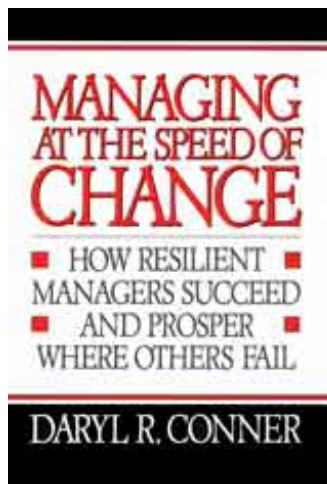


Managing at the Speed of Change

How Resilient Managers Succeed And
Prosper Where Others Fail



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The Big Idea

Written a decade ago but still very useful for today's world, this book will help you if you need to know:

- Why do some people absorb change quicker and adapt faster than others?
- Why do some companies flourish during turbulent times while others flounder?
- Why software systems changes may cause less havoc than moving the paper clips and envelopes to the other room?

With key insights into the fear of change many of us encounter, and many important lessons to understanding how humans, the most controlling type of species on the planet, can better work with change when it happens.

When living beings cannot adapt, they cannot survive. Our children's future is more uncertain than ever, our lives are more complicated with all the new technology presented to us, and like the old adage states, "the only thing constant is change". Human beings and organizations need to know how change affects everything, and what we know today can never really prepare us for tomorrow.

The key questions raised are:

- What distinguishes resilient people from those who suffer future shock?
- Why is major change so difficult to assimilate?
- What are the key elements and the flow of events involved in human transition?
- What roles are central to change in organizational settings?
- How and why resistance to change forms
- How do people become committed to change?
- Why is organizational culture so important to a change's success?
- Why powerful teamwork is at the heart of achieving change objectives

Some myths about change:

- Bureaucracies cannot be changed.
- Change will always be mismanaged.
- It is impossible to understand why people accept or resist change
- Management is inherently insensitive to problems caused during the implementation of change.
- Employees are prone to resist any change that is good for business.

Meet the Beast

The implications of an unanticipated change can torment you from early childhood experiences of moving nomadically from state to state, to job loss or loss of a loved one. Instead of being victims of change, we must learn to work with change.

For businesses today, change is imperative. Darwinian as it may seem, it is the survival of the fittest, whether in the IT business or traditional businesses like banking.

The lily pad riddle

It only takes 29 days for a pond to be nearly suffocated by lily pads, and 24 hours more until it is completely overwhelmed. The idea is to absorb change faster and keep pace with it. Waiting too long to take action is like waiting for the lily pads to completely overwhelm a pond. It may be too late.

Even the nature of change has changed

Today change happens faster. We have to deal with new technology every month or so. Communication is faster, the world's population is growing, our resources are limited, increasing competition, transitions of power, newly independent states are born, while old guards are falling.

Future Shock syndrome

Too much change in a short amount of time makes people cave in. High stress results in ulcers, conflict, and sometimes, even suicide.

Future shock is that point when humans can no longer assimilate change without displaying dysfunctional behavior.

Symptoms:

- Irritation
- Distraction from work
- Poor communication
- Reduced trust
- Defensive and blameful behavior
- Poor decision-making
- Conflict with co-workers
- Decreased team effectiveness
- Inappropriate outbursts at the office
- Venting job frustration at home
- Low morale

- Stomach pains, headaches
- Apathy

A high degree of future shock may result in severe reactions such as:

- Blocking of company procedures and tasks
- Undermining organizational leadership
- Strikes
- Sabotage
- Chronic depression
- Substance abuse and other addictive behaviors
- Family abuse
- Suicide

Key wisdom in a nutshell:

- To prosper, remain competitive, or simply survive, leaders need to respond to a growing number of profound changes in how they govern countries, structure companies, conduct business, treat employees, and deal with customers.
- The main ingredient of success is the ability resilient people have to understand and use to their advantage the principles underlying basic human patterns that operate during change.
- People who demonstrate resilient characteristics most often prosper during disruption and disorder. They regain equilibrium faster, maintain a higher level of productivity and efficiency, preserve their emotional and physical health, and achieve more of their objectives than people who experience future shock.

“Human beings are like tea bags. You don’t know your own strength until you get into hot water.”

It’s not just the negative changes that can break you...

Even a sudden windfall of money, like an unexpected inheritance or winning the lottery, is a major change that can ruin the people involved if not managed effectively.

Loss of control

Major change occurs when people feel they have lost control over some important aspect of their lives or environment.

Knowing your assimilation capacity

Assimilation is the process we use to adjust to the positive or negative implications of a major shift in our expectations. People need to adjust to changes they were unprepared to face.

Types of change:

- Micro change affects you, your spouse, family, or close friends.
- Organizational changes occur at work or any institution affecting your life, like your church or union.
- Macro changes affect you as part of a constituency or region.

Paradoxically, macro changes affect an individual's life the least. The ozone layer depletion or the destruction of the Amazon may be considered a macro environmental problem but because we as people do not fully understand or see tangible effects in our day-to-day lives, then these problems seem far removed. Similarly a war in a distant part of the world will not affect you directly unless you have a close friend or relative being sent off to that war.

The five key principles in the “nature of change” pattern:

When involved in major organizational change, you can enhance resilience if you...

1. Realize that control is what we all seek in our lives, and the ambiguity caused by disruption of expectations is what we all fear and avoid.
2. Are able to exercise some degree of direct or indirect control over what happens during the implementation of change.
3. Can assimilate change at a speed commensurate with the pace of the events taking place around you.
4. Understand the micro implications of organizational or macro change.
5. Face a total assimilation demand from the micro, organizational, and macro transitions in your life that is within your absorption limits.

The 3 phases of change:

These are the present state, transition state, and desired states.

To illustrate, let's take the classic battered wife syndrome. She knows she should get out of her present situation, find a way to adjust, become independent, find a new place to live away from her spouse, and seek a new life. The problem with many battered wives, they would rather stay on the sinking ship than jump. They fear what may be out there is not any better than where they have now. She needs to disengage from the status quo, and she needs firm resolve to move out to her transition phase.

Similarly, a man on a burning oil platform would rather jump into the sea, (possible death) with extreme temperatures, than stay on the doomed platform and face certain death.

Sometimes the speed of an important decision is what saves the life of the resilient ones. Stay on a burning platform or sinking ship and you are courting the inevitable. You will not survive.

Don't wait too long to make that decision to change. Get out of your job, your industry, your relationship, or your house. Do what you know you need to do. Your worst fears are usually ridiculous when you think about it. You will miss many opportunities and experiences because of your fear of change.

Two prerequisites for major organizational change:

- Pain
- Remedy

Pain: a critical mass of information that justifies breaking from the status quo.

Remedy: desirable, accessible actions that would solve the problem or take advantage of the opportunity afforded by the current situation.

The Process of Change

Orchestrating pain messages throughout an institution is the first step in developing organizational commitment to change.

Even if a new initiative is absorbed easily by senior management but causes significant disruption for others, winners approach the task as if it is a major change for those who perceive it that way.

Winners enhance their resilience by approaching change as an understandable process with phases that can be anticipated and managed. They view change as an unfolding continuum and demonstrate a high tolerance for its ambiguity.

They plan and execute movement architecturally from a present state through a transition phase to the desired goal. Their plans include pain-management strategies to help people disengage from the status quo, and desirable and accessible remedies to attract them to the desired change.

The six key principles in the “process of change” pattern:

When involved in major organizational change you can enhance resilience if you...

- Approach change as an unfolding process rather than one major event
- Accept you will either pay for getting what you want or you will pay for *not* getting what you want, but change comes at a price and you *will* definitely have to pay.
- Believe the status quo is far more expensive than the cost of transition
- Accept the discomfort of ambiguity as a natural reaction to transition
- Are attracted to remedies you see as accessible
- Are presented with changes in a manner that takes into account your frame of reference.

The roles of change

- Sponsors have the power to legitimize change. They decide when changes will happen and provide reinforcement to assure success. They create the environment so change is made on time and within budget.
- Change agents are responsible for making the change and executing plans effectively.
- Targets are those who must change or accommodate the changes to be made.
- Advocates can recommend ideas but do not possess the power to sanction them.

Successful advocacy has nothing to do with being right. The corrupt forces of the world will always dominate as long as they have the power to legitimize what they wish to implement.

Advocates need the sponsors support.

A good sponsor must have power, pain (discomfort with the status quo) vision, resources, the long view, sensitivity, scope, a public role, and a private role,

consequence management techniques, monitoring plans, a willingness to sacrifice, and persistence.

The five key principles in the “roles of change” pattern

When involved in a major organizational change, you can enhance resilience if you...

1. Understand and recognize the key roles in a change project
2. Are familiar with the effective operation of relationship configurations
3. Understand the general requirements associated with strong sponsorship
4. Recognize that a change must be clearly and strongly sanctioned by those in initiating and sustaining sponsorship positions.
5. Perceive that the rhetoric of change is consistent with meaningful consequences.

Phases of resistance to change

1. Stability precedes the announcement of change
2. Immobilization or initial shock to a negatively perceived change
3. Denial or trying to ignore the change so it will “go away”
4. Anger frustration and hurt with indiscriminate lashing out
5. Bargaining or negotiating to avoid the negative implications
6. Depression
7. Testing and regaining a sense of control thus freeing oneself from feelings of victimization, exploring new ways to redefine goals, a new framework
8. Acceptance or responding to change realistically but not necessarily liking it.

The five key principles in the “resistance to change” pattern

When involved in major organizational change, you can enhance resilience if you...

1. Understand the basic mechanisms of human resistance
2. View resistance as a natural and inevitable reaction to disruption of expectations
3. Interpret resistance as a deficiency of either ability or willingness
4. Encourage and participate in overt expressions of resistance
5. Understand resistance to positive change is just as common as resistance to negatively perceived change

Commitment to change

- Invest resources (time, money, energy) to insure the desired outcome
- Consistently pursue the goal even under stress and over time

- Reject ideas or action plans that promise short-term benefits but are inconsistent with the overall strategy for goal achievement
- Stand fast in the face of adversity remain determined and focused
- Apply creativity, ingenuity, and resourcefulness to resolve problems that would block the achievement of the goal

Typical reasons a change project is aborted:

- Logistic and economic problems
- The need no longer exists
- Overall strategic goals have shifted
- People in key sponsorship positions have left

You may institutionalize change as standard operating procedure.

Guidelines for commitment:

- People respond to change at different intellectual and emotional rates.
- Commitment is expensive don't order it if you can't pay for it.
- Don't assume commitment will be generated without a plan of action.
- Keep in mind that building commitment is a developmental process
- Either build commitment or prepare for the consequences
- Slow down to increase speed or take the time you need to educate people towards the change process

Company culture and change

A key element to enhancing resilience and minimizing the chance of dysfunctional behavior is to actively manage your organization's culture.

The three key principles in the "culture and change" pattern

You enhance resilience during major organizational change when you...

- Understand the powerful effect culture has on the outcome of any change effort
- Know that major changes introduced into an organization must be supported by the organization's overall culture and its local subculture
- Recognize that when counter-cultural changes are introduced, you must alter the existing culture to support the new initiative.

Developing synergy

- Recognize you need synergy to help change come about
- Encourage paradoxical thinking
- Facilitate creativity
- Strategize, monitor, remain team-focused, and update by communicating!

Teaching resilience

Opportunity or danger?

Resilient people or type O's...

- Display a sense of security and self-assurance
- Have a clear vision of what they want to achieve
- Demonstrate a special pliability when responding to uncertainty
- Develop structured approaches to managing ambiguity
- Engage change rather than defend against it

Last word:

- Resilient people are positive, focused, flexible, organized, and proactive.
- Remember, it's just like what Charlie Brown said, "There's no heavier burden than great potential." Use it or lose it.
- We can either learn to manage change at a speed that will accommodate future transformations that face us, or pay dearly for not doing so. The opportunity to choose is ours. The responsibility to act is yours.