



EPILOGUE:
'HI, THIS IS A CULTURAL
CHANGE PROGRAMME, AND
THIS IS THE LAST TIME
WE MENTION CHANGE OR
CULTURE'

The best thing that could happen to a 'culture change' or 'change management' programme is that we avoid using the labels! Maybe, by doing just this, we are already 10/20/30% further along, who knows? You will recall how I shared with you ideas about language and frames, and how I suggested that 'you'd better pick the right frame, before the frame picks you'.

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Change management labels, including cultural ones, create a significant level of antibodies in the organization. 'Here we go again' seems to be in the air. It would be naïve to think that we can avoid labels completely. After all, if it's not called 'culture change' it may end up being called 'an organizational transformation programme' or a 'company renewal', or something like that. So, does it matter? I'd like to suggest that it does, because enormous historical baggage is included with many of those terms. I have suggested in the early chapters that we need a terminology clean-up precisely because there is such a broad spectrum of 'initiatives' under those labels.

You may want to create **VIRAL CHANGE** and install new behaviours, and perhaps you may not need to call it anything. It may be, however, that you are 'forced' to do so in the context of - alas - many other parallel 'initiatives'. You may try to resist, but in the end you may need to reply to *that* question: "*How do we call this thing that we are doing? You know, the culture thing, the viral thing?*" And before settling for 'the culture thing' you may want to consider an alternative. I don't have a ready-made answer for you, but I stand by the philosophy behind my flippant proposition: "*This may be a cultural change programme, but this should be the last time we use 'change' or 'culture'!*"

One of the most distinctive features of Viral change going well is how much it progressively gets embedded in the life of the organization without the need to refer to it as 'a programme'.

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Believe me, this is a good measure of success! When people are using expressions such as ‘if we have these behaviours, if we all did things that way, the new culture will follow’, then you are on an excellent track for success.

When I’m working with clients on **VIRAL CHANGE** I do try to avoid labels such as ‘cultural change’ or ‘change management programme’, but, of course, we always end up using others.

That’s OK, as long as we try to avoid getting too close to the formal, standard, mechanistic tsunami change. I have no problem with describing that we are focusing on increasing productivity; or that we’re creating competitiveness; or that we’re aligning two merged organizations; or that we’re adapting to a new environment; or that we’re establishing a new behavioural fabric; or that we’re rethinking the way we do business. These are all labels I have used in the past. And they’re great!

For the same reasons described in the chapter about language and frames, the branding of an initiative of change may be useful. It all depends on its sincerity and simplicity. People in organizations - particularly in large companies with multiple layers of ‘programmes’ and ‘frameworks’ - are very cynical. Finding the right articulation is key.

I am stretching the argument. You may need/want to find a balance and use the ‘c’ word (culture or change) because you feel it is precisely what people need to hear. It is your call! It is your organization, and most likely you are paid to make those sorts of judgements. I am perhaps too cautious. If you have patiently followed me through this book, you’ll understand my point. It is the elevation of efforts and

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commitments to the category of a ‘programme’, which has to share its air time with another five or ten programmes, that bothers me; not the use of the language of culture or change in itself.

>> FINAL WARNING

This book may infect you. If it does, your understanding of organizations and management of change will never be the same. If you become infected, you will want to spread the practices of this book by infecting others in your organization. If you’re seriously infected, you will drive and implement changes this way from now on.

However, this infection can be treated. Medicines come in many forms and shapes, such as pretending that this is just clever talk. To combat the infection, you can also try ‘my line manager will never buy into this stuff’, ‘not in a million years!’, ‘the CEO won’t like it’ or ‘too bad, we have just started a total, all-inclusive, multi-million-dollar engagement across all divisions’.

If you don’t treat the infection, you will become a carrier. Unlike other contagious diseases that you may get, this one is not only clinically silent but it has a beneficial side. It will generate good levels of antibodies that will protect you for life against other really, really serious terminal illnesses, like, for example, the ‘Massive Change Communication and Training Programme’, a ‘disease’ has a three year roll-out, trillions of post-its and an incredibly expensive budget and will end in death by PowerPoint.

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I really wish you success in creating **VIRAL CHANGE** in whatever organization you work for (= spend most of your time). In creating that wonderful, distributed leadership across the organization, in which networks of small worlds lead in all directions, all the time, without the reference to a command and control centre. In mastering the power of language, behaviours tipping points, creation of infections and new cultures. In creating a fashion for success, creating wealth and building an environment where people are looking forward to Monday morning. Good luck.