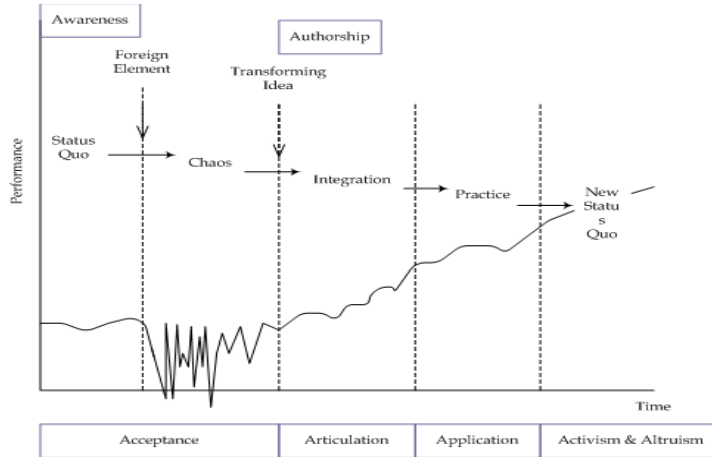


Satir Change Model

The Virginia Satir Change Model focuses not just on systems of people but also on individual people, making it a robust model.



(Late) Status quo

Late status quo describes a fairly stable system (individual or group) where occurrences are predictable, familiar and comfortable. This may mean things are working reasonably well, or it may mean that there are familiar solutions (better or worse) for common problems. For members, it does represent some level of success.

While the system at this stage is balanced, different parts of the system pay different prices to maintain this balance. This can be compared to the role played by some children who keep a family stable by acting out or repressing their feelings in particular ways. And, like with children, the impact of this maintenance on any particular part of the system may be indicated by the unhealthy symptoms revealed in it's functioning.

In an organizational context, late status quo generally refers to a system where things have stayed the same for a long time. Members of the system know 'what to do' and 'how to do it' and understand where they fit. They may or may not be satisfied with their place and activities, but they are comfortable.

Depending on the specific circumstances, attitudes may range from general acceptance, to boredom

"yah, I know how to do all that ..."

to frustration and complaining (blaming and placating as people find ways to get things done in a dysfunctional system). Some people may be looking for changes.

Introducing a foreign element

Either from within or without, a foreign element that was not a part of the status quo appears, and threatens to shake up the status quo.

In an organizational context, a foreign element can be generated internally, inspired by the desire to improve. This desire can come from management or from participants on the operational level; the change can be mandated or voluntary.

How such desires are substantiated by which stakeholder how, will greatly affect a systems reaction to the foreign element, although in both cases there are reactions. In the case of an unwanted, unexpected or mandated change the people within the organization (or other system) may try a number of strategies to neutralize the impact of the this alien element. The system may reject and expel the foreign element; members may ignore it or use delaying tactics; they may try to encapsulate the foreign element within the "normal" ways of handling things to make it part of the current state; or they may try to find a scapegoat to attack and blame.

When mandated sequences of events are experienced a couple of times on the operational level, trust levels of its people in management being able to lead goes down quickly and people anticipate more on potential future management blaming instead of the by management desired changes. Whatever happens, people do learn to anticipate effectively! :-)

Chaos

If the foreign element (or its backers) is sufficiently powerful and persistent to create a critical mass of discomfort, the organization enters into chaos. From the Merriam Webster Dictionary:

chaos is a state of things in which chance is supreme; it is a state of utter confusion; a confused mass or mixture. In this state, the system is disarranged; predictions no longer

valid, expectations are not fulfilled; things seem to be totally out of control.

People/systems may react to chaos in a number of different ways: by engaging in random behavior; by seeking stability at any cost, and trying to revert to earlier patterns of behavior' or by searching for magical, sweeping solutions -- anything to re-establish some form of normalcy.

It is very easy to get stuck in chaos:

- ✓ If you see chaos as some "death" of the Old Status Quo ... For more detailed "stuckness" we can use the following four preliminary stages of death identified by Elizabeth Kubler Ross: denial, bargaining, anger, or depression that individuals can get stuck in.
- ✓ When trying to manufacture the transforming idea as opposed to being aware and fully present during chaos. Obtaining and firing the latest silver bullet is a distracting temptation, one that needs to be avoided. Taoists say, "My barn having burned to the ground, I can now see the moon".
- ✓ If you try to avoid or control it. Then you will prolong it. Best seems to be relax, enjoy the ride, try a bite of something new here, and of some there. Be like Alice, relax, have fun, enjoy and wait for the transforming idea.

The transforming idea is the out-of-the-box idea that brings a system out of chaos (sometimes only for a short while ;-). A transforming idea is like an "Aha Erlebnis", inspiration, a sudden awareness of and understanding of new possibilities. Now that we have keys, what remains is finding the doors and actualizing this transformation.

Practice and integration

Entering the practice stage, the system begins to try out the new possibilities. This can be likened to birth or to a honeymoon. It seems all problems have been resolved and things will be wonderful, and we're all very excited. At the same time, systems entering this stage are like children that are trying things for the first time -- somewhat uncertain, needing time to learn and grow into the new state. And, with time, by the system practicing new ways of doing things, some effects begin to appear in substance.

In an organization, this is the time when people are learning to use a new tool or work according to a new process or tasks within a new structure. This is usually a period of reduced productivity -- performance and outcomes may actually be worse than prior to the change.

There are many factors that can lead to rejection of the change and return to chaos:

- ✓ Reactions of managers who expect to see results of the new 'whatever' immediately
- ✓ A culture in which people are afraid to seem less than fully competent and where admitting mistakes is not acceptable
- ✓ Time and schedule pressures inhibiting the learning process
- ✓ ... Name it and it can take you back!

During integration benefits of the new models become apparent and are experienced as useful. Gradually a new status quo is formed. What began as an idea becomes a normal state of affairs. And, for a while, things will continue to get better ... until we encounter a new foreign element. Yeeehaaa!

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