirical investigation.

We now return to a discussion of the ways forward. Rather than try to spell out a full manifesto for change, we identify four key issues that we believe lie at the heart of this debate. In each case the target audience comprises all those of us actively engaged in change issues, including practitioners, consultants, and researchers.

First, we need to reject some of the old mindsets and language that dominate the field of change management and replace them with new ones. We have summarized these in Table 1. We need to replace a fragmented and push-based approach to change with more process-based, ''pull systems''. We need to change our view of users, and the dominant concerns we have concerning their participation and their resistance to change. We should regard users as the legitimate owners who pull towards themselves the changes they need to help them undertake their work more effectively. This will help them adopt a more systemic approach in which they deal both with the technical and the social. We also need to take regard of the multifunctional nature of change initiatives. These are major alterations in how we think about change in organizations.

Second, a logical corollary of adopting a systemic view of change, is that we work with other groups and communities to design better ways of working. This requires that we embrace opportunities for multidisciplinary working (for example, with engineers, computer scientists, strategists, and

TABLE 1
Mindsets

Existing dominant mindsets	*Proposed new mindsets*
Fragmented process	Continuous process
Focused on implementation	Focused on strategy, design, implementation and use
Push-based system	Pull-based system
Supply-dominated	Customer-dominated
User participation	User ownership
User resistance to change	Participation of experts
Focus on technology	Systemic view
Focus on organizational goals	Focus on multiple goals
Managerial emphasis	Emphasis on pluralism
"Change management"	"System design and use" or "Organization development"

others), and develop expertise in such collaborations. This will require increasing support for multidisciplinary research and development (see also Norman, 1998). One implication that flows directly from this is that some social science work becomes more prospective. Thus social scientists need to get engaged in the design of new systems and ways of working at the outset. Social science, in this view, has a legitimate role as a design partner and one engaged in predicting the future and helping make it happen (Norman, 1998).

Third, we need to continue to develop and use methods and tools, which foster the inclusion of social science ideas in the design process, and thereby encourage and facilitate the new mindsets we are advocating. Existing methods and tools that provide role models include search conferences (Emery & Purser, 1996), ETHICS (Mumford, 1987, 1994), soft systems analysis (Checkland, 1981), scenarios planning (Axtell, Pepper, Clegg, Wall, & Gardner, 2001), and allocation of function (Waterson, Older Gray, & Clegg, 2003). Such methods and tools provide vehicles for taking such an agenda forward. (Unfortunately there is not space here to describe such tools in any detail.)

And finally, as mentioned above, we propose that these ideas are subjected to empirical test.

Our view is that these are significant changes in the mindsets held by people involved in organizational change programmes. They will require that many people think quite differently about change and how they organize it. We speculate that it requires changes this radical to enable organizations and people to manage and deal with change more effectively. We predict that changes underpinned by the mindsets advocated here would be more effective, but that they will be hard to promote.

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