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Excerpt:

Effecting Change:

**ALLIES
Not Enemies**

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Change/Change Agents

The A-squared Approach: Allies & Action

Not sure what triggered it, but I went on a Twitter rampage this morning (Thursday, 11/21/13) on the topic of change. Herewith, FYI:

Change agency: Forget the word “enemies.” Focus on/obsess on ...

ALLIES.

Big change is not about fighting the bad guys. It’s about surrounding them with your continuously recruited allies.

Success at change: Building a stable of allies. Failure: Pissing and moaning and picking fights.

Change agent time distribution: **50% recruiting Allies. 40% tending Allies.**

10% other. **0%** **fighting enemies.**

Change: Allies do not automatically remain allies. Tend them and do NOT NOT NOT neglect them—the latter is a common sin.

Change the 4F Way: **F**ind a **F**ellow **F**reak **F**araway.

(Change agents *need* playmates and distant playpens.)

(Note on motivation: Things ... PISS ME OFF. That's what my friends say. My In Search of Excellence co-author Bob Waterman to reporter: "Tom's not really happy unless he's pissed off about something." That's the point, isn't it, of the "34 BFOs"/Blinding Flashes of the Obvious that you've just—I hope—been through? Well getting pissed off—really pissed off—launched this 700+ page monster. I was ... PISSED OFF ... about the "change literature." It's all about "adversaries" and "battles" and overcoming "barriers" and "roadblocks." BULLSHIT. All "that stuff" is ... NEGATIVE. I think making change—and in particular making it stick—is wholly positive. It's about building, not tearing down; about finding friends, not "vanquishing" "enemies." Hence this first "tweetstream" focuses on that building ... THE RELENTLESS PURSUIT AND COURTSHIP OF ALLIES. I hope that—and the rest of this stuff—works for you. Fact is, I see ... PISSED OFF PEOPLE ... as the #1 source of innovation. They just can't tolerate the status quo—and must by hook AND by crook do something about it. So do it, now ... GO FOR IT!)

Elliott Masie*, on desirable eLearning vendors: ***“I want a ‘sandbox partner,’ someone who will openly say, ‘This is not the last word; we don’t know exactly where we’re going.’”***

*Masie is the “uber-guru” of eLearning.

Change you want: **“It”** (your thing) **is**

**already
happening
somewhere.**

FIND IT!

Change the Bob Stone way*: *“Some people look for things that went wrong and try to fix them. I look for things that went right, and try to build off them.”*

(*Stone ran the surprisingly successful “re-inventing government” program for VP Al Gore in the '90s.)

“Somewhere in your organization, groups of people are already doing things differently and better. To create lasting change, find these areas of positive deviance and fan the flames.”

—Richard Pascale & Jerry Sternin, “Your Company’s Secret Change Agents,” *Harvard Business Review* (The late Mr. Sternin was an incredibly successful change agent in developing countries.) (The authors’ key contribution is the idea of **“positive deviance”**—i.e., ferreting out good stuff already underway.)

“In foreign aid, Planners announce good intentions but don’t motivate anyone to carry them out.

Searchers find things that work and build on them.

*Planners apply global blueprints. Searchers adapt to local conditions. A Planner thinks he already knows the answers; he thinks of poverty as a technical engineering problem that his answers will solve. **A***

Searcher admits he doesn’t know the answers in advance; he hopes to find answers to individual problems only by trial and error experimentation.”

*—William Easterly, *White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good**

Losses as critical as wins: *The dotcom movement worked big time. Astonishing amount of experimentation in a brief period. “Ls” as/more important than “Ws.”*

Change is about end runs—not a smash-mouth plunge down the middle.

Allies: Recruit the quiet ones as much or more than the noisy ones.

If you can't find allies, you're probably perceived as too far out. Find the sweet spot: Exciting/edgy w/o scaring the shit outta people.

A rigid stance nearly always generates an equally rigid response.

Change: Making loud noises is usually a loser's strategy.

If you are really passionate, you tend to confront. Confrontation **NEVER** results in victory; it just entrenches your opponents and increases their determination to stop you. You play into the bad guys' hands: “I knew he was a jackass. Never put him on the agenda again.”

Action Rules! 1 Thing (Only) I've Learned in 48 Years!

A Bias for Action. (No. 1/"Basics of Excellence"/*In Search of Excellence*/1982)

"Ready. Fire. Aim."

(H. Ross Perot on EDS; as compared to GM's "Ready. Aim. Aim. Aim. Aim. Aim. ...")

Just do it! (Nike)

Move fast, break things. (Facebook)

Experiment fearlessly. (Trait #1/Great innovator companies/*Bloomberg Businessweek*)

Relentless trial and error. (Corporate Survival Trait #1 in crazy times/*Wall Street Journal*)

"You miss 100% of the shots you never take." (Wayne Gretzky)

"Fail. Forward. Fast." (Tech exec/Philadelphia)

CAN YOUR BUSINESS FAIL FAST ENOUGH TO SUCCEED? (*Economist* conf. title)

"Fail faster, succeed sooner." (David Kelley/IDEO)

"No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better." (Samuel Beckett)

"Reward excellent failures. Punish mediocre successes." (Phil Daniels/Australian businessman)

Whoever Makes the Most Mistakes Wins. (Richard Farson/book title)

"The Silicon Valley of today is built less atop the spires of earlier triumphs than upon the rubble of earlier debacles." (Paul Saffo/tech futurist/Palo Alto)

"The secret of fast progress is *inefficiency*: fast/furious/numerous failures." (K. Kelly)

S.A.V./Screw Around Vigorously (TP: only possible success strategy for crazy times)

Demo or die. (MIT Media Lab credo)

"Don't 'plan.' Do stuff." (David Kelley/IDEO)

"Effective prototyping may be the most valuable core competence an innovative organization can hope to have."/"Minimize 'mean time to prototype.'" (M. Schrage/MIT)

"This is so simple it sounds stupid. You only find oil if you drill wells." (J. Masters/wildcatter)

"We have a 'strategic plan.' It's called 'doing things.'" (Herb Kelleher/Southwest Airlines)

"Can do!" (Motto/U.S. Navy Seabees/my starting point in 1966 in Vietnam)

"Execution is strategy." (Fred Malek)

WD40 (Water Displacement, 40 tries to get it right)

BLAME NO ONE. EXPECT NOTHING. DO SOMETHING. (NFL coach Bill Parcells/locker-room poster)

"Quality is a probabilistic function of quantity." (M. Gladwell/"Creation Myth"/re J.S. Bach)

"Ever notice that 'What the hell' is always the right decision?" (Anon. screenwriter)

W.T.T.M.S.W. /Whoever Tries The Most Stuff Wins.

WTTMSASTMSUW/Whoever Tries The Most Stuff And Screws The Most Stuff Up Wins.

WTTMSASTMSUTFW/Whoever Tries The Most Stuff And Screws The Most Stuff Up The Fastest Wins.

WTTMSW:

Whoever

Tries

The

Most

Stuff

Wins.

Change: **Rack up and log (and**

advertise !) ... “*small*

***wins*” ... like a ...**

maniac.

*(“Trying a lotta stuff”/WTTMSW writ large: Trial and error, many many many trials and many many many errors very very very rapidly will be the rule—think dotcom boom and bust and the incredibly valuable residual in terms of entrepreneurial training and ideas surfaced and approaches rejected. Tolerance for rapid learning—and unlearning—will be a, even **THE**, most valued skill. FYI: “Gamers” instinctively “get” this—lots of trials, lots of errors as fast as possible—in ways their error-avoiding elders can only imagine; hence, for this reason among many, “the revolution” is/will be to a very significant degree led by youth.)*

Change: Recruit allies 2 or 3 levels “down” ... the magicians who reside where the real work is done and the place from which the system can be indirectly manipulated. I.e., “Suck down” for success/Make friends in “low” places.

Change: **ALLIES. ALLIES. ALLIES. ALLIES.**
ALLIES. ALLIES. (Then more **ALLIES.**)

Change agents: Commit no minor sins. Don’t let the bad guys find a narrow opening and bring you down for trivial reasons.

Change agents: Keep a civil tongue at all costs.

Winners: Recruit/nurture allies; try lotsa stuff; stay under the radar. Losers: Go toe to toe with the establishment; seek the spotlight.

Change agents: *Speak not ill of
thine enemies.* Even to pals in private. All
the walls have keen ears—circa 2014.

Change agents: No: Charts and graphs. Instead: Demos. Demos. Then more demos.

Change: *Success is more about momentum and
growing excitement around a portfolio of small wins
than it is about big wins.*

Change: Engage your allies in the design process—even if it introduces impurities. They must FEEL true ownership.

100% of change-that-works is NON-linear. (A wonderful saying: Winners are the ones who are “good at Plan B.” Or, I’d say, Plan Z.)

*Suck “down”
for success!*

*Make friends
in “low”
places. **

***It’s simple, really. “Down” is where the work is done! An Army of Fans “down below” is the greatest group of allies imaginable. If you are, say, making a sales pitch for a complex systems product, it’s true that the “VP” will eventually need to sign off. BUT ... the analysis that wins or loses the battle will be done two levels “down” by a trio of young, invisible, unloved engineers. They are the ones you want on your side—find *them* and nurture *them*. (FYI: This is a ... **GUARANTEED** ... winning formula.)**

Change: *Joyfully let/encourage your allies to take*

100% *credit for the small wins they're involved in.*

Serious change includes bad days, bad weeks, bad months, perhaps bad years.

Change agents: Re-read all emails **THREE** times before sending.

Social Media is a marvel. But do **NOT** shortchange face-to-face with Allies.

Change agents: *Successful “small wins” with outsiders provide enormous street cred.* * (*And, increasingly, “Co-invention” is “EVERYTHING.”)

Change agents: Preaching to the choir is just fine. More than fine: It produces a “multiplier effect”: *If the members of the choir preach to their choirs, it becomes a ... **MOVEMENT!***

Greatest waste of time? Trying to “convert” non-believers. Instead, surround 'em. That is, you don't “convert.” “They” “discover”—come to appreciate what you're doing because a couple of *their* pals have joined up.

*#1 role of
allies?*

*Recruit more
allies!**

*Hence allies' perceived **“ownership”** is all-important—allyes have to “do it their way” to abet that sense of ownership. Give 'em space: No doctrinal rigidity, please!

Aiming for An Ally's "Ownership"

The following are simplistic, but give a flavor of "the approach" to prospective allies. I repeat: They are not "helpers." They are stakeholders with as much ownership/skin-in-the-game as you.

Herewith:

"Hey, I've been working on this idea; actually we've both talked about the issue before. Want to add your \$2.22 (not \$0.02) and help me develop it? Who knows, could be fun."

"We ran a little two-bit trial on part of this new program. Results look pretty good. Any chance you'd tweak it and try it with your team?"

"I've gotten these great results from this system tweak. But your group is very different from mine. If you like the data, would you consider doing something akin to it, using your parameters, at your place?"

"I tested this idea and had some pretty good results. Then Nancy James redesigned it big time for her department—and had promising results. Your department is more like hers than mine. If you're interested, I'm sure she'd be delighted to go through it with you."

Etc.

Etc.

*All alliances are social—
regardless of the role of self-
interest. Tend to the social
part—or perish.*

*“Allied commands depend
on mutual confidence, and
this confidence is
gained, above all, through
the development of
friendships.”* —General D.D. Eisenhower,
on managing the impossible—the D-Day alliance

Change I: ALLIES.

ALLIES. ALLIES.

ALLIES. ALLIES.

ALLIES. (Then

***more* ALLIES.)**

**Change II: “Suck DOWN
for success.”**

Change III: Demo. NOW.

ONE More/LAST Time:

Allies, Not Adversaries

“Overcoming resistance to change” is the quintessential B.S./misguided/stupid/ignorant approach to getting (important) things done.

Let me set you straight in precisely ... **SEVENTEEN** words:

Implementing desired change is not about “vanquishing” “enemies.”

Implementing desired change is about recruiting and nurturing allies.

That is the difference between ... **Negative & Positive.**

That is the difference between ... **Enemies & Friends.**

That is the difference between ... **Fear & Fun.**

That is the difference between ... **Night & Day.**

That is the difference between ... **Hell & Heaven.**

That is the difference between ... **Failure & Success.**

Q.E.D.

ALLIES/Addendum: **C(I) > C(E)**

Suppose you are in sales. *Your most important customers are your ...*
INTERNAL CUSTOMERS.

I call them: C(I). That is, if you want to give the best service possible to your external customers—C(E)—then you need your entire organization—logistics, finance, etc.—going out of their way to aid and abet your efforts regarding C(E). As to the topic of this section:

Making ... ALLIES “AT HOME” ... is Task #1 for a salesperson bent on being (& *remaining!*) a top performer.

Appendix ONE

To extend this discussion concerning the abiding importance of allies, I have included as **Appendix ONE** at the end of this book, an essay titled:

Getting Things That Matter Done Against the Odds and in the Inky-black Shadow Cast by the Guardians of the Status Quo

Here is the introduction:

“The art of war does not require complicated maneuvers; the simplest are the best and common sense is fundamental. From which one might wonder how it is generals make blunders; it is because they try to be clever.”—Napoleon

This essay is *not* autobiographical—heaven forbid. On the other hand, it is autobiographical—heaven forbid.

The ideas that led to *In Search of Excellence* were welcomed by my employer, McKinsey & Co., like a cold sore in February; partners, almost to the man (and occasional woman), felt that I was betraying the canon that underpinned McKinsey’s success—that is, vaulting the usually glossed over “soft stuff,” like an abiding emphasis on people and relationships, over the “hard stuff,” like developing brilliant business analyses and paper strategies. Today, some say that the ideas from Bob Waterman’s and my book, altered and expanded, to be sure, underpin something like a whopping fifty percent of the firm’s business. After leaving McKinsey, “they” say I “invented” the “management guru industry”—for better or for worse. In both instances, overstated or not, I was at war with some pretty big folks, and managed to survive and make a bit of progress concerning the ideas about which I was so passionate and with which, I believed, firms of all sorts could increase their odds of sustainable success.

What follows is what I think I’ve learned from my many accumulated cuts and scratches—at least the bits that also seem to match up with the stories of successful people and organizations I’ve been collecting for the last three or so decades.

Key words:

Passion

Enthusiasm

Knowledge

Positive/NEVER Negative

Allies/Allies/Allies

Credit Sharing/Self Effacement

Presentation Excellence

Listening Skills

Network Obsession

Show up

Keep Showin' Up

Political Mastery

Execution Fanaticism

Indirection/Invisibility/"End runs"

Demos/Small Wins/Speed

Impatience

Patience

Civility

Excellence

Wow

Tenacity/Tireless

As usual, every bit of it is as obvious as the end of your nose. And, as usual, my retort to myself is that in "getting things done" it's overlooking the commonsensical in pursuit of the clever that gets us in trouble.