

and learn about their newly mastered professional skills. People cannot optimize their performance if they are not allowed to make mistakes.

### 3.4 Meta-change

For major changes, the system may go through the Change Model many times. For instance, in learning to ride a bicycle, you may have one stage of learning to ride with training wheels, another of riding without the training wheels, and yet another of riding no-hands. For me, I was stuck in an Old Status Quo stage of riding with hands on the handlebars for about thirty years. Then, once I learned to ride no-hands style, a foreign element arrived in the form of a pot-hole. I went through another change in which I learned to keep at least one hand on the handlebars at all times.

Going through repeated changes can make us excessively anxious, but there is a mitigating factor, called *meta-change*. Not only do systems and individuals learn during the change cycle, but after several complete change cycles, they learn *how to learn*—and learn about the *importance of learning in a change process* as well. At that point, the introduction of the foreign element produces almost total excitement and almost zero anxiety (see Figure 3-3).

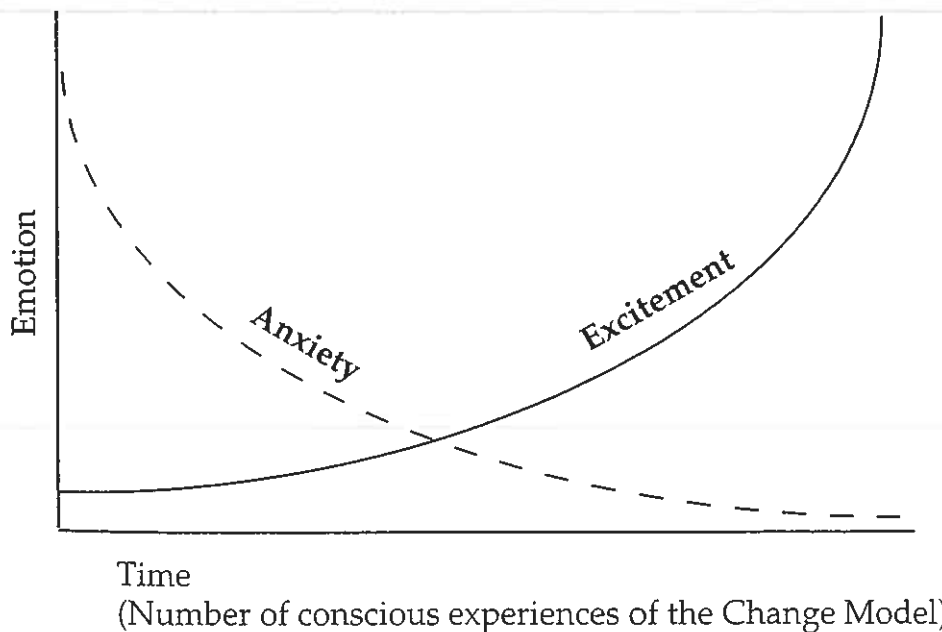


Figure 3-3. After many complete change cycles, systems and individuals learn to learn, and the introduction of the foreign element produces almost total excitement and almost zero anxiety.

Examples of meta-change include

- ❑ The individual with the bad heart takes up swimming, and figures out how to do his job in a less stressful way.
- ❑ Mother goes back to school, and Junior graduates. Father gets laid off, but finds a better position.
- ❑ The building layout is remodeled, and people are moved, under a comprehensive moving plan developed by a team consisting of management, workers, architects, and building support personnel.
- ❑ The software development team regularly promotes old members and brings in trainees to replace them.
- ❑ Further changes are introduced to the inventory system, based on suggestions from the users.
- ❑ The company adds a fifth new software design tool to its tool kit, appointing a special team to facilitate the introduction.

Much of this meta-change takes the form of mastering the choice points in the Satir Change Model (Figure 3-1). People recognize when they are trying to reject or accommodate the foreign element. They learn to be patient when seeking escape from Chaos through the transforming idea. They appreciate the need for Practice, both in themselves and others. By knowing where they are and what's happening to them, they improve their sense of timing, and their attitudes about change are transformed.

By the third or fourth similar cycle, people begin to feel luscious excitement at the prospect of a new cycle of growth. They feel alive, healthy, and creative. Some people around them may be frightened or put off, but experienced change artists are able to deal in a truly helpful way with those to whom the prospect of change is a threat.

### 3.5 Change in the Anticipating Organization

The state of excitement and readiness that derives from meta-change is why I call the Pattern 4 culture the *Anticipating* culture.<sup>5</sup> What participants in such a culture are anticipating is the next challenge, the next change.

Anticipation can be a blessing or a curse. A great deal of the trouble we have in experiencing change comes from a false set of expectations engendered by oversimplified change models. A more accurate change model helps by making our expectations more realistic.

In organizational life, for example, we are often expected to do business as usual while a change is taking place. In reality, the relationship between performance and change is what we saw in Figure 2-1: not very smooth at all. The smooth performance of the Learning Curve Model, by contrast, is obtained by averaging many Satir Change Model's performance curves, which smooths out all the jagged oscillations (Figure 1-8). Such a smoothed model may be fine

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### 3.6 Help

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for gross, overall planning, but it totally misleads the working manager who has to deal with the oscillations day to day. If your model says that good change is smooth and emotionless, you can easily get upset by every small deviation from plans, and then you can get upset about being upset. As a consequence, you'll be even less able to manage your own changes.

If you can take account of these oscillations in your plans, change becomes less stressful. That's one reason change becomes easier with each new cycle: Your model is more realistic, so you don't make change harder by defeating yourself with romantic expectations. Moreover, as meta-change occurs, the performance curve for each individual actually becomes smoother. In an Anticipating (Pattern 4) organization, the Satir Change Model and the Learning Curve Model converge to some extent, making planning by averages more reasonable.

Historically, in software engineering organizations, most strategic change plans haven't worked out. Tools are purchased but sit on the shelf. Methodologies are worked at for years, but never take hold. Training programs are introduced with a bang but die with a whimper. Then, as Naomi Karten says, there are the fads:

People buy into the latest-and-greatest fad and plunge full speed ahead to implement it without seeing that the change people must go through is so great that the odds of it working are slim. Reengineering is a good (that is, bad) example. Suddenly, the great gurus of reengineering are conceding that they underestimated the minor matter of the human element.

In some of these cases, there was no plan at all. Even when there was a plan, however, there was no attention to the individual response to change. That's why the Anticipating (Pattern 4) organization needs both change planners and change doers, or change artists, which will be discussed in the following chapters.

### 3.6 Helpful Hints and Suggestions

1. My colleague Fredric Laurentine relates the Competence/Consciousness Model to McLyman's Zone Theory:

When people are on a fast track, they never hit conscious competence (CC) because they are transferred before they reach full understanding of their job/effectiveness. Without reaching CC a few times in your career, you are apt to be insecure in your own ability—although the people around you may be seeing your competence.

My own experience as a consultant gave me a CC experience that really anchored my self-esteem. And recent experience growing a job up our company hierarchy over a few years has done the same.

2. Norm Kerth comments: "I have had great success by tying the Change Model to the development cycle—keeping a team in the Green Zone. At the end of every project, we do a retrospective review and ask, 'What do we do differently next time?' The team selects their own foreign element. We combat postpartum depression—while the next project is ramping up—by initiating a program to work through Chaos and Integration and Practice.

"For example, we know object-orientation is in our future, so let's get a C++ compiler. But let's just use it as a 'better-C' to get acquainted with it as a tool. Let's try objects in just one small area. Let's see what we can learn if we treat everything over the network as an object."

3. Change requires patience. John Stevens tells this story from the martial arts:

Once, a young man petitioned a great swordsman to admit him as a disciple. "I'll act as your live-in servant and train ceaselessly. How long will it take me to learn everything?"

"At least ten years," the master replied.

"That's too long," the young man protested. "Suppose I work twice as hard as everyone else. Then how long will it take?"

"Thirty years," the master shot back.

"What do you mean?" the anguished student exclaimed. "I'll do anything to master swordsmanship as quickly as possible!"

"In that case," the master said sharply, "you will need fifty years. A person in such a hurry will be a poor student."<sup>4</sup>

We can understand this story in terms of the Change Model, particularly the Zone Theory. A student in this much hurry to change will stay perpetually in the Red Zone, and never advance. Indeed, the harder he works, the slower the change.

4. Jim Highsmith observes: "I like the Satir model, especially the choice points shown in the figure. [See Figure 3-1.] Most writers on change management sometimes make it seem that everything is/should always be changing, and that all change is good. The figure has another side that should be discussed: about how a person or organization rejects 'bad' changes. The 'escapes' from the process—Can't Transform, Reject, and so on—can be positive ways of rejecting changes that really shouldn't be made. Just as reviews should accommodate an outcome that says to halt the project, a change model ought to reject ill-conceived changes—and this model works both ways."

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### 3.7 Summary

- ✓ According to the Satir Change Model, the change process contains many choice points—points at which the individual or organization can respond in one of several ways:
  - The foreign element can be rejected, or not rejected.
  - The foreign element can be accommodated into the old model of reality.
  - The old model can be transformed to receive the foreign element.
  - The transformation can be integrated or not integrated into the model.
  - The transformed model can be mastered or not mastered through practice.
  - In addition, there is the choice of how much time should pass before the explicit introduction of a new foreign element.
- ✓ When management announces a change, many employees will perceive the announcement as a foreign element and attempt to reject it. The first step in dealing with these attempts at rejection is to realize that opposition to a foreign element is perfectly natural, and not a personal attack. Then, listen to the sense of each argument and, more importantly, to the emotional “music” behind it. Responding to the emotions will generally be more successful than trying to counter the arguments.
- ✓ Other people may resort to accommodating the foreign element into their old model, and truly believe they are doing the change. A good strategy here is to be tactful yet explicit in what needs to be done to accomplish the change.
- ✓ A good strategy when introducing change is to emphasize how the changed state resembles the current state. Instead, some people introducing change emphasize how everything is entirely new and different. To be successful at change, you need to show people that they really have a vast amount of knowledge so that the change is only a small, logical increment to their knowledge base.
- ✓ The introduction of a change often fails at the point where the new way must be integrated into practice. In training, real examples give the most effective practice, especially if the environment makes it safe for you to make mistakes and to go at whatever speed is needed to integrate the new material. Practice doesn’t end when classes end; the introduction of new ideas to the actual job needs lots of safety and support from experienced people.

- ✓ Once the change has been integrated into a few working examples, a return to Chaos becomes far less likely, but still possible if conditions are bad enough. Many petty adjustments are required to make any real change work in practice, and much time must be allowed for scaling-up from small examples.
- ✓ Perhaps the most common cause of failing to change is timing—the interference from other changes. Changes do not come in isolation, and McLyman's Zone Theory is an excellent guide to timing the introduction of new foreign elements, based on zones.
- ✓ The Red Zone is the interval of time before a previous foreign element is transformed, accommodated, or rejected. When a new foreign element arrives while the system is in the Red Zone, Chaos from both foreign elements increases. Moreover, the chance of ever finding a transformation for either foreign element decreases, and the likelihood of rejection or accommodation increases.
- ✓ The Yellow Zone is the period during which a previous transformation is still being integrated. When a new foreign element arrives while the system is in the Yellow Zone, chances of successful change are reduced, but not as seriously as with Red Zone foreign elements. With successive Yellow Zone foreign elements, however, the system builds an energy debt. Successful change becomes progressively less likely, and productivity drags.
- ✓ The Green Zone is the time between late Integration and early New Status Quo. When a foreign element arrives in the Green Zone, the system's chances of successful change are maximized. Not only is there no energy debt, but each successful Green Zone change increases the chances for the next.
- ✓ The Gray Zone is all the time after a system has been in Late Status Quo for a while. When a foreign element arrives in the Gray Zone, people have lost some of their meta-change skills, for old learnings about change have lost their usefulness. Without these meta-change skills, change is once again slow and difficult, and the chance of successful change declines.
- ✓ Managers who are in a hurry and press the organization with too many changes too quickly will merely slow down the very changes they are trying to accelerate. Similarly, if managers adopt the strategy of "hit them with a lot of changes, and some will stick," they'll find that in the end, none of them will stick.

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- ✓ Not all parts of the system are in the same zone at the same time. This is true at every level of the organization, right down to the individual. Although change must be managed at a high level, we must never ignore the impact on individuals.
- ✓ Change tends to disrupt the information flow needed to manage change. The most reliable information is the *emotional signals from the people experiencing the change*. Use these signals to determine the appropriate zone strategy, or what kind of information you need to supply.
- ✓ During an aging Status Quo stage, old feedback mechanisms are eroding slowly. Information is not getting through. Behavior is less predictable, and to make it more predictable, people often ignore what information does get through. Interventions here should be in the direction of getting people to recognize what is, rather than what it is supposed to be.
- ✓ For major changes, the system may go through the Change Model many times. Not only do systems and individuals learn during the change cycle, but after several complete change cycles, they "learn to learn"—and they also learn about the importance of learning in a change process. Experienced change artists feel such high self-worth and unlimited coping ability that they are able to deal in a truly helpful way with those to whom the prospect of change is a threat.

### 3.8 Practice

1. Norm Kerth's retrospective approach ensures that

**Every project is also an experiment in improving the process.**

This experimental approach is typical of the Anticipating (Pattern 4) organization. Hold a retrospective for your next project (or project stage) completion, and decide what to change for the next project. Make a plan and follow through, noting the reaction to a self-induced foreign element.

2. Sue Petersen asks: The place in the Satir Change Model for a healthy organization is New Status Quo, but is the best we can hope for an oscillation between New Status Quo and Chaos? Chaos seems frightening, and it is this fear that keeps an organization denying foreign elements, until its members finally go into a *huge* and undeniable Chaos. Create a diagram of effects showing this dynamic, and where the choice points are for management.
3. Sue Petersen adds, "I like the descriptions of the change process, but they're very N. As an S, it helps me to anchor these descriptions to an

actual project, with actual events and the responses that various people gave. I'd suggest that other S's reading the book would like to do this as an exercise, with a change project they know personally." Do this, and share your observations (if possible) with a mixed S/N group. Observe what the two groups notice and omit from their descriptions.<sup>7</sup>

4. Now here's a similar exercise from an N personality type, Naomi Karten (with an example to help the S's):

I have found it helpful to look within at my own personal voyages through the change cycle. It's instructive to identify things that are foreign elements for me, to observe how it feels when I'm in Chaos, and to reflect on what kinds of things serve as transforming ideas and how it feels to emerge from the Chaos. This awareness makes the entire process less stressful and makes it easier to believe that the Chaos really will come to an end.

For example, when I'm asked to give a presentation that's significantly different in some way from what I've done before, it's sometimes a major foreign element. I'm sometimes thrown into total Chaos, unable to concentrate or organize my thoughts. Eventually, a transforming idea appears. For a presentation I'm preparing now, the transforming idea came via a conference call with the event sponsor to help me understand the industry and its service issues. Suddenly, ideas flowed. I'll slip back into Chaos a few times before I'm through preparing this talk. But the difference now from days of old is that I now have the Satir Change Model to provide a framework for what I'm experiencing. So I recognize the pattern and simply accept it as the way I react to this type of foreign element. I know I'm in a sort of Chaos, but I also know it won't last forever. And I know what sorts of things may be sources of transforming ideas.

So, stated as a Practice item, it would be something like: Think about situations in which you have experienced the change process, and reflect on what the foreign elements have been, how the Chaos felt, and where the transforming ideas came from. How can this awareness help you at a meta-change level?

To which I would only add, Share these experiences with some friends to see what you can learn by comparing notes.

5. Lynne Nix comments: Since change happens one person at a time, we also have to consider the effects on each person of seeing other people in different stages of the Satir Change Model. What is the effect on others of the early adapters? What is the effect on others of the late adapters? What steps can a manager take to diminish the harmful effects and accentuate the helpful ones?
6. Janice Wormington suggests: Discuss how an organization remains in the Green Zone. Brainstorm as many tactics and strategies as you can.

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