



## Changing the Way We Change

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Why is it that most organizations struggle tremendously to make real change? Whether consolidating a merger, re-engineering business processes, restructuring, changing value propositions, introducing new IT systems, or even relocating, all too often the change process is derailed by the resistance of employees. The challenge of change increases even more when the group is diverse and incorporates many cultures, nationalities, ages, genders religious beliefs, social classes and work experience.

When there is change, often there is resistance. The most common reasons people resist change are:

1. A desire not to lose something of value
2. A misunderstanding of the change and its implications
4. A low tolerance for change
5. Different perspectives on costs and benefits
6. To save face
7. A belief that the change does not make sense for the organization



During one change process, one of the staff began to always wear sunglasses into the meetings. She was so angry about the situation she decided to make a visual statement that she was not going to be engaged with the group. Another person in another organization during a change process started to wear more casual clothes and look less professional indicating that he just didn't care anymore. This resistance to change consequently creates a challenge for leaders because it is one of the most powerful drivers of human behaviour.

Most organizations make two fatal mistakes when it comes to dealing with resistance to change. First, they underestimate how important, deeply rooted cultures, behaviours and thinking styles play a part in the change process. Secondly, they underestimate what is required to change those behaviours and thinking styles and ensure the change isn't interpreted as a threat.

So how can an organisation successfully change with so many differences and so much resistance? In reality if you don't convince people that change is beneficial, they may initially comply yet consciously or subconsciously become saboteurs to the change effort. (because their old established behaviours and thinking patterns are rooted in a belief that says 'this is how I've survived around here so why change?' comfortable than the new ones). No matter what culture you are from, people resist change because people:

- i) Like to do what is familiar
- ii) Respond to threats of survival by resisting or fighting
- iii) Respond first with emotion then with logic

As a leader you cannot impose change - people and teams need to believe their solutions and responses to challenges are valued and therefore become part of the solution. The biggest leadership challenge is in creating that buy-in in multi-cultural, often multi-lingual environments.

In 2003 The Evans & Peck Organisational Development team of Barry Brewster and Jeremy Kidner were working in the field of Organisational Development and needed a tool for organisational change initiatives. They wanted a tool to aid communication across cultures, values and languages. Brewster and Kidner worked with cartoonist, Gavin Coates to create the Cartaphor process in Hong Kong. The process, in part, involves building buy-in by facilitating collaborative planning sessions to map out the “Desired Future State” of the organisation. The concepts created from those discussions, are turned into metaphors and the metaphors are turned into pictures in the form of a cartoon. Hence the name Cartaphor (a metaphor drawn in the style of a cartoon) was created.

When an organisation knows they need to change but are not sure how to do it, drawing a picture to depict where you want to go is often more helpful than getting bogged down with words. During the development of a Cartaphor, employees of the organization gather together in a room and begin talking about what they would like their future to hold. They come up with some words and concepts and then they are given the challenge to draw a picture to depict their thoughts. An enormous explosion of ideas begins to happen when you shift from words to pictures. People move away from word smithing and head towards more symbolism. When you think about it, symbols tend to have a longer shelf life in a person’s memory than words do. People think in images and will often use metaphors to better understand a situation. For example you might have heard people say, “In our firm we are a sinking ship” or someone might say, “They are a diamond in the rough” or on a particularly bad day someone might say “I feel like I was just hit by a truck.” When people use these terms they are talking in metaphors and replacing "normal" words in order to help others understand or enjoy our message.

When cartoons and metaphors are combined together in business to impact change, the Cartaphor can help organisations extract knowledge and wisdom from staff and collaboratively use it to develop the final product. When you are dealing with resistance to change, creating this type of visual representation of the situation lets all employees begin to believe their issues are addressed and they see hope for the future through positive visualisations.

The final product, the Cartaphor, provides a visual representation along with a narrative towards changing to reach our ‘Desired Future State’.

Cartaphors increase clarity of the situation and serve as an excellent tool for communicating with all people of all cultures who may speak in different languages and live in different geographic locations. The principles of using Cartaphors for change include:

1. **C**- Create a collaborative environment through facilitation.
2. **A**- Agree on the “current state” of the organisation. What works and what doesn’t.
3. **R**- Reflect on what could be your ‘Desired Future State.
4. **T**- Turn the reflections into a metaphor.
5. **A**- Animate the metaphor- draw it
6. **P**- Precisely define the key learning points and fine tune the message using pilot groups to develop a narrative that allows anyone using the Cartaphor Technology to understand and feel part of the strategy.
7. **H**- Honour the knowledge and wisdom of your people by eliciting feedback. Ask people to comment from within the language of the metaphor.
8. **O**- Operationalise the change by actually looking for evidence of what is working not what is broken.
9. **R**- Reinforce the message by rewarding the behaviour you want and celebrate the success.

A story about developing a Cartaphor for a company begins with an organisation that had a mega project, building one of the largest civil engineering structures in the world, the Venetian Casino in Macau (Special Administrative Region of China). There were many challenges the organisation had to face including pushing people to change some of their current thinking and develop new "relationship management" initiatives with all stakeholders. As you might know Macau is in the middle of a massive explosion in gaming venues. In just 5 years, since the end of the monopoly license agreement with Stanley Ho’s Society the Venetian Casino in Macau the company is generating revenues in excess of the entire Las Vegas strip. This frenetic growth of more than 25 new casinos built over a 12 year period will be employing 20,000 people working on one site during two 12 hour shifts.

This time focused construction project's success relied on dozens of contractors working corporately in unison. This was a change in the way they were use to operating. The group not only needed good Corporate Governance during this project, they needed a way to foresee and resolve issues quickly as they arose. The benefit in using the Cartaphor technology with this group was to get the undiscussables to be discussed, amongst this multi faceted multi cultural group. The Cartaphor shown below was developed in a collaborative exercise with the client to reflect specific learning objectives for consideration as this project moved forward and create a process to ensure minimal delays. Through questioning and the use of metaphors we were able to surface potential and existing issues. This Cartaphor also allowed multi-cultural groups to discuss their ideal outcome in a way that was comfortable and relevant to them. An agreement on what "working in harmony" means to all stakeholders and the group created a pledge which bonded the stakeholders together in their quest for success.



The benefit of using Cartaphors to ‘change the way we change’ is the opportunity you have to create a safe environment to discuss topics and begin to engage people in the process of moving forward. It has been found that Cartaphors can be used in many situations requiring the analysis of a situation, the engaging of dialogue and the building of commitment.

Even reading this article, you can benefit from a Cartaphor. For example, if the Cartaphor above represented your organisation, how would you answer the following questions?

1. Where do you see yourself and your organisation in this picture?
2. Why do you fit into this picture? Why? What role are you playing?
3. What does this picture tell you about how your organization can change and improve?
4. If you asked your subordinate the questions above, what would they say?

One of the many roles a leader plays is as a facilitator in the organisation. When a leader is facilitating a discussion within the protection of a metaphor “undiscussables” become “discussable”!

When working through the process of change, the following are some recommendations for moving forward.

<b>Change Challenge</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
When in denial	Provide information
When in resistance	Listen with ears, eyes and heart
When in exploration	Brainstorm alternatives
When in commitment	Celebrate successes

Since leaders have a responsibility to facilitate, communicate and enable change they can benefit from processes that will generate commitment, participation and help cross the boundaries of language and culture to ensure results are achieved. It is up to the leader to use processes that create the opportunity for releasing huge potential for issue resolution, future achievements and positive change.

In Asia in particular, people are generally reluctant to speak up or give feedback to senior people. People who have used the “protection” of the Cartaphor, notice that people are more comfortable to become engaged in the metaphor, imagine themselves part of it and provide comments that are meaningful where in the past they might have avoided the discussion.

When people have extreme positions that require departure from a standard course of action sometimes passions are inflamed, anxieties rise and insecurities heighten. It is said that the only person that likes change is a wet baby, and even they resist the process. So how can you deal with the reality of resistance? The most intriguing aspect of using Cartaphors to help change the way we change is its power in reinforcing the age old adage, ‘When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change’.