

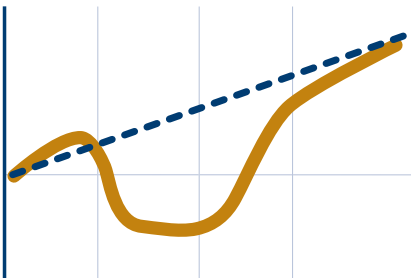


The Real World

Capitalizing on the Change Curve

Imagine there was a relatively simple tool that could help you understand and predict how members of your team and organization would likely perform over a period of time. You may already know it as the universal change curve or the forming, storming, norming, and performing curve, a variation on the work of B.W. Tuckman that originally appeared in 1965.

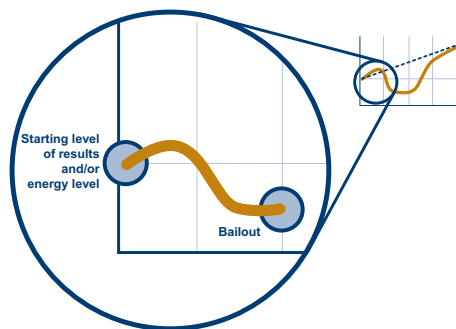
The curve we're talking about looks somewhat like this:



What makes this tool so interesting to us is that it doesn't seem to matter whether someone is adding team members, subtracting team members, or replacing team members: the overall pattern still holds.

Although everyone wants their company or team to be on the dotted line above when a change is made, it usually doesn't happen that way. Instead, when a change is made, there is usually some euphoria among team members, increasing the energy level and initial results. Then, as the reality of the situation kicks in and the magnitude of the needed change becomes better understood, the team realizes it's going to take real work to make the change happen. As the project

moves into the storming phase, the results usually get worse, and the group's energy level will fall before it starts to recover. If we look at the implications this model has on the implementation of a typical organization's strategic plan, we see that if poor or incomplete planning has taken place, the results going forward can look like this.



At the lower results point, executives may feel compelled to bail out. You'll hear people saying, "This is crazy. You know what we need? We need a new plan."

The problem is that if they do that, the universal change curve kicks in again, and now it may go even lower. As we see below, it is though they are shifting the Y-axis to the right and starting over through the process. It gets repeated—with devastating results.



We have found that many executives do not understand the true ramifications of having a weak strategic planning process or a weak implementation plan. Although most of us know in our hearts that the devil really is in the details, many business executives don't seem to want to take the time to do it right the first time. Their philosophy seems to be, "If this doesn't work, we'll just come up with a different plan."

But looking at the second and third charts, you can see that the huge dollars and cents impact of operating by trial and error. In contrast, the first chart clearly shows the upside of having an appropriate strategy with an appropriate level of detail that can be successfully executed.

The same idea holds true when putting organizations and project teams together. False starts can cause organizations to experience larger cash drains and higher customer defection rates than many may realize. Wonderfully effective teams can be worth their weight in gold, so don't be too quick in the selection of team members and formation of teams. Instead, maximize the opportunities you have available.

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