



Kurswechsel

now

associations

Panta rhei („Alles fließt“), sagte schon der Grieche Heraklit. Zwar meinte er nicht die Veränderungen, vor denen Verbände und Organisationen stehen, doch sind diese Veränderungen das einzig Beständige. Veränderungs-Management, oder: Change-management, ist nichts anderes als die Kunst, eine Organisation mit vielen Teilhabern an die sich ändernden Verhältnisse in der Gesellschaft anzupassen: Demografische Änderungen, schlechte Finanzen, steigender Kostendruck, zunehmende Konkurrenz zur Privatwirtschaft, veränderte Anforderungen an die Mitgliedschaft – all das verlangt vom Geschäftsführer, Neuigkeiten zu implementieren. Und nicht, wie

Don Harrison herausstellt, nur einfach von oben herab zu installieren. Seiner Meinung nach braucht es weitsichtiges Führungspersonal, das in der Lage ist, Neuigkeiten zu kommunizieren, neue Strukturen und Prozesse intern mit den Beteiligten zu modellieren sowie schließlich diese Veränderung um- und einzusetzen. Don Harrison ist Gründer und Präsident der weltweit tätigen Beratung „Implementation Management Associates, Inc.“ und entwickelte die anerkannte „Accelerating Implementation Methodology (AIM)“, um einen strukturierten Ansatz für das Führungspersonal, das mit Changemanagement beschäftigt ist, anbieten zu können. ■

Das Magazin „Associations Now“ wird von der American Society for Associations Executives (ASAE) herausgegeben und zählt im englischsprachigen Raum zu den führenden Magazinen zum Verbandsmanagement und zur Fachinformation für Verbände. Das monatlich erscheinende Magazin erreicht etwa 22.000 Entscheider in Verbänden weltweit, die etwa 11.000 Organisationen in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika und 50 weiteren Ländern repräsentieren.

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Leadership Course

To put your association on a new track toward transformational change, you need leaders who will express, model, and reinforce new ways of doing business.

By Don Harrison

Yet what is missing for many leaders is the realization that defining strategic priorities represents only 15 percent of your success: Fully 85 percent depends on your ability to implement these innovations, according to F. Warren McFarlan, a professor at Harvard Business School. What's more, your own actions as an association executive are the single-most-important factor in your ability to effectively implement transformational change.

A Different Kind of Change

Over the years, your association likely has undergone many changes. Perhaps you invested in new technology to handle your members' needs more efficiently and at lower cost, offered a new service to attract and retain members, or changed a membership policy or an internal procedure.

These were incremental improvements that caused minimal disruption to your operations. But now you are confronted with the need to make changes of an entirely different magnitude to remain relevant and vital, to advance your association's mission and preserve its health, and to compete in a market with dramatically reduced sources of

funding. Changes can be categorized by scale and complexity in three ways:

- minor changes that create minimal disruption and resistance
- “first-order” changes designed to make multiple sets of improvements to what you are currently doing so that you can do it better, cheaper, or faster
- “second-order” changes that require your association to “forget what we are doing now” and instead to do “different things differently”

Transformational change and true innovation is second-order change. It is large-scale and complex, regardless of the size of your association's internal organization. If your association is embarking on transformational change, be aware that it is different in three important ways:

- **Transformational change can't be done incrementally.**

You can't make the leap across the abyss in two jumps. Transformational change affects an entire way of operating; it cannot be done in small steps.

- **Transformational change can't be made guardedly.**

It requires a leap of faith.

As you look to the future of your association, what do you see? Are you planning major innovations to better serve your members and attract new ones? For association CEOs, there is arguably no greater priority than to position your association for the future through innovations in structure, services, and operations. In many cases, these changes are so significant and far-reaching that they are considered transformational rather than incremental changes.

– **Transformational change means you can't go back.**

Once you begin to cross the abyss, you can't change your mind and go back to the old ways of operating.

Installing Versus Implementing

It's important for association leaders to recognize that innovation is both exciting and frightening and, frankly, fraught with risk. One of the first risks is in how CEOs define success for the transformation at the start.

Too often, executives are focused on installation versus implementation as the goal. For example, suppose your association is planning to

these five essential success metrics for best-practice implementation of any change:

- on time
- on budget
- all business objectives met
- all technical objectives met
- all human objectives met

The human objectives are the new behaviors you want to see, and they should be defined for each part of your organization affected by the change. In our example of the strategic shift, new behaviors will obviously be required of the membership department and the program-planning teams. But other parts of the association, such as finance,

successfully in the past. That's why sponsorship for transformational change is so critical.

Helping People Make the Leap

Sponsorship is an active condition that must be sustained through the entire implementation of the innovation. In a small association, there might be just one authorizing sponsor—usually the CEO—leading the transformation. In a larger association, there will be an authorizing sponsor and reinforcing sponsors at each management level who will need to carry the transformation forward by the way each expresses, models, and reinforces his or her commitment to the transformation. (See sidebar below for more on what these activities entail.)

Your association's ability to implement innovation is directly linked to your own behavior as a sponsor of the change. You control the pace of the transformation that occurs in your association. When what you say, do, and reinforce are not aligned, you lose trust and credibility. And trust and speed are related: High trust leads to high-speed change, while low trust means low-speed change.

For example, if your association decides it will focus on the quality of member interactions rather than the quantity of programs it offers but doesn't change its budgeting processes and instead continues to focus on program numbers, you create confusion for your staff. Trust goes down. You can't get your staff to make the leap by leading change in the same way you've led past changes, and you can't lead the same way and expect to see transformational results. So how do you get your staff members to make the leap to new behaviors? It's through your own actions as a sponsor of the transformational changes. The primary lever for accelerating the transformation is the application of reinforcement. Reinforcement drives

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change your focus from being a program-based organization to driving member value. This strategic shift could affect people, processes, and technology in transformational ways. You might "install" changes (get new software up and running, put in new processes, change job descriptions) but never get to sustained adoption of the new behaviors your staff must demonstrate daily to carry out the strategic shift.

This behavior change is the fundamental requirement for full implementation of innovations. Whether in the nonprofit or for-profit world, leaders miss the fact that if you don't achieve sustained adoption of new behaviors, you only install the change on the surface. There is no real change without behavior change. You will not realize a return on your investment in new strategies and innovations unless you can meet

human resources, and strategic planning, will need to make behavioral changes as well. They will need to interact with members differently; their performance will need to be measured against different criteria.

Your association must define what its operations, processes, and technology will look like in the future. But you will also need to identify the new behaviors that each area of the association will need to demonstrate to achieve this future state. Transformational change requires culture change, meaning there will be a dramatic shift in the unwritten rules that guide the way your association really works "below the water line."

It is much more difficult for people to adopt unknown and untested behaviors – those new behaviors we seek to see in transformational change – than it is to stick with the status quo, which has worked



behavior change; no behavior change means no implementation and no transformation. Reinforcement is three times more powerful than what you say as a leader, and twice as powerful as what you model.

As a sponsor, if you are applying the same reinforcements as you have in the past, you will get more of the same patterns from staff. Your association's

current reward system, both formal and informal, is perfectly designed for reinforcing the status quo. It's the special relationship between the manager and the direct report that drives the reinforcement for the transformation. That reinforcement occurs on a daily basis; it's far more powerful than any performance-management system.

There are many ways for you to apply positive and negative consequences other than through compensation and benefits. For example, you can reward individuals by giving them greater control over their work, public recognition, or access to training. Negative consequences can come in the form of immediate, private feedback or assignment of less desirable tasks.

Consistently applying these consequences to behaviors is the key to implementation success. The more often you apply positive and negative reinforcement to observed behaviors of your direct reports, the faster you can drive behavior change.

Implementing innovation and transformational change is arguably your most important responsibility as an association executive. If you can't implement, you'll never know if your strategy is right; innovation without implementation goes nowhere. You must provide the leadership to cross the transformational-change abyss. ■

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Express, Model, and Reinforce to Speed Change

When what sponsors say, do, and reinforce are aligned and carried level by level down the organization, change is implemented quickly and efficiently. Here's how to do it.

Express the change.

Although emphasis is often placed on communication, only 10 percent to 15 percent of implementation success depends on expressing the change. We can be seduced by the activity of communication, but communication can't substitute for modeling and reinforcement. There are, however, best practices for communicating changes. For example, are you

- clearly articulating the reason this change is needed?
- communicating how this change relates to the association's overall strategy and mission?
- communicating personal commitment for this change?
- communicating specifically what will change for each affected group?

Model the change.

Employees will pick up on inconsistencies between what leaders say and do. When words and actions are out of alignment, trust goes down and the change slows down, too. Modeling includes what you do publically and privately. Are you

- prioritizing resources to reflect the importance of the change?
- demonstrating personal changes in behavior that symbolically demonstrate the change?
- demonstrating your willingness to pay the ongoing personal and organizational price for the change?

Reinforce the change.

The relationship between manager and direct report is the most powerful lever in achieving the behaviors needed for any change. Reinforcement must be applied based on daily observation of behaviors. Are you

- emphasizing achievement of the change versus punishment for failure?
- emphasizing both formal and informal work-unit reward or recognition and individual reinforcement?
- establishing mechanisms for gathering data to monitor progress?
- making both positive and negative reinforcement predictable, certain, and immediate following behaviors?