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TRANSFORMATION AS SOCIAL MOVEMENT

How decision-making for organization model transformation differs from conventional change initiatives

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04

Recently, the CEO of a publicly listed company asked himself (and us): “Why Double Helix transformation?”



So what's the difference between a typical change project and this „Double Helix“ transformation?

And why should I as CEO buy into this approach?

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A fair question. Why “Double Helix” transformation?

This paper is about to give you a couple of answers to this question.

First and foremost, it is important to acknowledge the nature of change.
Whenever a company changes, two dimensions of change can be observed:

1. the **organizational** dimension,
2. and the **individual** dimension.

Consequently, truly successful change efforts need to pay attention to the special characteristics of **both** of these dimensions.

Now, the problem is that in today's change initiatives, usually only **one** dimension of change is considered - the organizational bit. Change projects quite often assume that changing organizations is changing organizations. Full stop. Individual change, on the other hand, is mostly the subject of “soft skills” training, and coaching activities, and these are rarely linked into organizational change initiatives. They are mostly actually totally decoupled from what's really going on in the company.

So this lack of acknowledgement of the link between organizational change and individual change is why most change projects fail, either fully or partially.

The **Double Helix Transformation Framework** (short: DHTF), in contrast, fully considers both dimensions of profound change. And thus makes change successful.

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About this paper



This paper addresses two topics:

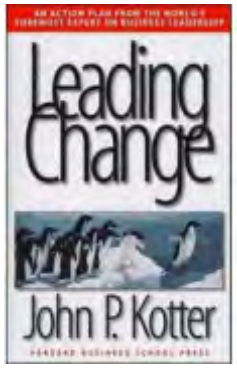
1. The rationale for “Double Helix Transformation”
2. The DHTF in practice

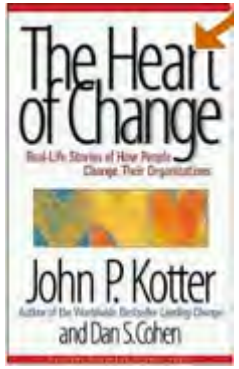
Let's start with an overview of the Double Helix Transformation Framework concept.

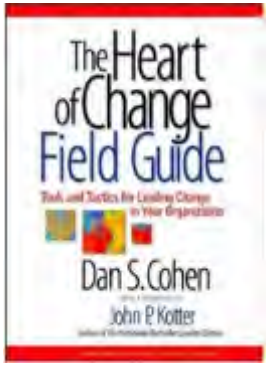
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Helix string 1: The organizational change dimension

References







Organizational change process

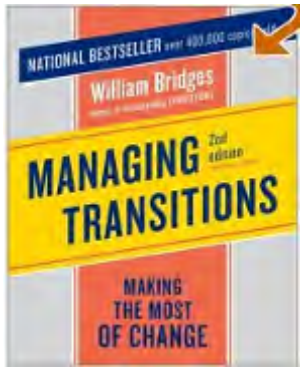
1. Create a sense of urgency
2. Pull together a guiding coalition
3. Develop change vision and strategy
4. Communi-cate for un-derstan-ding and buy-in
5. Empower all others to act
6. Produce short-term wins
7. Don't let up!
8. Create a new culture

John Kotter (HBS) presented this change management model first in a Harvard Business Review article, in 1994, and then in his groundbreaking book "Leading Change". Since then, Kotter has elaborated on that concept, publishing books on practical cases and tools, and also, recently, a fable on change called "Our Iceberg is melting".

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Helix string 2: The individual change dimension

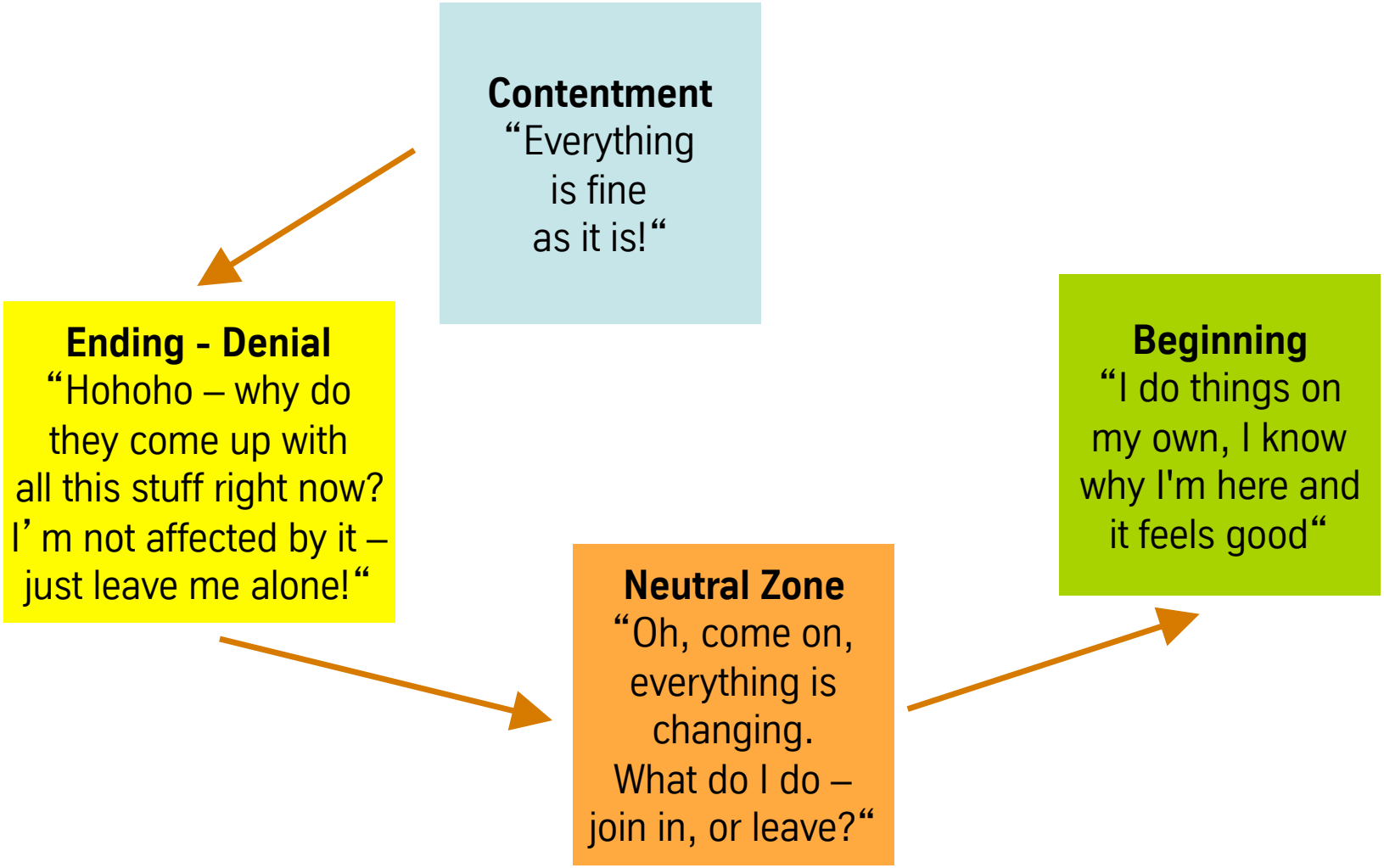
Reference



Consultant William Bridges published his landmark book "Managing Transitions" in 1991. His concept is based upon the observation that in order to change as a person or start something new, you have to go first through a stage of "Ending" or "unloading your baggage", followed by a path through so-called "Neutral Zone".

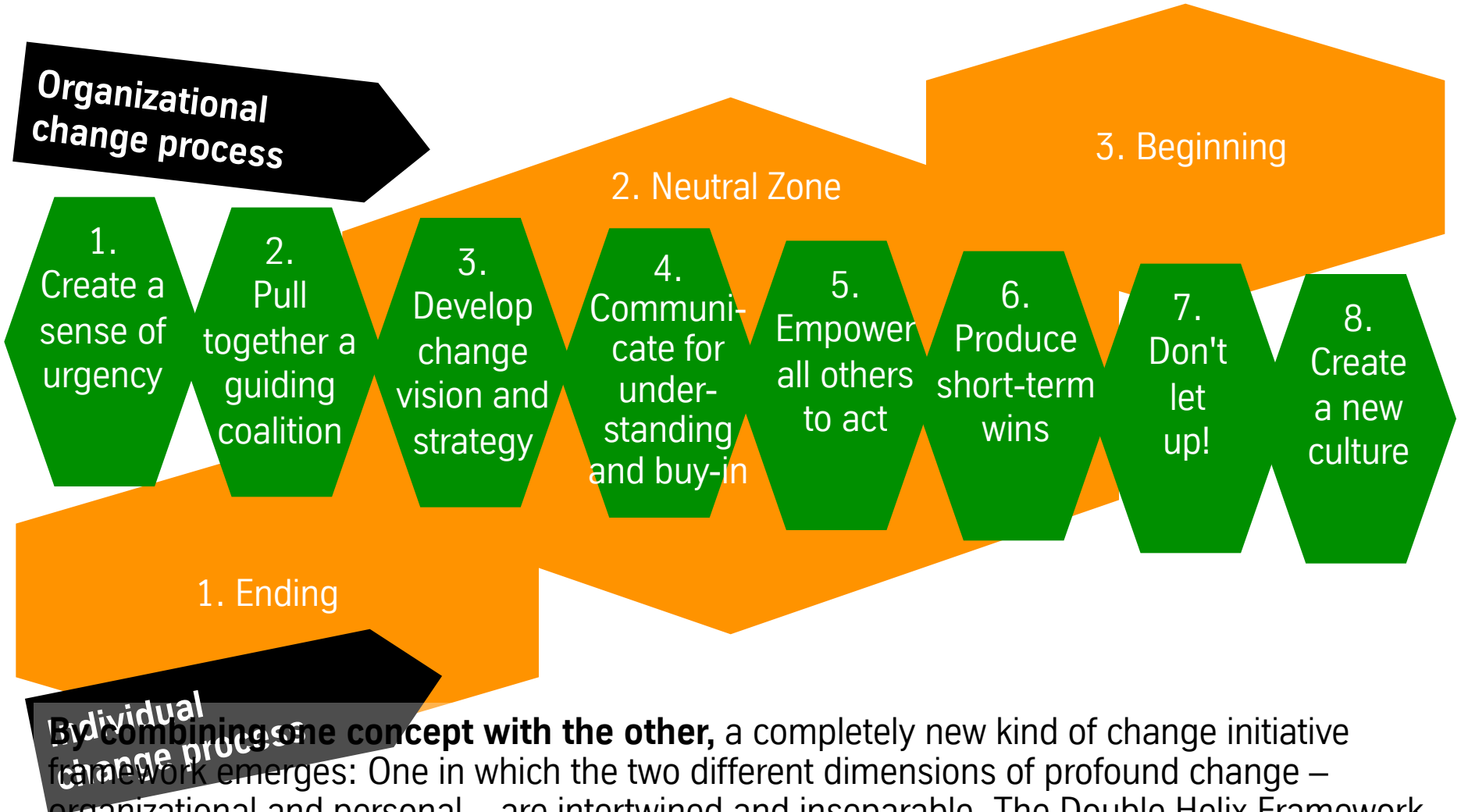
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Helix string 2 - individual change: What it means



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The Double Helix – when the two strings come together…



By combining one concept with the other, a completely new kind of change initiative framework emerges: One in which the two different dimensions of profound change – organizational and personal – are intertwined and inseparable. The Double Helix Framework allows for a far richer and more "realistic" perception of profound change processes.

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Decide to change: The importance of how the decision is taken.

Successful change strongly depends on how the decision for change is taken. Two main aspects need to be considered:

1. The **moment in time** when the decision on change is being taken.
2. The **communication** that goes on until the decision.

In most change initiatives (we will call this the "traditional" approach to change, in this paper), the decision to change is taken at the very beginning of the project. It is taken even before all people relevant for the process are aware that there *will* be change. Most practitioners actually believe that the decision to change should be taken "as early-on as possible", in order to "put a stick in the ground".

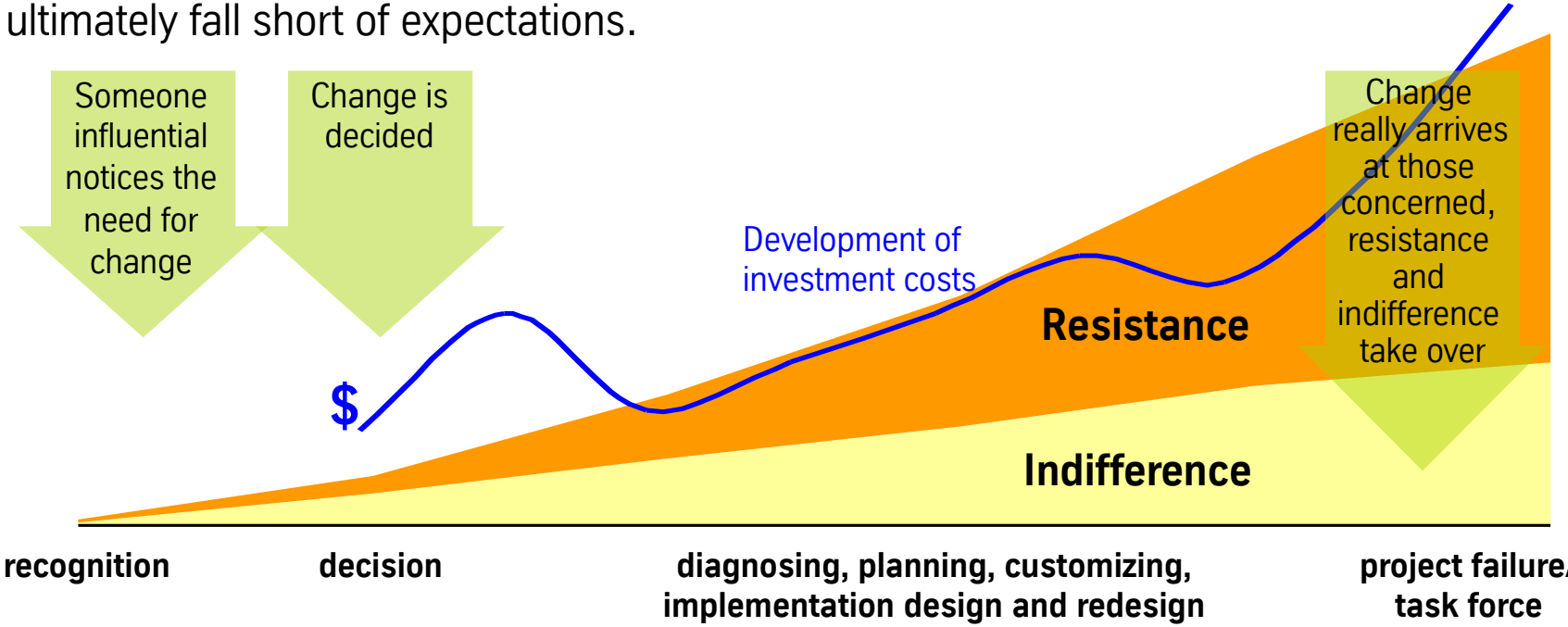
But there is a huge problem with that approach. Because, if the decision is being taken before all those involved have the opportunity to influence the decision, then usually strong resistance and time-wasting political games will result.

The Double Helix Transformation Framework applies special communication techniques to involve all people relevant to the process early-on, before the decision on change is made, and to enable the organization to decide **as late as possible**.

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The traditional approach: How the decision for change is taken - and the consequences

In the traditional approach to producing change, management takes decisions about the change process right at the beginning of the process. After the decision is taken, communication and change processes start to involve the people within the organization. "Convincing", and "cascading" efforts follow.
Because of the fact that the decision on change is already taken, people who are affected by the change don't have much choice than (1) to agree, (2) to build up resistance, (3) to stay indifferent, or (4) to start political gaming until the change really takes place.
Because indifference and resistance build up over time, many change projects fail, or ultimately fall short of expectations.



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Deciding early-on: Upsides of the traditional approach



- Strengthens the **power of management**.
- Offers a playing field for ambitoned **career seekers** to prove their project management skills.
- **Helps win battles and entire wars** against a whole lot of people.
- **Makes the change team feel powerful** and heroic.
- **Allows playing** with large amounts of money.
- **Offers opportunity to create a smart task force** for rescuing a damaged project.

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Deciding early-on: Downsides of the traditional approach



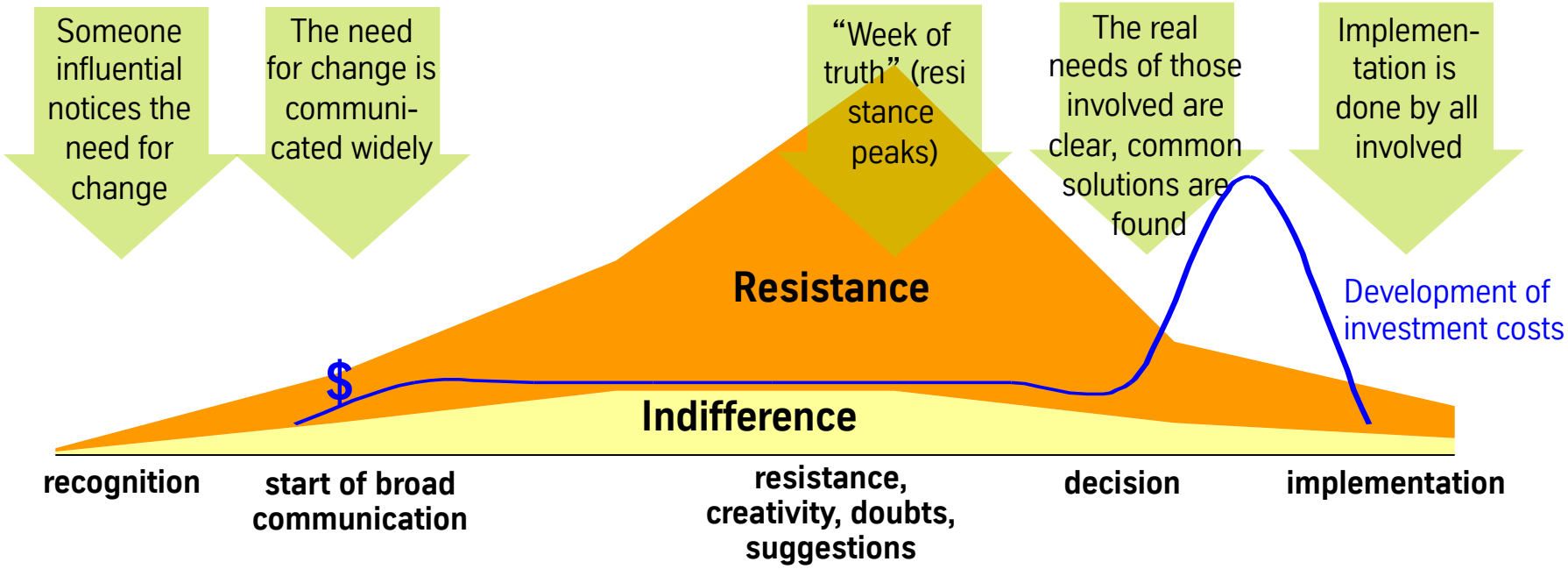
- **Causes high investment costs** right at the beginning, based on rough estimations and poor specifications, because the solution identified by management right at the start typically is not consistent with what is actually needed.
- **Builds up resistance,** while a common understanding for the need and a common will to change should be created.
- **Causes unforeseeable additional costs** right from the beginning, because of repeated redesigns and apparently needed specializations/ customizing.
- **Wastes time** through endless discussions in both bilateral and group meetings, which hover on about the “why”, not the “how” of change.
- **Installs political battlefields** for ambitioned career seekers and burned-out middle managers, and with that creates even more waste of time.
- **Fails timelines** and cost targets.
- **Change gets caught in the ”whatever”-trap**, which becomes wide-spread among employees who feel disempowered.

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The transformational approach: How the decision for change is taken - and the consequences

In the transformation approach, decisions are taken **as late as possible** by the responsible guiding coalition. Until the decision is taken, there is a lot of structured communication and adjustment with all involved about the necessities, possibilities, musts and nice-to-haves of the change effort. People bring in their creativity *before* the actual decision is taken. Before the decision is due, everybody already knows what the change project means, and also what will not happen.

This way, people get what they expect. Implementation is wanted, not battled against. Implementation is driven by a far larger group of people.



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Deciding as late as possible: Upsides of the transformation approach

- **It reduces costs,** because the guidelines are high quality (action planning is done at the latest possible moment), estimations are sustained and timelines are adhered to.
- **It causes less or no redesigns.**
- **It supports producing standard- and principle-based solutions** ("simplicity").
- **It involves all people within the organization,** right from the start.
- It guarantees that possible solutions, as well as implementation risks and obstacles are being identified before acting - by making use of the **intelligence of a larger group**.
- **It creates a common understanding** about the reasons & the aims of the needed change.
- **It creates a huge support base** for implementation, and thus shortens actual implementation time.
- **It brings up practical and wanted solutions** for the people involved.
- **It supports getting things done** – as it minimizes the division between "thinking" and "doing".

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Deciding as late as possible: Downsides of the transformational approach

- **It disempowers management.**
- **It doesn't create a clear "winning moment",** and no individual hero to be celebrated.
- **It requires highly mature behavior** in meetings and structured communication.
- **It brings to light unresolved conflicts** between people, departments, or business areas.
- **It requires a strong guiding coalition,** not just top management power.
- **"Not having the guts to confront resistance"** poses a risk for the initiative
- **It requires a tough stance** towards political gaming within the organization.

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The traditional approach: How to communicate the change

In the traditional approach, decisions mark the beginning of the change process. The decisions are taken by a small group of „powerful“ people. It doesn ‘t matter if they are all managers, or if some of them are informal leaders. Because in the end, there has to be a management board or even more commonly a single manager who decides what kind of change will take place.

Based on the decision on what to change, several activities start:

- Selection of privileged colleagues such as change experts, management team members or informal leaders.
- Planning of ressources, timelines, milestones etc.
- Looking for external support like consultants, coaches, trainers, implementers, technology specialists etc.
- Defining of the change vision, mission and scope.

Until the decision is taken and until most of the preparation work is done, communication about the change effort is considered confidential and kept within a selected group of priviledged people.

Only when all important issues are planned-through and decided upon, those affected by the change will be informed about the consequences of change.

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The traditional approach to change: Common reactions

resignation



resistance



Most of us are used to the traditional approach to change. We are thus also used to the resulting resistance and/or resignation, and we are used to reacting on it, usually by command and control. Besides this "official" reaction, those among who are more ambitious start political intrigues, in order to try to profit from change process.
Seen from this angle, traditional change processes are a huge opportunity for individuals who focus on making a career. While there are always some true winners among these individuals, the wealth of the company is usually far less remarkably improved.

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The transformational approach: How to communicate the change

In the transformational approach, decision-making is not the first step. Instead, the first move is to make the need for change explicit: to build a sense of urgency for doing things differently. Once this need is clear and can be explained and emotionally understood by all, then actions like this have to be taken:

- Identify those colleagues who are noticeably really looking forward to change.
- Build a "coalition for change" that includes the following types of people: a powerful leader, an implementer, a "buddy", a professor, a knowledge-seeker (for more information, read "Our Iceberg is Melting" by John Kotter and Holger Rathgeber).
- Define who, at the end, will decide what and why.
- Keep in mind that every single person has to go through his or her own transition (read "Managing Transition", by William Bridges).
- Before every decision, consult with all or at least most of the colleagues affected.

Until the main decisions are taken, the communication about the change is spread widely. People are already confronted with the change before a decision is taken. The relevant ideas, needs and fears find a place in the change process. When the decision is ultimately taken, by the right people, then the execution of change should happen rather quickly.

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The transformational approach to change: Common reactions

neutrality/confusion/fear



enthusiasm



In a Double Helix transformation, neutrality, confusion and/or fear will appear early-on, and they are being dealt with during an intense communication phase – which occurs before decisions about how to change what are taken. Few of us are used to this approach, a fact that can produce some anxiety and misunderstandings amongst those affected by the change. Usually, people in organizations have never been confronted with the need for *them* to design the change. Most are more used to just fighting it, or to swallow it, or to use it for their personal interests. In a Double Helix transformation, the benefit for the company is the focus of the change effort, and thanks to transparency there is little space for personal advantage.

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Conclusions



Traditional Change Processes

- Change is being decided upon early-on, and only then it involves a larger group of people.
- Both organizational changes and process steps are fixed in detail at the beginning and made effective in a rush. Resistance, fear and creativity during the change initiative are then dealt with by making costly redesigns.
- After a huge investment into the initial design, which occurs behind closed doors, change is being forced upon the organization, against all obstacles. This causes massive rework and redesign, considered necessary since early spending is perceived as “sunk cost”.

Double Helix Transformation

- People´s fears and ideas are inputs to the initiative´s design. People are involved in an intense communication process, before the decisions about change are taken.
- Resistance and political games are dealt with throughout a broad communication phase, virtually, before expensive, specific changes take place.
- Major challenges become transparent during the communication phase, long before high process and technology expenses occur, thus reducing rework, redesign and waste.

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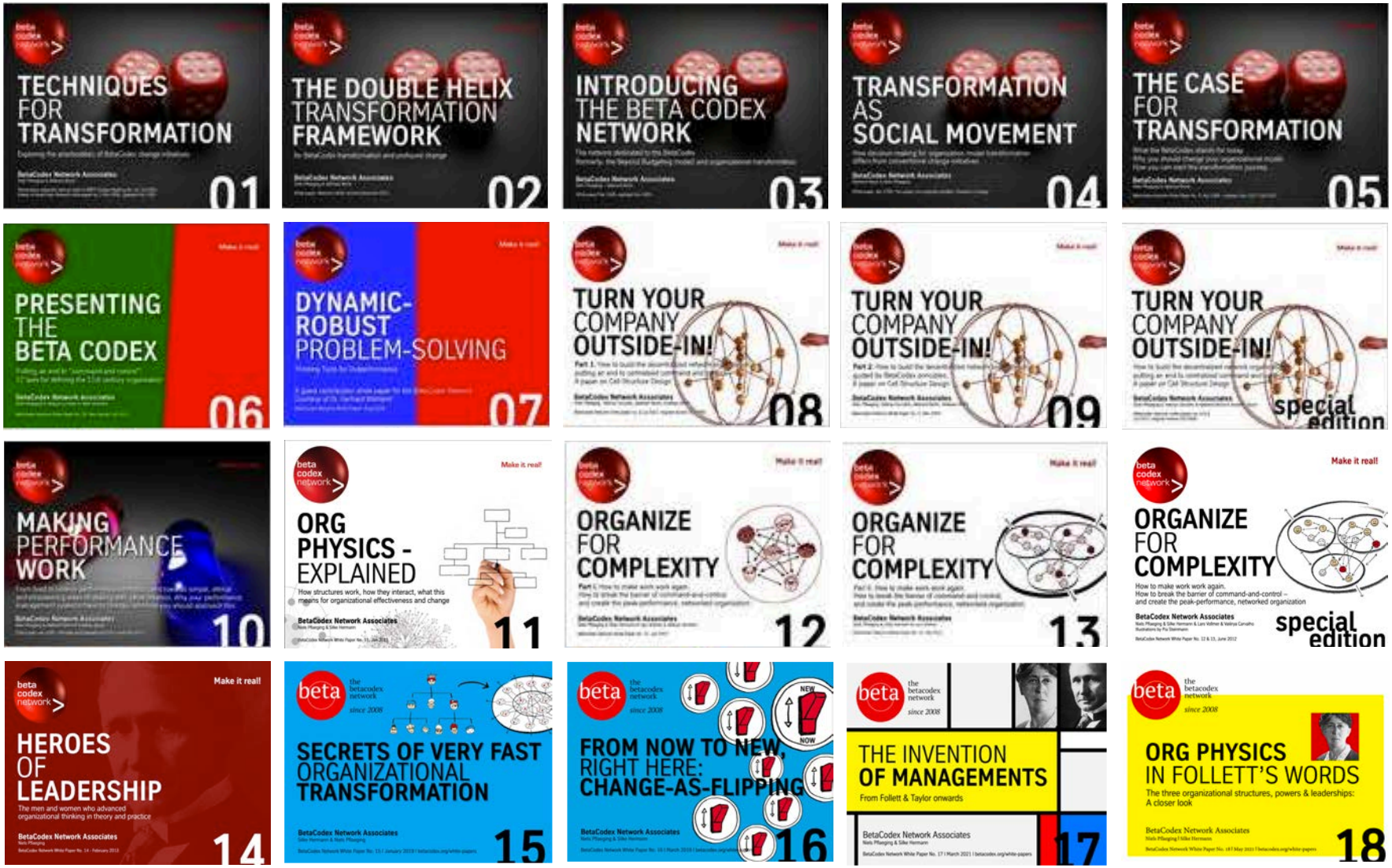
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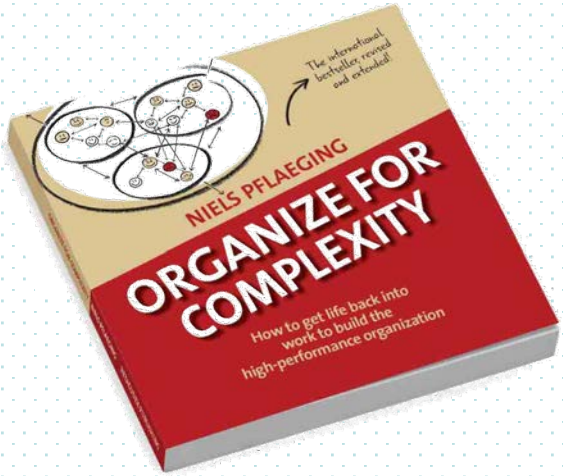
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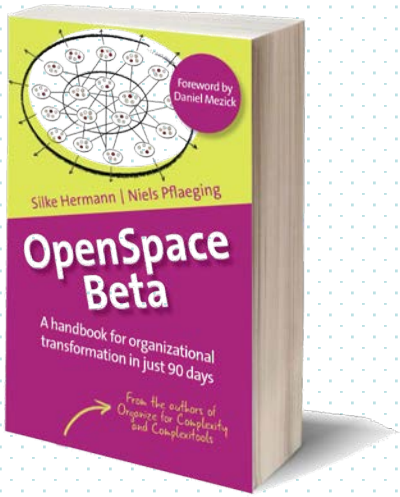
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