

Leon de Caluwe and Hans Vermaak. **Learning To Change: A Guide For Organization Change Agents.** Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003, 330 pages, \$44.95.

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The field of planned organizational change was long equated with organization development (OD). OD proponents were upfront with the *bona fides* of their approach: full disclosure, informed consent, inclusive participation, and so on (see Cummings & Worley, 1993, for a representative listing of OD's values and assumptions). These canons of OD provided the principles and practices that could be applied to any organizational change project. Yet, for a number of years, standing alongside the OD literature were smaller volumes (Zaltman & Duncan, 1977, was an early example) that did not so neatly fit the OD mold. By these accounts, the geography of organizational change management was bigger than that encompassed by OD. In short, this alternative literature advocated a contingent approach to managing change: although OD techniques might be appropriate in *some* cases, they would not necessarily be appropriate in *all*. What has been needed is a volume that can articulate a contingency approach to planned organizational change. *Learning to Change* by de Caluwe and Vermaak (consultants with the Twynstra Group in Amsterdam and affiliated with the Free University there) is one such volume, and, although it may not be perfect, it does do a good job in this regard. Written for managers, consultants, and students, this volume provides a relatively comprehensive review of a contingency approach to managing organizational change. It is a volume from which most students and practitioners can benefit.

The book is divided into seven chapters with two appendices. Chapter 1 sets the stage by noting the reasons why organizational change is so complicated. To start, organizations tend to be both ambiguous and irrational. This foundation of complexity is further compounded by

four other factors. First, organizational components are loosely coupled, making the unilateral application of force or direction for change generally impractical. Second, employees resist being treated subserviently, creating constant sources of tension and conflict. Third, chaotic conditions imposed from external driving forces threaten to overwhelm internal organization. Finally, organizations are political arenas of competing interests and shifting alliances. All of these points underscore the fact that change is as much an irrational process as it is a rational one.

In Chapter 3, after reviewing the literature on change models, they present their contingent approach, based on five different models of change. Each model is defined in terms of its distinctive assumptions, ideals, pitfalls, and techniques. They use a color-coding scheme for labeling each approach. The colors are supposedly related to the nature of the approach (e.g., as the color of the sun or fire, yellow represents power); this color scheme is *not* related to DeBono's (1992) thinking hats theory. *Yellow*-print change is based on power and self-interest where people change because their interests are affected and/or because they are compelled to do so. *Blue*-print change is rational: change will happen when goals are clearly stated goals with well defined plans. *Red*-print change is based on barter, the exchange of behaviors for rewards or punishments. Individual and organizational learning is the basis for *green*-print change. Finally, *white*-print assumes change is self-organizing in a field of chaos. Each color/approach has its own strengths and weaknesses, and, even though some combination of approaches will often be needed in any one change program, one approach will tend to be dominant. In order to make this a really contingent approach to change management, they need to do a better job identifying when each approach is recommended.

In Chapter 4, they develop a more general theory of any planned organizational change process. The six defining variables are desired outcomes, context or history, actors involved, phases of a change process, communication activities, and steering mechanisms. The entire framework is depicted in an extensive 3-page foldout (unfortunately, it was upside down in my copy). The potential outcomes of a change program are new forms of products and services, interactions, organization management practices, and/or people. The process of planned change occurs in six phases, beginning with diagnosis and ending in interventions.

Chapter 5 explores various aspects of this model more fully, particularly diagnosis, change strategy, and interventions. In the discussion on diagnosis, they draw the useful distinction between the scientific and action research procedures. As is often the case in this book, they draw upon the existing arguments and contentions in the field, nicely packaging those issues and making recommendations for practice. More than

30 different types of diagnostic methods are listed. They conclude that the type of method to be used must be deliberately selected for its appropriateness. The phases of diagnosis they review are fairly standard, running from contracting and planning, through data collection and analysis, to feedback and recommendations. Issues of intervention planning and resistance are also covered in Chapter 5 under the topic of selecting a change strategy. Six indicators of the likelihood of resistance are offered, including: Is there is a clear need or desire for change? How complex is the change? How emotionally charged is the change issue? Is the change feasible? They identify 45 different kinds of interventions. The interventions are classified by color-print and level of intervention, again making the point that the change agent must be versed in and capable of using many.

Chapters 6 and 7 should really be seen more as supplements or appendixes to Chapter 5. Chapter 6 is devoted to a more detailed examination of the 36 types of diagnostic procedures identified in Chapter 5. Twelve procedures are singled out for review, using a common framework that describes the procedure's basic philosophy, what it is and how it works, and comments about when and where to use it. Many of these procedures, such as force field analysis, will be well known to experienced practitioners. Other examples will be less familiar, such as the Eisenhower principal, biographical fit, and the clock. Some procedures are not covered in any detail, such as fishbone diagrams, portfolio analysis, SWOT analysis, experience curves, and organizational structure assessments. Finally, some of the procedures *qua* diagnosis are questionable, either because they are better seen as interventions (the Eisenhower principal seems to be time management, for example), or they're not really diagnostic in nature (such as the use of resumes). The procedural descriptions are basic and simple. Finally, several of the diagnostic procedures are European in origin, and the original sources listed in the bibliography do not seem to be available in English. These problems make this the least successful chapter in the book. Chapter 7 follows the same format in examining the interventions identified in Chapter 5. Many of the same comments apply here, too.

The nature, orientations, and competencies of the role of change agent are covered in Chapter 8. Although I did not disagree with their discussion, it was not as fruitful as the other chapters. Indeed, this discussion could have been improved by concentrating more on the techniques and issues facing change agents. Better use of such works as Block's (1981) *Flawless Consulting* or Schwarz's (1994) *The Skilled Facilitator* would have helped. One appendix provides tips for recognizing the various color-print change styles. A second appendix is a self-test on one's relative preference for the different colors/change strategies and

a companion self-test addressing how one typically acts in change situations. The tests were informative and they provided a brief discussion of how to interpret the scores.

In *Learning to Change*, there is little that is completely new, but that is not a problem with this volume. The authors identify and integrate a large and disparate literature, and, in the process, do a nice job both summarizing and advancing it. The text is supplemented by high quality tables and charts that provide easy-to-use visual summaries or aides for comparison. For American readers, the book introduces works from European scholars who may not be that well known. As noted, there are some rough spots: The authors need to do a better job identifying when each approach/color should be used, the organization and discussions of diagnostic and intervention procedures could be done better, and a review the differences between first- and second-order change with their implications for practice should be provided. Even so, on balance, this volume is an important advance in the change management field, not for its originality but because of its ability to tie together a disjointed literature into a coherent whole and suggest a framework for a contingent approach to change management. I can recommend it to practitioners, scholars, and students alike, and will use it as the main text in the graduate change management course I teach.

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