



VIRAL CHANGE

The alternative to slow, painful and unsuccessful management of change in organizations

By Leandro Herrero

Most of conventional 'change management' programmes fail. One of the reasons is that these conventional approaches are mainly focused on changes in processes and systems, with the assumption that these will lead to change in people's behaviours. However, this assumption is wrong: people often continue to do things like before or, after an initial peak of so-called 'adoption', initiatives fade.

The author states that there is no lasting change unless it is true behavioural change and this is hardly a by-product of 'new processes'. In other words, it is not until people in organizations change behaviours that we can claim that actual change has occurred. The clue is that behavioural change must be moved up, must happen first, not as a result of other changes! This is one of the main theses of this book, which explains how to do it.

Equally, most of 'change management' - as preached by many academics and consultants or, in general, by managers of change in many organizations - occurs following an old-fashioned organizational concept: changes are initiated by the top and percolated through the management system (the book calls it 'the plumbing system'). This results in initiatives or programmes that usually emphasize communication and training and, in general, a more or less 'rational' appeal to people to change. In many cases, however, what people witness is a slow, painful and finally unsuccessful process, which often generates a great deal of cynicism, making the next wave of change even more difficult. And this is often after massive communication and training programmes and colossal consulting budgets.

Viral Change provides a completely different framework that is based on recent 'discoveries' across disciplines such as network and behavioural sciences. Unlike conventional methods of change management - where cultural change is assumed to be a painful, long-term process from which one shouldn't expect short-term results - viral change is faster, far more effective, potentially more inclusive and certainly long lasting. It resembles more the transmission of an infection (in this case, the virus of 'success' within the organization) than it does the traditional communication snowball.

In 'Viral Change', the author shows how a combination of the right language and 'frame, a small set of non-negotiable behaviours (all spread by a small number of activists) and the creation of 'tipping points', creates lasting cultural change in organizations.

It also debunks several conventional myths such as: 'people are resistant to change', 'one needs to involve everybody' or 'big changes need big initiatives'. In Viral Change mode, people talk less about 'the programme' and do more in a way that infects other people, creating 'tipping points' where the new behaviours and the new changes become visible and sustainable.

The book is written (and will be revealing) for all leaders in any organization, - both business and non-profit - and for supporting and business partner functions such as HR, organizational development or change management agents. It brings the language and methods of a socio-behavioural approach developed by the author, poured into a comprehensible, practical and actionable framework called Viral Change. Since change is constantly present in any organization, the book is a companion for all managers and leaders in day-to-day organizational life and not just for those directly embarked upon initiatives labelled 'change management'. It will appeal to any reader who is interested in how organizations are rapidly evolving today and how understanding internal social networks is changing the way we should lead and manage.

Leandro Herrero was a practicing psychiatrist for many years before holding senior leadership positions in top league business organizations. He currently leads The Chalfont Project Ltd: an international consulting group of organizational architects. Leandro Herrero has personally led multiple organizational and cultural changes by applying the Viral Change way, the socio-behavioural approach described in this book. His previous books include *The Leader with Seven Faces*, also published by Meetingminds.