



## Change Leadership 4.0 – Part 1

All industries are facing their share of disruptive and continuous change – call it globalization, digitalization, governmental & regulatory interference, artificial intelligence advances, multifaceted workforces, “you-name-it-4.0”,... and though the word Change Management has been around for a long time, even the meaning of that has morphed.

Decades ago, change “happened”. It had a beginning and an end. Thought leaders like Kurt Lewin explained to us then, how to deal with that kind of change: unfreeze – change – refreeze. And today? Complexity and speed challenge us on how to survive, navigate and lead change – not once but continuously. No more refreezing and settling calmly into the new stable reality to take a break and rejuvenate after the energy-sapping “change”.

Especially leaders of others need to look at the environment in which they operate and then drive towards the mission and results. As the VUCA world (A world that is **V**olatile-**U**ncertain-**C**omplex-**A**mbiguous – detailed [definition here](#)) intermingles with a BOCA world (a world described as having **B**lurred boundaries, **O**verloaded with more work than people can manage, **C**omplex, and **A**ddicted to technology and continuous stimulation from a knowledge-based economy – more detail at [2016 Executive Coaching Survey published by conferenceboard.org](#)), leaders need to excel at a) building resilience in themselves, b) inspiring others to prevail through ambiguity and c) navigating the environment to select the most viable options.

A deeper look into these three elements of mastering change in the 4.0 era:

### 1. Building resilience:

Everybody goes through the “Emotional cycle of change” (based on [Kelley & Conner](#) or the [John Bridges Model](#)) when faced with transitions. The question is not “if” but “how fast and with what repercussions”. As Robert Kegan already described in his book [“In over our heads”](#), the human inner make-up is not really ready to cope with the magnified and accelerated reality we live in today. Hence, what can be done? Leaders can work on their own resilience. A model based on [Conner Partners](#) looks at helpful characteristics of resilient individuals: **Positive** (having a sense of self-assurance that is based on a view of life as challenging but filled with opportunity), **organized** (building plans, estimating effort, creating processes enabling effective collaboration, and displaying the discipline to apply these approaches consistently), **proactive** (moving into action even when the pieces aren’t all in place), **focused** (developing structured approaches to managing change), **flexible** (demonstrating a special pliability when responding to change).

If leaders find little ways each day to build up their own resilience, they will get through situations easier and hence have more energy left over to lead their organizations more positively through the transition towards the future.



2. Inspiring others:

Once leaders are more “resilient” themselves, they can spend more focus and energy on helping, leading, inspiring others to be effective during a time of constant ambiguity. They need to show a clear vision, make seemingly contradictory paradigms work for their teams and navigate through the challenges that a VUCA (or also BOCA) environment present. What helps is to create a “listen-up-speak-up” culture by leading inclusively and hence to harness the best thinking of the team. The Center for Talent Innovation makes a powerful case in [“Innovation, Diversity and Market Growth”](#) for how inclusive leadership (the demonstration of particular leadership attributes that create more open-minded work-environments in which more people are willing and able to speak up and being listened to) increases our ability to grow in the market. Engaged people, more ideas and better decisions are pivotal to be successful in a changing setting.

3. Navigating the environment:

This is meant beyond the so-called organization. While hierarchical structures and functional silos fade, networks and project work gain in importance. The ability to communicate and collaborate across all those fading boundaries paired with strong analytics is a key capability to access relevant information and insights. In the highly ambiguous, fast-morphing settings of most business endeavors, leaders good at identifying options, leveraging gained insights for risk evaluation and acting on the “best” option will stand out: With better results, exceptional talent and sustainable approaches. (See related source: HBR, [How the Best CEO’s Differ from Average Ones](#)”, author Dean Stamoulis)

Based on this, here are four ideas on how to become “proficient” in Change 4.0:

1. Acknowledge that everybody faces and hence needs to proactively deal with three levels of “change” that trigger longer term transitions – the personal one, the one on the immediate work team and the larger one which includes competitors and the value chain surrounding the own product/service.
2. Increase personal resilience to be an authentic rock in the stormy BOCA-sea for the team(s) and organization.
3. Improve ability to inspire by communicating a clear vision and by making the world less VUCA for the teams.
4. Develop self (and others) by managing a variety of functions and situations, by getting used to making solid risk-assessments and decisions based on limited information, and by becoming a collaboration expert in real, virtual and social media settings.

**Summary:** Only when leaders are so agile, that they can positively advance or adapt to “New-ness”, when structures, processes and culture truly allow to “try-fail-regroup-try-different” without punishment, then “change and transitions” become the new normal and become sustainable for both – organizations and the people that form them.

*You like the article? I’d be proud if you send it to your network.*

*You want to discuss further? Drop me a mail at [Brigitte@Lippmann-International.com](mailto:Brigitte@Lippmann-International.com)*