

# 6. Seven Challenges of Change

## Seeing Repeating Patterns

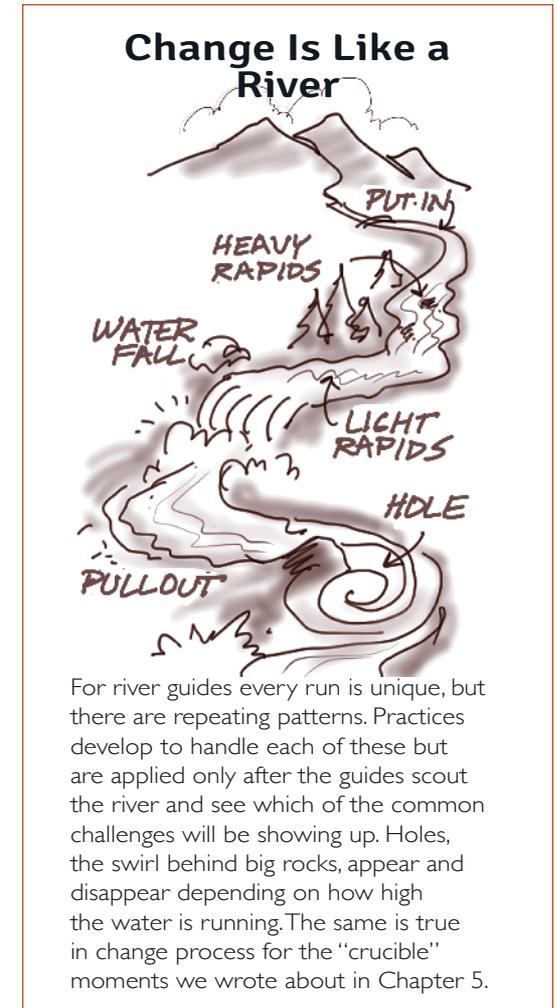
Figure 6.1

Wouldn't you like to know the challenges you will face as a process-oriented consultant? We've already explored some of the fundamental orientations regarding thinking about your role. We've reviewed basic capabilities, and learned about the deep pattern in change revealed through the lens of traditional rites of passages. But ultimately, there is the task of gaining the client's respect and helping guide them through their unique challenge of designing and leading change for their specific organization or community. This chapter will introduce you to seven predictable challenges you can prepare for and work with. Each challenge will be explored in more detail in the following chapters.

The problem of navigating change is analogous to the challenges faced by a river guide (Figure 6.1). Rivers are never the same from one season to the next, and differ a lot from one to another. How does a guide develop competency? How can you, as a person who wants to be a competent visual consultant know what to suggest?

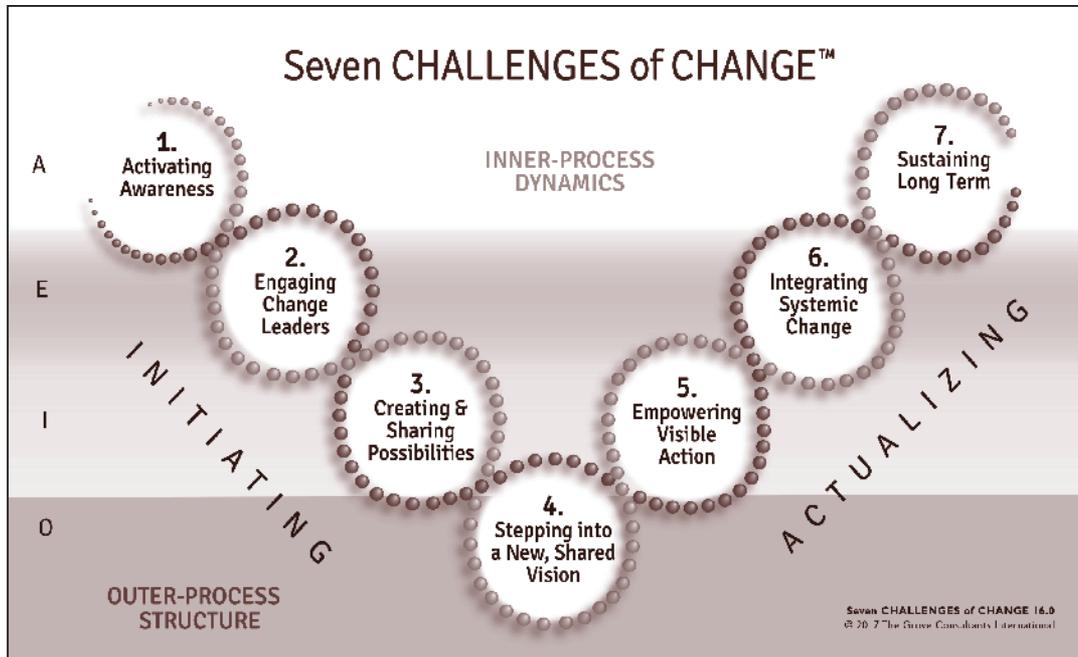
### Integrating Liminal Pathways & The Grove Organization Change Model

Over the past four years we authors have been working to identify these repeating patterns for human systems change processes, harvesting over 70 years of collective experience. We are finding that the seven challenges we have identified will apply to any consulting project that requires new ways of thinking, real behavior change, and new organizational processes. To capture our full understanding, we have visually integrated the archetypal perspective reflected in the *Liminal Pathways Change Framework* with The Grove's model for looking at organization change. We have called the new framework the *Seven Challenges of Change* because it describes big patterns that we find to be present in many change projects, especially those that use high engagement approaches. We also involved a core group of colleagues who work cross-sector and globally to test this framework against their experiences. As with other Grove work, it is also supported by Arthur M. Young's



For river guides every run is unique, but there are repeating patterns. Practices develop to handle each of these but are applied only after the guides scout the river and see which of the common challenges will be showing up. Holes, the swirl behind big rocks, appear and disappear depending on how high the water is running. The same is true in change process for the "crucible" moments we wrote about in Chapter 5.

Figure 6.2



Theory of Process (see Appendix). Figure 6.2 is our graphic representation of these challenges, illustrating the interplay between inner-process dynamics and outer-process structures, and mapping them on the four flows of process.

Look at the seven challenges as two groups. One includes the challenges involved in initiating change leading up to what, in the Theory of Process, is called “the turn.” The second is related to realizing the change, building on what has been initiated so far, and what has emerged from moving through the turning point.

## Bouncing Ball Pattern

Readers familiar with the widely used *Drexler/Sibbet Team Performance Model* will immediately see the familiar “bouncing ball” pattern used to illustrate the essential dynamics of teamwork. The same underlying process patterns apply to organizational and community changes that you can support as a consultant.

## Challenge 1: Activating Awareness

Waking up to the need to change is always the starting point in a change process. This is about activating your own awareness during initial meetings and scoping talks and understanding the current awareness of the need to change within the client system. What are you paying attention to? What does the client think is needed? What is driving this change? Like being on a river that changes, this challenge is informed a lot depending on whether the need to change is activated by external circumstances, like the fires that are challenging the western United States, or by developmental needs, like the need for UC Merced to double in size to handle the economics of a large university, or volitional as in our creating the GLEN. In most cases usually only a few people

are fully awake to the need to change. But even in a full-scale catastrophe that affects everyone, people will first shut down in shock and not be open to how much has to change. Regardless of the circumstances, the first challenge is raising both your own and your client's awareness as Chapter 7 will show.

## Challenge 2: Engaging Change Leaders

Early on, the primary focus is to bring together a group of leaders, formal and informal, to be the designers and the catalysts of the change process. A process consultant partners with these leaders to put into a place a change process that empowers the organization or community to stay in charge of the change and minimizes the dependency on the consultant in ultimately realizing the change. Putting in place a change team or a process design team early on is helpful. Even an expert who is supporting a change initiative usually depends on partnering with internal champions. The discovery that a change may push up against the leader's inner sense of bandwidth, capability or sense of adequacy, and reservations, along with a variety of strong feelings, expressed or not, are often present during this time. Chapter 8 will deal with the practices to boost and direct the momentum of change by identifying the needed leaders, the formation of process design teams, stakeholder mapping and enrollment, and ways to address the deeper personal concerns.

## Challenge 3: Creating & Sharing Possibilities

It's tempting to think you can plan your way through change as though it is a construction project. Some are, but in our testing of this challenge with colleagues, everyone agreed that after engaging a group of leaders, the next challenge is more often than not actually trying out possibilities. It's a phase that is active, and uncertain, and exciting. It involves visioning, prototyping, linking in new participants, exploring assumptions, embracing

## Looking at Visual Models

As you look at the *Seven Challenges of Change* framework in its simplest form, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Why is it called "Challenges of Change"? What does this metaphor call up right away?
2. Two strings of beads intertwine. What does this remind you of? Is there a graphic metaphor beyond "inner" and "outer" that is embedded here that might be relevant?
3. The numbered challenges tell a story. At this level of reading does it ring true with your experience? Where do you experience little disagreements vis-à-vis what you already know about change?
4. What are the little letters to the left? They seem to refer to four bands underlying the model. Why might this be important?
5. Let your own experience both resonate with and clash with what is represented here. Both interactions are important to understand.
6. Is it clear to you that all flat maps are distorted? These built-in biases are important. What is the bias in this presentation?

## Looking at Visual Models

Here are our answers to the questions in SideStory 6.1:

1. Why “Challenges of Change”?— Challenges invite responses, and are difficult. Facing challenges can transform them into opportunities.
2. DNA is a two-stringed molecule that can replicate. Good support structures in one change process can repeat in others.
3. What resonates with you depends on your experience, not ours. You’ll have to answer this one.
4. AEIO refers to the four flows of process and stands for Awareness, Energy, Information, and Operations. All four levels need to be managed in every challenge. Different challenges have centers of focus on different levels.
5. Maps are not the territory, and these frameworks are more like piano or computer keyboards than little blueprints. Remember both your agreements and disagreements.
6. The bias in this framework, expressed in the arc, is to amplify the idea that you have to connect your high-level aspirations for change with the ground of where people really live and work before you can turn people toward lasting change.

resistance, refining purpose and goals, and continuing to activate awareness in the larger system. Visual consultants are finding their tools and methods full of potential for responding to this challenge (see SideStories 6.1 and 6.2). Here is where big-picture thinking is invaluable. Chapter 9 will introduce many tried and true approaches.

### Challenge 4: Stepping into a New, Shared Vision

You may appreciate, if you have had some experience consulting, that the first three challenges may need to be revisited several times before you reach a threshold stage when a critical mass is willing to step into a new way of working and leave the old behind. We call this stepping in to a “shared” vision. Challenge 3 is more permissive, from a process standpoint. It’s exploratory and divergent at times. Challenge 4 requires converging while simultaneously holding a great amount of complexity. Reconnecting with the deeper purpose is helpful as big decisions and trade-offs are made, and as budgets, personnel, and power shifts. Chapter 10 addresses principles and practices related to this challenge. Visualization is again a powerful tool, but attention to the inner dynamics is crucial at this point. There may have been “crucible moments” in earlier stages, but this entire challenge is a big crucible. It’s the challenge of choosing a path from which there is usually no turning back.

### Challenge 5: Empowering Visible Actions

In any organizational or community system, having a core group step into change doesn’t mean that the whole system shifts right away. Without truly visible actions being taken that support the change, resistance and habit can start compromising forward progress. Supporting what emerges at this stage is crucial for sustaining momentum, and learning from new experiences helps you stay on track and can help amplify what is working.

It involves empowering new leaders, supporting new key initiatives, and adopting new measures of success. Making these moves visible throughout the system is critical after stepping into big commitments. So are communication campaigns and supporting new collaborations. Chapter 11 will explore these practices.

## **Challenge 6: Integrating Systemic Change**

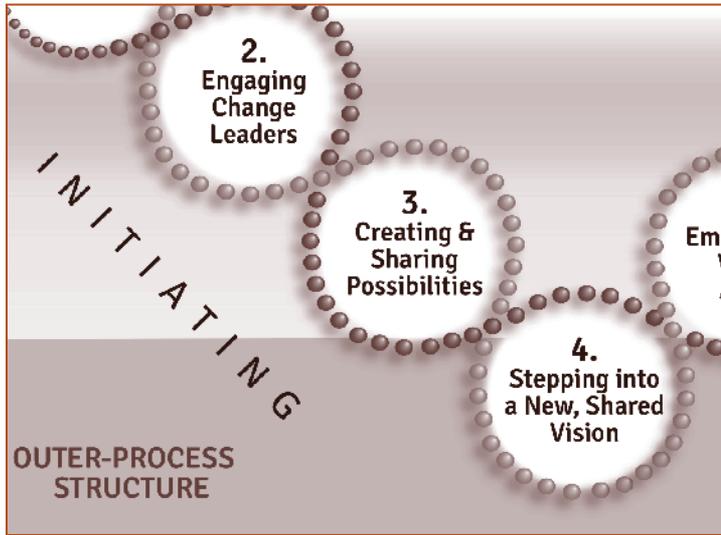
Visible actions, good communications, learning and amplifying early wins as well as persistence will eventually move the system to change. But now integrating new communities of practice and developing and embedding needed processes and norms throughout the system becomes the work of culture change. This is about embodying the change day-to-day such that the “new” is the way things are done. It means changing technical and other work processes, reward structures, employee development, as well as understanding how to measure success, power and mobility in the new system. In communities it may involve new laws and policies. This challenge draws on the patience and stamina of the leaders of change and requires empowerment of the organizational units to experiment and make the change their own. Chapter 12 will explore the practices involved in amplifying successes in ways that replicate throughout a system. It requires continuing awareness of how the larger system actually works and gets in the way.

## **Challenge 7: Sustaining Long Term**

Sustaining change long term is a challenge that involves developing change fluency and change fluidity. With your support, the capabilities of designing, leading and then sustaining a change can be a focus of the organization and become deeply embedded in the culture. Traditional cultures evolved their rituals as finely tuned ways of cultivating, harnessing, and focusing the energy of change, as well as stabilizing the change into

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Figure 6.3



## The Change Archetype Repeats

Each challenge in a change process presents an opportunity for a “crucible experience” where the inner process and outer structure allow people to break through to something really new. They vary in intensity, with Challenge 4 bringing the most “heat” to the process. Rites of passage can happen in all these transitions from challenge to challenge.

practices that then sustained the community culture. With a focus on mechanization for efficiency, we have lost touch with the value of traditional methods and rituals that create a rich, cultural fabric energizing the organization with a sense of connectivity, well-honed processes, and purpose. Many large business organizations, in their desire to be more efficient, are inadvertently taking away core rituals and activities that were historic sources of renewal, inspiration, and “glue” for employees. Understanding culture and how it evolves has widespread attention in our organizational work today. But the challenge of having new practices become embedded rituals that are alive, meaningful, and adaptive is not easy. They can easily be overdone or undone by unaware leaders. Chapter 13 will deal with the possibilities these responses to sustaining the change.

### Unpacking the Visual Framework

Understanding how we have visualized these seven change patterns as a whole system is another layer of value for you as a visual consultant, for you may want to share it with clients as a way of generating some change literacy or fluency.

You will probably notice that the same double strand idea we used to visualize rites of passages repeats here (Figure 6.3). This is because all change, and each challenge you will encounter in your consulting work, will have some kind of outer-process structures that you and your client will put in place to support change, and there will be some kind of inner-process dynamics that both you and your clients will experience. Both need to be appreciated and attended. This dance between inner and outer is ongoing. (One of the reasons many change processes fail arises from under appreciating and not taking time for the inner process.)

### Why the Bouncing Balls?

You will probably notice that this framework visualizes change as a process that isn't a straight line or a closed circle (two popular visualizations). In the *Seven Challenges of Change* depiction, the initiating stages go down toward the bottom of the page and then turn back toward the top. Arthur Young called this pattern "the ARC" of process, and felt it was universal. In applied terms, it points to how all process starts with nothing but potential, often beginning with something people imagine or feel as a hunch, and then materializing into plans and projects and eventually budgets, structure, behavior change, and some other kinds of tangible results.

If you think of the top of the page as the "top line" and the bottom of the page as the "bottom line," and think about experiences you have had where aspirations and visions are in creative tension with real-world constraints and resources, then this picturing of change will make sense (Figure 6.4). At some level, integrating our inner purposes and aspirations with the real world is the fundamental challenge of any change project or consultancy. When this integration is successful, a "turn" toward actualization can occur with energy and direction.

Theory "U" used this graphic representation of going down to go up in its signature graphic but represents it as a smooth arc. Young insisted this shift isn't smooth but represents a real flipping of attention and preferred the right angle.

Visualizing the shift in direction as a "turn" creates a metaphor that a different direction is possible during change. This two-fold nature of process is characterized repeatedly in the literature on consulting. Some like to call this the movement between divergence and convergence. "Divergence" means expanding out, adding more ideas, including more people, getting more understanding, etc. "Convergence" is about synthesizing, harvesting,

## Freedom Through Mastery of Constraint

Visually it's easy to represent creative tension between aspirations and material world constraints as one arrow going to the bottom line and one going to the top line. This pattern repeats through each of the challenges in addition to being reflected in the larger process.



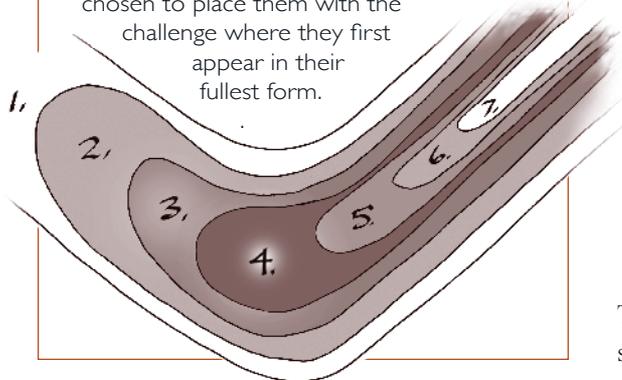
## Nested Process

All processes, like music, have multiple layers. The four flows are always present whether or not we are paying attention to them. Patterns and themes persist and reappear, nesting into the later ones. For instance, becoming aware and staying awake doesn't just happen in the beginning. It persists at every stage.

Engaging leaders of change is the focus when you create the change teams and find sponsors and leaders, but continues all through the actualizing phases.

Creating and testing possibilities gets a lot of attention early on before full commitment, but the practices associated with this will continue to be important as you empower visible action, and initiative teams work to refine what they are doing.

As we write about the practices associated with each challenge we have chosen to place them with the challenge where they first appear in their fullest form.



and making decisions. Sometimes visual consultants visualize this as an accordion process, with a continuous fluctuation of convergence and divergence. Both the inner-outer dynamic, and this movement between divergence and convergence accompanies whatever processes you adopt in responding to any of the seven challenges. If the challenges are like chord structures and keys a musician chooses for a piece of music, the dance between inner and outer is like paying attention to the intervals and timing that bring these chords and keys to life (SideStory 6.3). Paying attention to the divergent and convergent pattern is paying attention to increasing tensions and complexity and then resolutions.

### What About the Flows of A-E-I-O and U?

We have illustrated the seven challenges of change as patterns in process with each having an affinity for a certain level as illustrated in the four flows. .

1. Initially **attention** is centered on “Activating Awareness” and getting attention on the need to change. Eventually attention focuses on “Sustaining the Change.”
2. It soon involves people’s **energy**, emotions, and relatedness as you begin “Engaging Change Leaders.” Energy is also a main part of “Integrating Systemic Change.”
3. Sharing and exploring **information** is central to “Creating and Sharing Possibilities,” as ideas emerge in different ways—literally coming to life “in” form. Later the job is to “Empower Visible Action,” having the forms show up as observable results.
4. Bottom line, “Stepping into a New, Shared Vision” is about actual embodiment personally and in the **operational** “body” of the organization or community.

The “U” is not a level, but “YOU,” as we’ve pointed out, and represents all the intentions, styles, skills, and preferences that shape your way of working and through which your

Figure 6.5



application of practices will filter. The guide for how to be “YOU” must come from within. Self-awareness and being open to feedback and mindfulness practices help. Mentors help. Success models help. But ultimately it comes back to self-acceptance.

### **Learning Your Way into Using the Full Framework**

Figure 6.6 is a version of the *Seven Challenges of Change* framework that includes bullet points for likely inner dynamics and the outer support structures that can help support change at each phase. At first glance it may seem overwhelming, but all these factors can come into play. This map has been our guide in developing the next seven chapters about how you can, as a visual process consultant, meet these challenges. It is a map you may use to prepare for doing actual work.

As we turn our attention to actually finding clients for change and engaging them around scoping the project and making proposals, it helps to have a big-picture sense of what is involved as you go into initial interviews. It helps to know that change processes always go through crucible moments at some point. That is why we chose to explore the underlying patterns of change before getting into detailed practices.

As you can probably anticipate from your own experience, gaining command of all the capabilities we referred to in Chapter 3 and the inner process dynamics and outer support structures listed on the big *Seven Challenges of Change* map is a long process of trying things, reflecting, learning some more, adding some practices, trying some more, checking back with the big maps to see if you missed anything, and diving in again. We have come to understand this process is never completed. Developing mastery comes out of the commitment to being a life-long learner, appreciating the adventure of learning alongside and with your clients and trusted colleagues. With openness and a will to learn, useful perspectives and advice often arrive just when you need them.

*Developing mastery comes out of the commitment to being a lifelong learner, (and running the river of change many times). This kind of learning you cannot do alone. As we will point out in our last chapter, Towards Mastery, being a visual consultant working on change is an adventure of learning alongside and with your clients and trusted colleagues.*

Figure 6.6

