

Leading in a culture of Change

EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARY

NOVEMBER 2009

KEY CONCEPTS:

- Leaders today must embrace and work through the complexities of change.
- The five components needed for effective change are: moral purpose, understanding change, relationships, knowledge building, and coherence-making.
- Leaders must use these five components with energy, enthusiasm, and hope.

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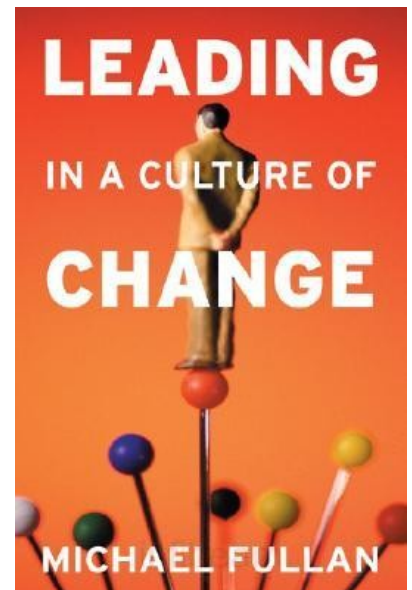
Leading Change in a Fast-paced World

Change in the world today is faster and more complex than ever before. *Leading in a Culture of Change* provides



leaders in education and business with effective strategies to lead change in a fast-paced world. Leaders

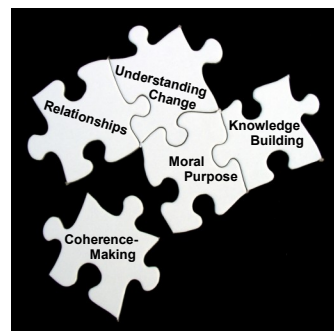
today are faced with making complex decisions where there are no easy answers, and Fullan suggests that schools and businesses must become “learning organizations” if they are to survive. The change process, although messy, brings forth creative ideas and novel solutions. Leaders who want to enact change in their organization must be willing to work through the disturbances and guide people through the differences.



The Five Components of Leadership

Leaders need to be prepared to address new problems that have yet to be solved successfully. Fullan suggests that leaders must “mobilize” others to figure out how to solve these problems, and he presents five strategies that must be used to affect change. These strategies, described by chapter, work together to provide effective leadership in a world where change is happening at a relentless pace. If leaders are to be effective, they must con-

tinually work on the five components of leadership: moral purpose, understanding change, relationships, knowledge building, and coherence making. Leaders who genuinely embrace these five



aspects of leadership will ultimately feel and act with enthusiasm, energy, and hope. Moral purpose focuses on direction and results; understanding change, relationships, and knowledge building are about what is done along the way; and coherence-making is about finding the ideas and processes of value, and implementing them into the culture of the organization. *Leading in a Culture of Change* challenges leaders to embrace the complexities of change.

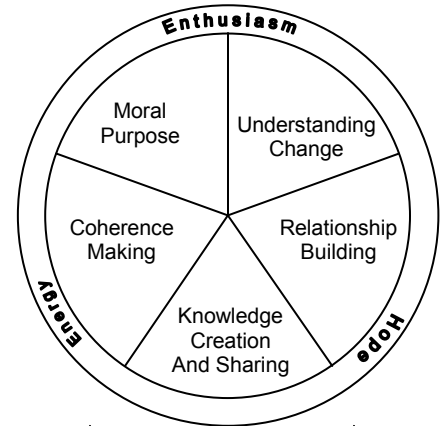
A Remarkable Convergence

“Leaders will increase their effectiveness if they continually work on the five components of leadership—if they pursue moral purpose, understand the change process, develop relationships, foster knowledge building, and strive for coherence—with energy, enthusiasm, and hopefulness.”

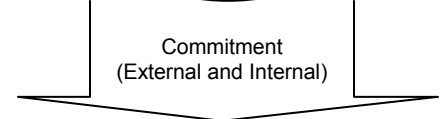
(p. 11)

In chapter one, *A Remarkable Convergence*, Fullan describes five components of leadership — moral purpose, understanding change, relationships, knowledge building, and coherence making — needed to provide effective leadership in complex times. These five components along with enthusiasm, energy, and hope, provide a means for “thinking about and leading complex change more powerfully than ever before” (p. 3). Fullan developed a framework for leadership (diagram at right) to conceptualize how these strategies work together to improve situations in organizations. Leaders use the five strategies with enthusiasm, energy, and hope, to instill commitment in the members of the organization, which creates positive outcomes.

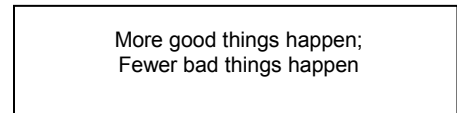
Leaders



Members



Results



A Framework for Leadership



“If you don’t treat others well and fairly, you will be a leader without followers.” (p. 13)

Moral Purpose

In this second chapter, Fullan defines moral purpose as acting with the intention of improving and making a positive difference in the lives of others. Leaders must have moral purpose if they are to be effective. It must be about both ends and means in that what is to be achieved must have moral purpose, as well as what is done to get there. Fullan stated: “To strive to improve the quality of how we live together is a moral purpose of the highest order” (p.14). Ef-

fectiveness can only be achieved if there has been morally purposeful behaviour.



Moral purpose is integrated with the other four components, and leaders who work on all five qualities described in

the book will be surrounded by moral purpose. They will not need to plan to be moral in their endeavors, but it will come naturally. Fullan provides examples for both education and business to illustrate how moral purpose is fundamental in the issues of leadership.

The most significant point Fullan makes in regards to moral purpose is that it is necessary for sustainability. If organizations are to survive, they must have moral purpose.

Understanding Change

In this third chapter, Fullan points out that there is a lot of complex, unclear, and often contradictory advice about how to lead change. He therefore suggested that it is important to *understand* change in order to develop a greater feel for leading complex change. Fullan identifies six points to better understand the change process. These items are explained as follows:

The goal is not to innovate the most. Simply put, leaders who try to change everything at once will not succeed at changing anything properly. Their fast-paced style of leading will cause members of their organization to be overwhelmed and burn out.

It is not enough to have the best ideas. Having good ideas is an element of effective leadership; however, internal commitment is required to sustain the implementation of these ideas. Leaders must recognize their weaknesses as well as their

strengths, and use several leadership styles to create the best climate and performance.



Appreciate the Implementation Dip. With any innovation, people will be required to learn new skills and behaviours, and may need to understand new belief systems. Fullan called this “the implementation dip.” Effective leaders understand that this implementation dip must occur, and they must be supportive and sensitive to the unrest that it may bring to members of the organization as they adjust to the change.

Redefine Resistance. Leaders cannot overlook the importance of listening to dissenters. These resisters often have ideas and views leaders may have missed, and if ignored, can create tension and dissatisfaction that can lead to the demise of any innovation.

Reculturing is the Name of the Game. Effective leaders must learn to transform the culture to one that is receptive to challenge and change. Successful leaders need energy, enthusiasm, and hope to tackle the task of seeking, assessing, and selecting new ideas and practices.

Never a Checklist, Always Complexity. Leading change is not an easy, follow-the-steps procedure. Leaders must cultivate their knowledge, understanding, and skills if they are to create change.

Understanding that change is complex, and different situations require different strategies, is crucial for effecting change.

“Change can be led, and leadership can make a difference.”
(p. 34)

“All innovations worth their salt call upon people to question and in some respects to change their behavior and their beliefs—even in cases where innovations are pursued voluntarily.”
(p. 40)

Relationships, Relationships, Relationships

Relationships are crucial to success. Moral purpose, relationships, and success are closely interrelated. Everything is in relationship to something else, and these interconnections are complex. There is a need to feel connected to the organization, and leaders must focus on people and relationships if they are to achieve sustainability. Leaders need to develop relationships that are “genuine” and based on “authenticity and care” (p. 52). Attention needs to be given to the treatment of people, and there needs to be a focus on people and relationships.

Fullan provides a school example to demonstrate the importance of building good relationships. He uses a case

study by Newman et al. (2000) which concluded that *school capacity* was the key to success. Five components are necessary for this school capacity: teacher’s knowledge, skills, and dispositions; professional community; program coherence; technical resources; and principal leadership. Schools must focus on creating school wide professional learning communities, stating clear learning goals that are coordinated with all staff, and providing the necessary resources to improve instruction. Principals must foster relationships that work at targeting these components. “The role of leadership . . . is to “cause” greater capacity in the organization in order to get better results” (p. 65).

Fullan provides a word of caution about relationships in that they may not always be positive. There can be strong relationships that reinforce ineffective practices. Relationships that establish collaborative cultures where people are open to sharing resources and ideas are crucial. Leaders have the important role of ensuring relationships that produce desired results are being developed.

The main point in this chapter is that organizations must always involve relationships as they establish strategies to implement new and better ideas. In order to lead in a culture of change, there must be concern for moral purpose and good ideas, which is essential for success and sustainability.

“The role of leadership . . . is to ‘cause’ greater capacity in the organization in order to get better results.”
(p. 65)

Emotional Intelligence and Resistance

A vital part of building effective relationships is helping people work together when anxiety, stress, and ambiguity run high. These emotions are part of the change process, and leaders must have emotional intelligence if they are to manage successfully the differing emotions that come with change. People will have doubts, reservations, and differences of opinion, and effective leaders will see this dissent as a potential source of new ideas and breakthroughs. Negative feedback is part of improving.

“[T]he most effective leaders are not the smartest in an IQ sense but are those who combine intellectual intelligence with emotional intelligence.”

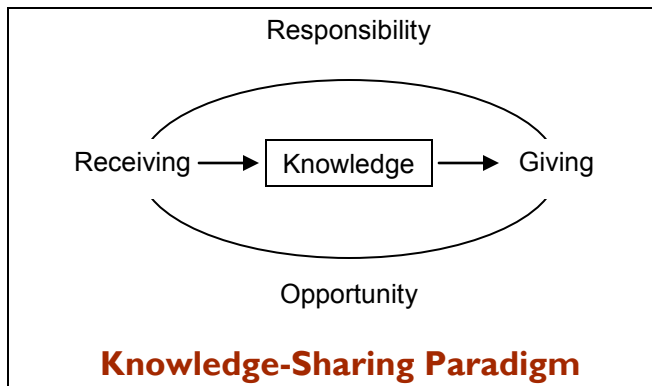
(p. 71)

Knowledge Building

Fullan begins this chapter by distinguishing between information and knowledge: “Information is machines. Knowledge is people” (p. 78). Information only becomes valuable when it has a social context. Information must be shared and used. Sharing best practices is not enough. Leading in a culture of change means creating new environments conducive to learning and sharing knowledge.

Fullan provides examples from business and education to describe knowledge building. He uses the work of Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) to distinguish between *explicit* knowledge and *tacit* knowledge. Explicit knowledge is communicated in the form of data and information, and tacit knowledge is the skills, beliefs, and understanding that are practiced but not clearly stated. Tacit knowledge is much more difficult to define, yet is crucial to the process of knowledge creation. Successful businesses recognize the necessity of relationships to effectively share tacit knowledge.

Sharing knowledge practices and creating collaborative



cultures go hand-in-hand. A caring culture fosters knowledge sharing, the sharing of knowledge itself creates a learning culture that is vital for successful performance. The knowledge shared must be about issues seen as important to the members.

Leaders must develop knowledge-sharing practices to create collaborative cultures. They must make building knowledge a core value, and create specific opportunities so that members can engage in the sharing process. There needs to be a collaborative culture where members expect to share their expertise, and is part of the common practices of the organization.

Fullan creates a *knowledge-*

sharing paradigm (shown above) to explain the process of the knowledge exchange. Members must see the giving and receiving of knowledge as a responsibility, and leaders must reinforce the knowledge-sharing process by providing opportunity and incentives. Complex information comes into the organization and must be sorted out through interaction. Establishing knowledge-sharing practices helps to create a collaborative culture.

Fullan provides several examples in both business and education of organizations that have used knowledge-sharing in different ways.

- Ford plant receives *best practices* from other plants to help reduce costs.

- British Petroleum has a *Peer Assist Program* where teams working on projects call upon another team that has had experience in a similar task.
- The U.S. Army uses *After Action Reviews* where units assess what has been learned in a battle or project so that it can be immediately used in the next endeavor.
- Shell uses *fishbowls* where teams watch while the top management meet with another team.
- A New York district uses *intervisitation* and *Peer Networks* to allow members to observe each other.
- The Edmonton Catholic School District uses a *Learning Fair* where ideas in the Assessment For Learning Initiative are shared.

If leaders are to successfully build knowledge-sharing practices, they must instill trust, be willing to take risks, and tackle the cultural barriers to sharing knowledge.

Coherence-Making

“When change occurs, there will be disturbances, and this means that there will be differences of opinion that must be reconciled. Effective leadership means guiding people through the differences and, indeed, enabling differences to surface.”
(p. 114)

In this chapter, Fullan describes the need to work through the complexities of the change process. The world is a dynamic, complex system, and leaders must use the dynamics of change to bring forth new ideas and innovations. Maintaining the status quo or persistent coherence is not desirable. Leaders must be willing to “move toward the edge of chaos” so that fresh new solutions can be found (p. 108).

Disturbances will be a common occurrence on the journey of change. Introducing new projects will “disturb” the status quo and enable differences to surface; however, effective leaders work through these differences while creating coherence. Leaders must be aware of introducing too many innovations at the same time. This leads to fragmenta-

tion, confusion, and uncertainty. Schools are in a worse situation than businesses, since they must contend with policies and innovations coming from the Board and Ministry.

Fullan points out that internal commitment from members of the organization is needed to make more good things happen. Coherence-making is needed to reconcile



the differences that are sure to be a part of the change process. Coherence is in the hearts and minds of the members of the organization. Pursuing moral purpose, the change process, relationships, and

knowledge building can and will create deeper coherence.

In the last part of the chapter, Fullan describes two key concepts in coherence-making: *self-organizing* and *strange attractors*. *Self-organizing* refers to what happens when moral purpose, the change process, relationship, and knowledge building are put into practice. New interactions and ideas create a shift in the organization that brings it to a state where greater coherence is achieved.

Strange attractors are experiences that bring about deep commitment and energy that make desirable things happen. Meaningful initiatives can be powerful “attractors” and motivate members to invest energy into a plan.



“Quality ideas must be retained, shared, and used throughout the organization”
(p. 81)

Coherence and Disturbance

Fullan states that disturbance is a good thing. It would seem that disturbance and coherence are counter-productive. Fullan argues that both are needed, and in fact disturbance leads to greater coherence. It is working through the unsettling processes that brings about coherence. Coherence alone stifles new ideas and innovations. Disturbance alone creates chaos and confusion. Effective leaders welcome the disturbances, work with members through the ambiguities and complexities to find quality ideas, which in turn creates

coherence. Timing is key, and leaders must know when to disturb and when to cohere.



Fullan points out that there is a great deal of coherence-making in the Framework for Leadership (found on page 2). Focusing on outcomes and moving towards moral purpose can be a powerful coherence-maker, as long as the

disorder of the process is taken into consideration. First, there must be accountability, and all members must be willing to contribute in a constructive, collaborative manner. Secondly, knowledge-sharing activities must have purpose, and people should stimulate, inspire, and motivate each other. Thirdly, there must be a shared commitment to the vision and the action plan selected. Thus disturbance and coherence-making work together to produce new and better ways to run an organization.

The Hare and the Tortoise

In this final chapter of the book, Fullan uses Fontaine's fable of the hare and the tortoise to make the point that quick and clever is not wise, and perhaps slow and purposeful is a better way to go. Fullan identifies three intricately related lessons for developing leaders: the vital and paradoxical need for slow knowing, the importance of learning in context, and the need for leaders at all levels of the organization in order to achieve internal commitment throughout.

Slow Knowing. In a complex world of rapid change, there is an increased need for "slow knowing" (Claxton, 1997, as cited in Fullan, p. 122). Time is needed to deal with disturbances and draw out new patterns and ideas. Effective leaders understand that situations do not always have easy answers, and taking the time to listen and think through situations, often collaboratively, provides better results.

Learning in Context. Having talented people in the organization is helpful, but the greatest improvement is achieved by "learning to do the right thing in the setting where you work" (Elmore, 2000, as cited in

Fullan, p. 125). The emphasis is on continuous learning, and leaders should model learning and create an environment where everyone expects learning and sharing to take place. The examples provided in the *Knowledge Building* chapter (Peer Assist, After Action Learning, fishbowl, best practices, Learning Fair, and intervisitation) are all learning in context. Tacit knowledge is developed by learning in



context, which gives value to learning and sharing knowledge.

Leadership for Many. Fullan provides ideas throughout the book for all members of the organization to become better leaders. People who take a leadership role and invest time and energy into an organization will have greater internal commitment. They are more likely to care and share ideas. Ful-

lan states: "Strong institutions have many leaders at all levels" (p. 134). Not only does shared leadership strengthen organizations in the present, but it ensures sustainability. Leaders who cultivate leadership in others "move the organization even further after [they] have left" (p. 134).

A Time to Disturb

The world is becoming increasingly complex, and leaders must have the skills to respond to the changing environment. Leadership is not about making decisions in solitude, but instead is about mobilizing the "collective capacity to challenge difficult circumstances" (p. 136). Effective leadership is not just about taking leadership training. It is about mastering the five core capacities—moral purpose, understanding change, relationships, knowledge building, and coherence-making—and knowing when to disturb and when to rein in. It is about taking the time to make wise decisions, and learning in context with members throughout the organization. Finally, leadership is not leading alone, but producing leadership in others.

*"The message [of this book] has been that organizations transform when they can establish mechanisms for learning in the dailiness of organizational life."
(p. 130)*

Critical Evaluation

I thought this book was enlightening and enjoyable to read. Although the world is rapidly changing and the role of leadership is becoming more challenging, Fullan gives hope that it is possible to lead in today's complex society. I found the examples from business and education to be relevant and useful, as the strategies presented could be modified and used in any context. I found Fullan's views on moral purpose and relationships to be refreshing. Many times leadership training becomes a theoretical checklist that fails to include the reality of human emotion. Fullan tackles the issue of interpersonal relationships head on, letting readers know that if they do not address this part of leadership, they will not be effective.

In the past, leadership has often been about finding quick solutions and diffusing conflict. Leaders may feel they are failing in their role if there are "disturbances." Fullan states that these disturbances should be expected, and encourages the reader to learn and grow from them. Fullan wisely advises that taking the time to think through situations, often with the help of others, provides better results and is the mark of a great leader.

Leading in today's fast-paced world can seem like an impossible task. *Leading in a Culture of Change* provides leaders with encouragement and hope—encouragement through the use of the five components of leadership, and hope that change and success are possible in today's complex world.

Critical Questions

How can organizations prepare aspiring leaders to develop the five components of leadership (moral purpose, understanding change, relationships, knowledge-building, and coherence-making)?



“The chief role of leadership is to mobilize the *collective capacity*.”
(p. 136)

What “disturbances” have you encountered in your organization? How have these disturbances encouraged learning and knowledge-sharing? How have they thwarted progress? What are some of the barriers to collaboration?

“Leaders are not born; they are nurtured.”
(p. 131)



According to Fullan: “Leaders are not born; they are nurtured.” Do you agree with this statement? Are all people capable of being leaders?