IMMUNITY TO CHANGE: How to Overcome it and Unlock Potential in Yourself and your Organization.

AUTHORS:

ROBERT KEGAN: An American Development Psychologist and Author.

LISA LASKOW LAHEY: Co-Founder and Principal of "MINDS AT WORK".

INTRODUCTION

Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey's collaboration in "Immunity to change: How to overcome it and unlock potential in yourself and your organization", depicts and summarizes the personal immunity of people that resist them from being changed. The real reason people won't change is not due to lack of skill and deep commitment within them, but it is due to hidden competing commitment followed by big assumptions. For some, the need is confidence-building, for others it's behavior change or skill development. Their explanation is that, after identifying the stages through which adults evolve, they observed that many people did not evolve a whole new world view after adolescence, and if they did evolve, it wasn't very far up the spectrum. Their observation was that this whole process of looming, adapting, and enlarging one's world view, followed an unfolding pattern in all humans, but unequally from person to person. Back to being stuck. And, getting unstuck, is the challenge.

Developing and Implementing Change

Change is not a new concept. However, it is an important part of an organization and it happens all the time. Without change, improvement will not happen. If First Nations schools continue to hold onto the belief that the Federal Government will ever deal fairly and justly then we are only deluding ourselves into a great travesty, eventually leading to a dismantling of an education system.

Change can be either planned or unplanned. Unplanned change occurs suddenly due to specific circumstances whereas planned change is a longer process that involves planning to achieve a specific goal. Change can be personal or organizational. However, in order for an organization to have positive change, then it begins with you.

Some Examples of Competing Commitments are:

- *Dragging one's feet on an assignment because one wants to avoid a tougher assignment or future lack of work.*
- *Avoiding teamwork or meetings because one wants to avoid the conflict that is associated with it.*
- *Using sarcastic disruptive humor to keep oneself at a distance.*

Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle. And so we must straighten our backs and work for our freedom. A man can't ride you unless your back is bent.
Martin Luther King, Jr.

Part 1 – Uncovering A Hidden Dynamic In The Challenge Of Change

CHAPTER – ONE –
Reconceiving the Challenge of Change

It begins by remarking that persons in the leadership role who assess capability as a resource that stands alone (fixed), will fall behind those who work towards growth in their organization. The authors make mention of the adults cognitive and development stages and how this will affect their thought process within a leadership role. Most importantly it states that a person in a leadership role faces challenges that are too mentally complex that they are unable to perform, so it is better if we apply simply solutions or meet the mental capacity to be a successful leader.

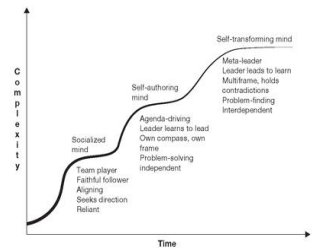**Three plateaus in adult mental development**

FIGURE 1-5
**The three adult plateaus described**

Shifts In The Demands On Followers And Leaders and Mental Complexity AND "Technical" Vs. "Adaptive" Challenges

Kegan and Lahey research the higher demands of leaders today. Leaders of today have a much higher mental demand and a lower capacity to perform. They use percentages to show the various levels of development that each leader is at.

They also speak of the technical and the adaptive challenges that leaders face today and how leaders need to adapt their level of mental capacity to the job at hand as opposed to applying the technical solutions available, thus causing dysfunction in the organization.

FIGURE 1-7

Results from two large-scale studies of the distribution of levels of mental complexity among adults
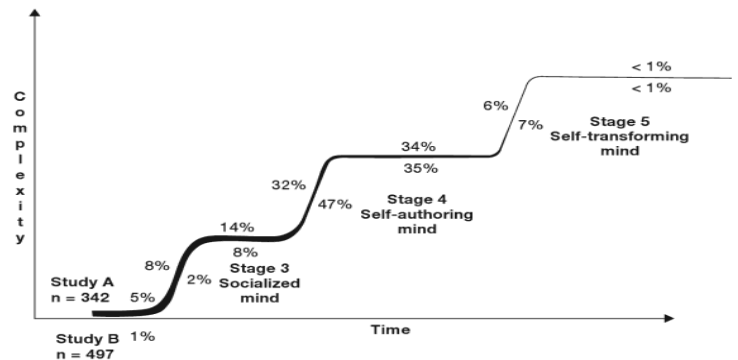
Sources: Study A: R. Kegan, *In Over Our Heads* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994). Study B: W. Torbert, *Managing the Corporate Dream* (Homewood, IL: Dow-Jones, 1987).

" The percentages of people beyond the plateau of the self-authorizing mind are quite small". (p.28)

-This chart shows what our mind is able to perform. As much as we would love our employees to be at stage 4, we are not.

"Look call it denial if you like, but I think what goes on in my personal life is none of my own damn business." (Kegan, Lehay, 2009, p.46)
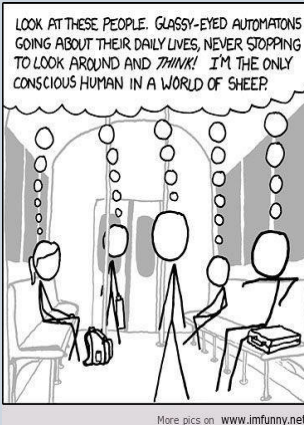
Kegan and Lahey use three steps to identify the notion of immunity to change. Their research concluded that in order to overcome this immunity, you should follow the following steps. Firstly, you cannot wipe out the anxiety-management system, you should only build a better unity that works more efficiently. Secondly, we need to change how we address new items that are given us and not feel defenseless in front of it. Thirdly, we can change our immunity to change thought process. This all leads to the fourth step which brings all the together and which make "big assumptions" more understandable.
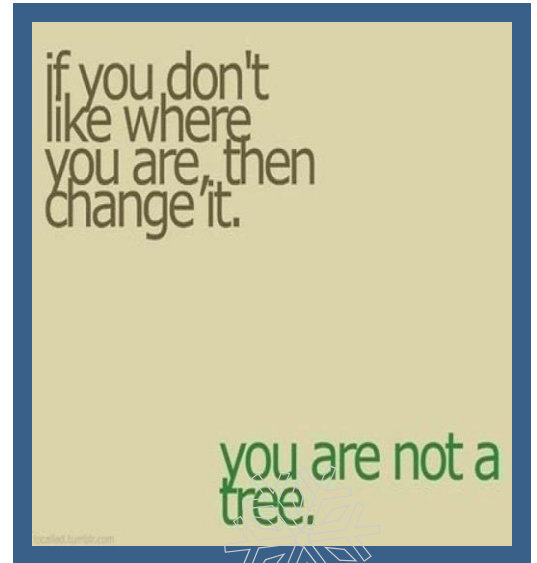
CHAPTER THREE – *"We Never Had A Language For It." (Engaging the Emotional Life of the Organization)*

In this chapter examples are used again to explain how to put the right issue into column one. This is called the "one big thing" that everyone can relate to in different ways. This is set up so that the persons' personal life is included as well. An area that tends to be left to the side. The link between personal and organizational development is described in further detail within the book.

The authors also focused on the individual in the organization by focusing on the clients who assess things systemically and organizationally. This ensured that their focus was on the emotional life of the organization.

Managing Change

ABORIGINAL PHILOSOPHY	EUROPEAN PHILOSOPHY
Space is more important than time	Time is more important than space
Cyclical view of world (constant motion) Life as flux, wave	Linear view of world, Fixed laws, particle
Verb-rich language (action-oriented)	Content-based
Dichotomies are rare in language	Dichotomies (good/bad) reinforce universalism
Creation is continuity ,	Creation is static,
Context specific	Universalist
Spider web of relations: interconnected/ balance	
Non-interference unto others	Universalism justifies interference
Depend on each other's truth to create the whole	Truth is objective and must be striven for
Collective decision making	Hierarchical social order (since only one truth)

Part 2 – Overcoming the Immunity to Change in Organizations, Individuals, and Teams

CHAPTER FOUR – Overcoming the Groupwide Immunity to Change

In this chapter the authors use three brief and three detailed examples of various groups and sizes to make use of the four column map that was previously discussed. Each group either created an individual immunity map or a longer scaled map that depicted the information that they received from the surveys. In conclusion to these surveys, the plan of action is to create projects that test the "big assumptions" that emerged from their research.

Insightful discussion is the third stage that is often the most difficult to overcome. If persons involved are able to reflect on the challenges then they are essentially satisfying a need to change.

CHAPTER FIVE – David Doesn't Delegate – Overcoming an Individual's Immunity to Change

This chapter discusses one leader's effort to make change in an organization by utilizing the immunity to change process to change those behaviors. David was able to achieve this by creating a bigger assumption and acting on this assumption. David learned a lot about himself and what he was capable of doing when he was promoted to this position. The natural reaction facing new leaders is to engross themselves into the work load without requesting assistance from the employees in order to relieve them of any unnecessary stress in the work place, will only increase your chances of burning out. By David changing his outlook and work ethics, he was able to build on his skills and delegate work to employees thus eliminating exhaustion. In the Education sector, we as new leaders can also be easily distracted by how we should behave with our subordinates. A school will run smoothly when all stakeholders take on the responsibility of varying roles within the organization.

David's initial immunity map

Commitment	Doing/not doing instead	Hidden competing commitments	Big assumptions
To better focus on a few critical things: • Delegate • Clarify outcomes desired • Accept different approaches • Support small failures as learning • Challenge the thought process and logic	I let new opportunities distract me, adding to my list. I accept more tasks and sacrifice non-work-related things. I don't consistently balance time commitment to urgent and important rankings. I don't ask people to help me.	(I fear missing a good opportunity. Falling behind.) I'm committed to being independent and capable of anything. (I fear letting my team down. If I put myself first I feel guilty and selfish.) I'm committed to being selfless. (I dislike leaving boxes unchecked—it's harder to drop something than just to do it.) I'm committed to always finding a way to get it done.	If I am dependent on others and unable to do many things well, I lose my self-respect. If I put myself first I'll become what I dislike in others—superficial and trivial. If I don't find a way to get things done, I'll stop being valuable.

CHAPTER SIX – Cathy Can't Contain Herself – Overcoming an Individual's Immunity to Change

Cathy's impatient and stressed out behavior has effects on an entire department, because she allows herself to scold what she deems to be inefficient production of herself. And, although her co-workers believe that she is spectacular, Cathy herself, needed to redefine her underlying problems and fix them. She works on problem projects individually now as opposed to conveying them to additional projects. In the end, Cathy was able to curtail her emotions and thus creating a more harmonious work environment. Cathy's issues are not uncommon, but the dependence on how we manage our emotions will separate an excellent leader from someone mediocre.

CHAPTER SEVEN – The Case of Nascent Pharmaceuticals – Overcoming Individual Immunities to Help a Team Succeed.

Kegan and Lahey focused their attentions to helping A pharmaceutical company better enhance their ability to work as a team, by concentrating on the individual immunity work amongst the larger group. Attaining goals was one of the major factors surrounding difficulties that employees en-countered. Trust and communication issues were evident and contributed significantly in this matter. It was noted that when personnel avoided bringing personal issues to the group, then it was easier have a cohesive dynamics amongst the workers. Various methods were implemented that ensured that positive change. When a school like the one I work in is constantly concentrating on someone else's negatives, it will assuredly

The Dark Side of Leadership Development – Overcoming our resistance to change

NEGATIVE STATEMENTS:
-"I feel like what I say is falling on deaf ears." (Kegan and Lahey, 2009, p. 174)

-"Too much of the time I don't know what to communicate to whom, and what level." (Kegan and Lahey, 2009, p. 174)

POSITVE STATEMENTS:
-"I could do a better job by refraining from jumping to conclusions." (Kegan and Lahey, 2009, p.174)

-"I contribute to the culture of defensiveness by being indirect with several people on the team." (Kegan and Lahey, 2009, p. 174)

Three Necessary Ingredients

1)"The Gut"- A vital source of motivation for change. (Kegan and Lahey, 2009, p.210).

2)"Head and Heart" – The work must simultaneously engage thinking and feeling. (p.214).

3)"Hand"- The work is simultaneously about mindset and behavior. (p.217)

CHAPTER EIGHT – Unlocking Potential

By using the three ingredients simultaneously, a person will find harmony within their work. By working together, you will fee l that motivation to change. The gut level assists us in going beyond feeling importance, to feeling it as a necessity. This makes it easier to move toward utilizing the head and heart level and being able to engage what we feel and think as one. If each are operated separately, then success is will not be attained. Finally, the hand level which by putting the hand to the experiences, it will generate and test our assumptions, eventually makings insights into realities. It is evident in all organizations, that all employees will use one level at some point in their careers. A great leader will pull together the three levels and create a working environment that is conducive with accomplishment.

CHAPTER NINE – Diagnosing Your own Immunity to Change

This chapter discusses the four columns in more detail and how focusing on the first column "commitment" by creating a change that is adaptive to the environment and building on it so that we can achieve success. If we continuously focus on things that don't matter then our immunity system will shut down. The second, third and fourth columns should fall into place when the boundaries of the first column have been met.

FEEDBACK INFO…
- The person to whom they report: "Here's the improvement goal that is going to make the biggest difference to me in evaluating you…."(Kegan and Lahey, 2009, p.230)

-Peers: "Here's the thing I think would make you a better team member" (p. 230)

- At least one person who reported to them: "Here's what would enable me to serve you better." (p. 230)

CHAPTER TEN – *Overcoming Your Immunity to Change*

The authors in this chapter create a framework so that you are able to see what is holding you back from succeeding. They identify several people who were tested in each of the columns to see if they had progressed in their immunity to change. The tests were to meant to challenge the "big assumptions" and to recognize whether these were making a difference with others around you. The entire purpose is to develop a personal improvement project. In my school, I will be attempting this process to hopefully gain a stronger commitment from my staff.

THREE PHASES
1) Opening Moves: Setting the Stage
    -Honoring your map
    -Initial Survey

2) Middle Game: Digging into the Work
    -Continuum of progress
    -Self-observations
    -Biography of the big assumptions
    -Testing the big assumptions

3) End Game: Consolidating Your Learning
    -Follow-up survey
    -Identify hooks and releases
    -Future progress

CHAPTER ELEVEN – *Surfacing Your Collective Immunity to Change*

This approach is about applying the same four column process, but as a group and to not use this approach immediately, but take the individual steps needed to gain a better understanding of your needs. It also follows 5 steps to achieving success in the immunity to change.

Step One – Identifying your collective improvement goal

Step Two – Taking a fearless inventory (of behaviors contrary to the improvement goal)

Step Three – Uncovering your collective column 3 competing commitments

Step Four – Uncovering your collective big assumption

Step Five – Preparing to test your big assumptions

"Respect yourself and your limitations. Don't push past your tolerance to appease others, but if you do, don't feel guilty if you sometimes fail."

CONCLUSION

The immunity to change is a book that enables organizations, but most importantly the stakeholders in an organization to take an active role in succeeding by bringing all the themes and concepts together and mastering the change.

I clearly states that even after adolescence, the adult will continue learning through the technical and adaptation of change. People want to grow and will grow, but changing their mindset is key to this taking place.

:K

I strongly believe that all players in an organization, especially the leader, will benefit from taking these concepts and practicing them within their chosen careers. We each harbor feelings or insecurities that halt us from achieving greatness. This book ties everything together so that we can take our commitments to our big assumptions and become experts at our professions

REFERENCES

Kegan, R. & Lahey, L. L. (2009). *Immunity To Change: How to overcome it and unlock the potential in yourself and your organization (pp.1 – 339).* Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation.

http://kboo.fm/BreadandRoses