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A RedShift eBook

# The Seven Virtues of Change Leadership

HOW EXECUTIVES WILL FILL THE LEADERSHIP CHASM AND  
TRANSFORM THEIR ORGANIZATIONS

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## CHANGE LEADERS NEEDED!

Executives are increasingly required to be change leaders. To support my executive clients, I help them think more expansively about the roles, skills, and core self-awareness that they will need to lead their organizations.

Enterprise change programs and initiatives provide a good staging area for executives moving into change leadership. Driving these programs takes them out of their zones of comfort, tradition, habit and theory. It places them in the often chaotic, organizational change realm characterized by continual uncertainty and high emotions.

With support, its the executive's ideal platform for learning, integrating, embodying and modeling new leadership competencies, critical to personal, and organizational change and transformation.

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Questions that often arise with respect to change leadership include:

- \* What leadership vacuums are showing up as organizations respond to forces bombarding them? How should executive leaders function differently to fill these gaps? How will their personal and professional success be re-defined, measured and rewarded?
- \* What are the largely undefined, natural abilities and soft skills, that are core to change leadership in the future multi-dimensional organization (economic and human and social)? How are they developed?
- \* What are the moral and ethical challenges that executive leaders will face? How will those impact their decision-making process?

These are challenging questions.

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## There's paradox in change.

That's why it's important to remember that in the midst of massive change affecting organizations are the seeds of opportunity and transformational potential. Realizing this potential is a result of a successful change response. And successful change response always! begins with change leadership.

The paradox is that, although enterprise change programs are initiated to capitalize on change trends, ingrained corporate cultures, outdated systems and fear of the unknown create a chasm between the change that is desired and the change that is accepted, implemented and fully integrated.

Change leadership will bridge this gap. For the executive, this means re-assessing competencies, increasing self-awareness, and learning and embracing change leadership "virtues".

*(Virtue - definition: the quality of doing what is right and avoiding what is wrong, any admirable quality or attribute; "work of great merit" - WordNet® 3.0, © 2006 by Princeton University.)*

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## We know...

Top people are motivated by a complex set of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards.

Many older workers with legacy knowledge want to, and need to, work past retirement age.

Younger, educated workers, with highly desirable skills, are willing to work hard, but on their own terms.

## Change Paradox: DEMOGRAPHIC



## The danger...

Our people are our greatest resource and competitive advantage - but we can't identify, motivate or retain, the best.

## But yet...

We have high top-tier talent turnover.

We screen out older applicants and can't or won't accommodate younger applicants' requirements for fast-tracking and flexibility.

Our job descriptions, professional development programs and compensation systems are rigid and out-dated.

**Leadership Chasm**

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## EXECUTIVE CHALLENGE: FILLING THE LEADERSHIP CHASM

Organizational response to change often contradicts accepting reality and getting desired results. Habits, systems and culture get pushed around, and people go through the motions, but the results are insignificant, the change doesn't stick and soon its back to business as usual.

An example is the typical organizational response to changing demographic trends in light of an increasingly critical need to recruit and retain top talent.

Its known that shifts in workforce demographics require new and more creative talent management strategies. But entrenched policies, cultures, systems and perceptions impede progress. The inability to more effectively and quickly respond, points to a chasm that won't be filled solely by moving people in and out of leadership positions.

It requires that current executives step up to accept reality and challenge assumptions, past experience and future aspirations.

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## Nobody can do it for them.

Executives will break with no longer useful habits, structures and systems. The only viable path to long-term competitive advantage is to embed new knowledge in the corporate culture. Cultural change requires that the multi-dimensional executive have radical qualities. This is where many get executives tripped up. Its not about radical management. Its about radical leadership.

- \* radical self-trust
- \* radical responsibility
- \* radical humility
- \* radical generosity



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**CFO Roles:  
Single-Dimensional  
Organization**

**Financial  
Improvement**

**Value of Human  
Capital**

**Presenting to  
Investors,  
Stockholders**

**CFO Roles:  
Multi-Dimensional  
Organization**

**Performance  
Improvement**

**Talent  
Identification &  
Retention**

**Selling Change  
to Stakeholders:  
"Showmanship"**



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## EXECUTIVE CHALLENGE: FROM FUNCTIONAL TO INTEGRAL ROLES

To meet the complex challenges of the multi-dimensional organization, future executives will transcend a deep and narrow focus and step into a broader, more expansive one, taking a leadership role in driving enterprise change programs.

It will be up to the CFO, for example, to envision and develop new targets and metrics, link those metrics to proposed and planned initiatives, and then sell those programs across the enterprise to 1.) gain support from top management, and to 2.) get buy-in from end users.

**New executive leader communication competency: an element of showmanship!**

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Showmanship: its not about a one-way, bells and whistles sales pitch, motivational talk, fear-driven mandate or directive, or a perfectly and professionally produced multi-media show.

It is about embodying compelling and authentic communications leadership to get people behind programs that they know will likely cause them uncertainty, fear and even chaos.

It means relating with people in a deeply human way, and with appreciation, inclusion, and 100% honesty.

Communication leaders don't strive for perfection. They strive for inspiration.

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# The Multi-Dimensional Executive



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## REQUISITE SOFT SKILLS: THE SEVEN VIRTUES

Executives will inspire people through leadership communications based on soft skills and self-awareness. That requires going beyond learning new skills and competencies, by transcending and including them. It requires moving into the realm of self-awareness and practicing, modeling and embodying what I call "the 7 virtues".

The executive change leader will create an entirely new orientation, an atmosphere in which change can happen and one in which desired changes occur.

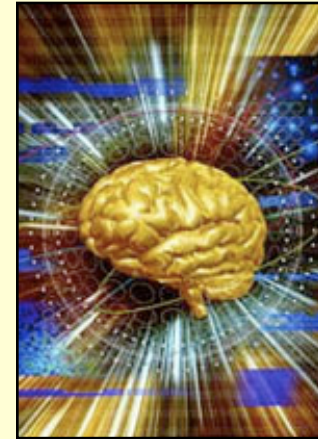
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## Virtue #1. Be Imaginative

Continually assess and challenge how you think about problems and decisions. Probe for blind spots.

- \* "What we don't know we don't know" is an opportunity for thinking out of the box.
- \* "Not knowing what we believe we know" is an opportunity for creativity and transformation.



The greater your consciousness about knowledge, the greater the range of your imagination. Integrate a simple framework for scenario planning in your decision making and problem solving processes. Your imagination follows your knowledge and beliefs. What you think becomes what you see.

Make your vivid imagination your best ally.

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## Virtue #2. Be Empathetic



Be with people, not just as an executive, but as a person. Listen, make eye contact and speak to the humanity in others.

Learn how to accept emotions as feeling, not as a belief about reality. The latter tends to escalate a state of crisis within yourself, and in your organization.

Address the emotional & cultural impact of change in the organization first...not last.

Practice exchanging yourself for others. Cultivate the ability to see and feel what your employees, managers, customers and clients are experiencing and perceiving about how they could be affected by change programs.

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## Virtue #3. Be a Storyteller

Eliminate all cheerleading, directive, pontification, paternalism and business jargon from your corporate communications. Until you do this, you don't really have an audience because they've already tuned you out and have begun to, consciously or unconsciously, plot their resistance and survival strategy.



Use stories in your communications, but keep them brief, simple and related to your audience, not your ego.

If your stories are based on too many goals, force of will, scarcity, lack and limited choice, they'll fail. If they're based on co-creativity, evolution, abundance, belief, desire and unlimited choice, they'll succeed.

Let go of pushing people to change. Through stories, let them feel the space you're holding within which they can change.

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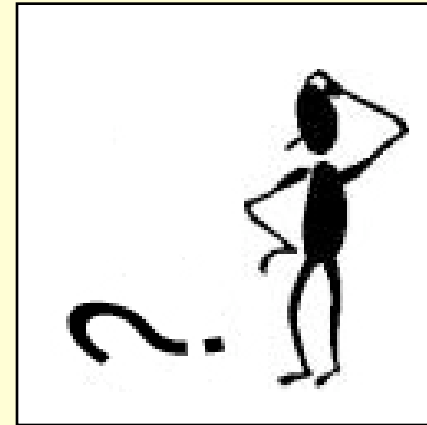
## #4. Love Uncertainty

Help people accept things as they are, even in the midst of uncertainty. Do this by separating facts from emotions.

Embody and communicate your belief that the combination of uncertainty and willingness are the portal to change and transformation.

When the situation is not clear-cut, practice holding multiple perspectives in view at the same time, continually increasing your capacity for complexity.

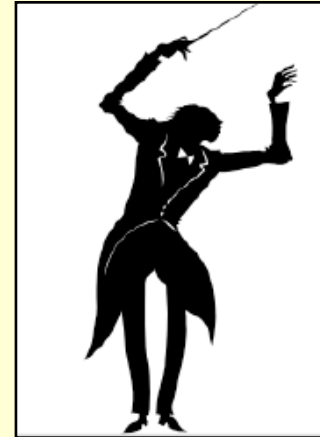
Be vigilant to any of your, or others', fear or ego-driven responses. Share them, recognize them as natural and human, get commitment for renewed resolve and strive to transcend them.



## #5. Be Radical

Practice going to the extremes with the following:

- \* Radical self-trust. Do exactly what is in front of you to do. If negative emotion trips you up, recognize it as human and natural and work through it.
- \* Radical responsibility. Embody and model the power of belief and choice. Be vigilant about not letting your personal (or organizational) "victim history" take the lead.
- \* Radical generosity. Approach everything from the point-of-view of a service leader, asking "how can I help?" And then get out of the way.
- \* Radical humility. Let go of worrying about getting credit. Give it.



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## #6. Be Integral

Hold the big picture and request that of everyone. Keep the decision evaluation and problem solving frameworks simple and honest:

- \* Is it good for me?
- \* Is it good for the organization?
- \* Is it good for us: our internal and external customers, clients and cultures?
- \* Is it good in some way for the world, the greater good?

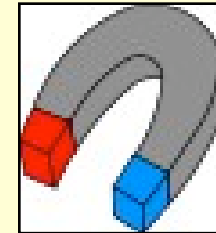
Practice accessing the bigger parts of your mind and heart, that are connected to a single mind and heart. Mentor that ability in your managers and future leaders.



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## #7. Be Inclusive

Don't just pay lip service. Believe and communicate that everyone is important, and that the people closest to the customers are the best source for ideas for both incremental and large-scale improvements.



Get participation in your change initiatives by sharing knowledge and learning, and then acting on ideas, feedback and responses. Prove it. Show participants how their contributions get incorporated into a new end-user, employee, customer or client experience.

Inspire and mentor to convert resistors and neutrals to allies, contributors and champions. If nay-sayers are hurting productivity and morale, ask them where they would prefer to be and help them get there ("de-hiring").

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## NOTES

1. To my knowledge the originator of the terms "Multi-Dimensional Organization" and "Single-Dimensional Organization" is Peter Drucker who used those in an article titled Survey: The Near Future, and published in The Economist, November 02,2001.

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