Changing Attitudes, Change Agents and Change Models:
Three Exercises to Teach Change

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DESCRIPTION OF SESSION

In order for businesses, communities, and individuals to be sustainable, they must be able to change. How do we teach our constituencies to change in order to be sustainable? We will address this question in this highly interactive session. Attendees will participate in three exercises used to teach key concepts related to change- attitudes, change agents, and models to implement change. In true OBTC style, these engaging exercises will include unique elements including the use of Mr. Rogers and blindfolds. After debriefing the exercises, the presenters will facilitate a discussion on best practices and challenges in teaching change management.

Keywords: Change management, experiential exercises
**PLANNING DETAILS**

**Proposed audience:** Instructors of courses that have a change management component will get the most from this session. The facilitators are presenting exercises from an organizational behavior, an entrepreneurship, and a change management course, demonstrating the broad appeal of this session. Facilitators have used the exercises in undergraduate, masters, and professional settings.

**Maximum number of participants:** All attendees are welcome. Over 40 participants will minimize the interactivity of some of the exercises, but we will gladly adapt for a larger audience, if necessary.

**Type of session:** Activity-based with debrief and discussion, as time permits.

**Special requirements:** We need a large open space to conduct one of the exercises, so a classroom with moveable chairs and tables or desks is required. Participants need no special equipment other than an open mind. If available, a computer with a projector would be helpful for debriefing the exercises and the discussion.

**Length:** This session need a minimum of 60 minutes. A 90 minute session would allow time for an extended debrief and discussion.
INTRODUCTION

‘Change or Die’ is a popular adage for business. Our students, our communities, the global world and ourselves cannot remain the stable and expect to survive, much less thrive in our rapidly changing world. Individuals often appraise change as negative, resisting change initiatives, and compromise long-term sustainability (Furgate, Kinicki & Prussia, 2008; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). In order for businesses, communities, and individuals to survive for the long term, they must be able to change. In our role as educators, how do we teach our constituencies to change in order to be sustainable? This session explores this question by demonstrating three exercises to teach the change management concepts of attitudinal change, change agents, and change models followed by an interactive discussion. The goals of this session are to give participants several tools to engage students and ourselves in understanding and implementing change and gain a better understanding of how to teach change management concepts. The learning outcome for this session is for participants to gain a better understanding of teaching change from various perspectives. Participants attending the session will receive instructions for executing the session exercises in their own classrooms.

THEORETICAL GROUNDING

Each of the exercises in the session is designed to demonstrate a classic theory within the organizational behavior literature. The first exercise explores the interaction of the three components of attitudes – cognitions, affect, and behavioral intentions (Breckler, 1984). It also utilizes Festinger’s (1957) classic work on cognitive dissonance during the debrief session. The second exercise utilizes Bandura’s (1997) social learning theory and social cognitive career theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) as its theoretical base. This second exercise utilizes an entrepreneurship framework for participants to understand better how an individual transforms into an agent for change. The third exercise utilizes Kotter’s (2007) eight-step model for change as its theoretical grounding. In addition, this exercise utilizes Lewin’s (1951) work on change as well as Kotter and Schlesinger’s (2008) strategies for implementing change, which the facilitator will reference during the debriefing session. Each presenter will demonstrate how his or her exercise links to each theoretical model. We will introduce and link other change theories, concepts, and models into the discussion depending on the desires of the attendees.

SESSION DESCRIPTION

After a brief introduction, we will proceed with the three exercises. The first two exercises will take approximately five to ten minutes to execute, with an additional five to ten minutes for debriefing. The third exercise will take twenty to twenty-five minutes to execute, with an additional ten minutes to debrief. The following is a brief overview of the exercises including how attendees will participate in each exercise:

Exercise 1 – Changing Attitudes
The facilitator developed this exercise for use in an organizational behavior class to demonstrate the interaction of the three components of attitudes: affect, behavioral intentions, and cognition. The facilitator will guide participants in the session through a series of questions to demonstrate
how belief affects feelings, and how feelings are inconsistent predictors of behavior. The facilitator’s questions utilize Fred Rogers (Mr. Rogers) and college rivalries to engage the participants in the session. The goals of this exercise are for participants to understand better the components of attitudes and how attitudes influence change initiatives.

**Exercise 2 – Change Agents**
The facilitator developed this exercise for use in an undergraduate entrepreneurship class to help students understand the relationship between individual, environmental, and social attributes influencing the development and sustainability of entrepreneurial self-efficacy and identity. Although the facilitator originally developed the exercise for an entrepreneurship course, the exercise is adaptable to help students better understand the to a change agent context. For this exercise, the facilitator will place participants in groups of four or five. The facilitator will provide each group with several questions designed to encourage discussion and reflection by group members of the key attributes required to be a change agent (or entrepreneur). The questions utilized for this exercise focus on five topic areas: allocentrism/idiocentrism, altruistic values, identity aspiration, outcome expectations, and self-efficacy.

**Exercise 3 – Implementing Change**
The facilitator has been unable to find the original author of this exercise (Ian Palmer, personal communication, September 2007), but was introduced to the exercise by Ian Palmer during the 2007 Academy of Management meeting. The facilitator developed an instructor’s manual for this exercise to provide a better alignment with change theories. She has utilized the exercise in an undergraduate change management course as well as in several professional development seminars. This exercise utilizes ropes and blindfolds to simulate a company going through a change process. Participants play the role of a CEO, eight to sixteen line workers, and a board of directors. Through this exercise, the participants learn the importance of the various steps in Kotter’s (2007) classic change model including urgency, vision, communication, removing obstacles and celebrating small wins. Past participants have found the exercise impactful and memorable.

At the conclusion of each exercise, each of the three facilitators will conduct a short debrief session for his or her exercise and distribute an exercise instruction sheet for those who want to replicate the exercise. If time permits, we will use this time, estimated at 20 to 30 minutes of a 90-minute session, to discuss various approaches to teaching change management concepts, including the use of various readings and simulations. The goal of the discussion is to share best practices and potential challenges in teaching change management.

**APPLICATION TO CONFERENCE THEME AND SUB-THEMES**
As noted in the introduction, making organizations, communities and the global world sustainable requires change. Our goal in supporting the conference theme is to provide a session where we not only discuss change from a theoretical perspective but also provide participants with tools to engage their constituencies in changing attitudes towards sustainability, developing change agents for sustainable enterprises, and implementing the changes needed to make their organizations, communities, and world more sustainable.
REFERENCES


