Based on David A. Garvin and Michael A. Roberto’s article in HBR, Feb. 2005, p.105-112
Leaders can make change happen only if they have a coherent strategy for persuasion.
Faced with the need for Change

- Leaders revamped the organization’s strategy,
- Shift around staff,
- Realign incentives,
- Root out inefficiencies
- Then they wait patiently for performance to improve, only to be bitterly disappointed
- For some reasons, the right things don’t happen
Why is Change so hard?

- People are reluctant to alter their habits
- What worked in the past is good enough
- People will keep doing what they’ve always done
- Resistance is even stronger if the organization has had succession of leaders
- Staff automatically condemn the new one to failure, assuming that he/she is “just like others”
- Call for sacrifice and self discipline is met with cynicism, scepticism and resistance
Leaders must develop and implement an effective persuasion campaign.
This must be done well before change is introduced.
Leaders must ensure that staff will listen to tough messages, question old assumptions and consider new ways of work.
Leaders must take a series of deliberate but subtle steps to recast prevailing views and create a new context for action.
This shaping process must be actively managed before change is introduced, when uncertainty is high and setbacks are inevitable.
Persuasion Campaign

- Like a political campaign
- Largely one of differentiation from the past
- For change leaders, the trick is to show that their plans are different from those of their predecessors
- They must convince people that radical changes are required for the organization to survive and thrive
- Change leaders must gain trust by demonstrating that they are the right leaders
The Four Phases of a Persuasion Campaign
The 4 Phases of a Persuasion Campaign

PHASE 1
Convince staff that radical change is needed; Demonstrate why the new direction is the right one

PHASE 2
Position and frame preliminary plan; Gather feedback; Announce final plan

PHASE 3
Manage staff mood through constant communication

PHASE 4
Reinforce behavioural changes to avoid backsliding

DEVELOP PLAN

IMPLEMENT PLAN

Announce Plan
Persuasion Process
Change Process
Change Process

- Consists of two phases:
  - Plan development, followed by
  - Implementation that may or may not be welcome by the organization
- The leader must create a continuous receptive environment for change, by developing a persuasion campaign, so that change is widely accepted and adopted
- The campaign must begin well before the planning phase and continues long after the plan is announced
Four-part Persuasion Strategy

a) Before announcing a new policy or issuing a set of instructions, leaders must set the stage for acceptance,

b) At the time of announcing the change, they must create the frame through which information and messages are interpreted

c) During implementation, leaders must manage the mood so that staff emotional states support implementation and follow through

d) At critical intervals, leaders must provide reinforcement to ensure that the desired changes take hold without backsliding
a) Setting the Stage for Acceptance
Effective Change Leaders

- First task is to gain the mandate for change
- Need to develop a bold message that provided compelling reasons to do things differently
- Adopt an open management style - manage by walking around, communicating directly with staff
b) Creating the Frame

Helping staff interpret proposals for change
“Frames”

- Change can be interpreted in a number of ways, not all of them ensure acceptance and favourable.
- Skilled leaders use “Frames” to provide context and shape perspectives for change.
- By framing the issue, leaders help people digest ideas in particular ways.
c) Managing the Mood

An essential leadership skill for change
Effective Change Leaders

- Pay close attention to staff emotions – the ebb and flow of their feelings – and work hard to preserve a receptive climate for change
- Delicately balance presenting the good and good news in just the right proportion
- Strike the right note of optimism and realism and carefully calibrate the timing, tone and positioning of every message
- Ensure staff that their sacrifices have not been in vain
- Recognize and reward staff for their accomplishments
d) Reinforcing good habits

*To avoid backsliding into dysfunctional routines*
Dysfunctional Routines

Six Ways To Stop Change
Organizations

- Thrive on routines much like people who are creatures of habit
- Routines – predictable, virtually automatic behaviours – are unstated, self-reinforcing, and remarkably resilient; functional and highly desirable
Dysfunctional Routines

- Barriers to action and change
- Some are outdated behaviours which were appropriate in the past but are now unhelpful
- Others are knee-jerk reactions, unproductive foot dragging and sometimes active resistance
- Persistent but unchangeable
- Leaders must work directly with staff to recognize and examine them and substitute desired behaviours
Dysfunctional Routines: Barriers to action and change

A culture of “no”
Always a good reason not to do something; two sources: a culture that overvalues criticism and Analysis, and complex decision making processes, where anybody can say “no”, but nobody can say “yes”.

The dog and pony show must go on
Too much focus on process; Confuse ends & means, Form & content; Presentation more important than proposal

Ready, aim, aim…
Unable to agree on a definitive course of action, “Paralysis by Analysis”

The grass is always greener
Avoidance tactic that does not confront tough problems; Suggesting new approaches to avoid facing challenges

After the meeting ends, debate begins
Cooperative meetings Are followed by resistance; Politics triumphs over substance; Meetings become empty rituals

This too shall pass
Reluctant to respond to Change; Ignore new initiative, work around them, or wait things out
Effective Change Leaders

- Provide opportunities for staff to practice desired behaviour repetitively
- Personally model new ways of working
- Provide coaching and support
- Explicitly reinforce organizational values on a constant basis, using action to back up their words
- Change behaviour not just ways of thinking
- Recognize that many staff simply do not know how to make decisions as a group or work cooperatively, and accordingly delegate critical decisions and responsibilities to provide them with ample opportunities to practice new ways of working
Heads, Hearts, and Hands
Successful Change

- Important to make the cultural soil ready before the seeds of change are planted
- When the environment is receptive, staff not only understand why change is needed, they are emotionally committed to make it happen, and implement it
On a cognitive level

- Staff in receptive environments are better to let go of competing, unsubstantiated views of the nature and extent of the problems facing their organization.
- They hold the same, objective views of the causes of poor performance.
- They acknowledge the seriousness of current difficulties.
- They take responsibility for their own contributions to these problems.
- Such a shared fact-based diagnosis is important for change.
On an emotional level

- Staff in receptive environments identify with the organization and its values and are committed to its continued existence.
- They believe that the organization is worth standing up for.
- They trust the leader, and believe that the leader shares their values and will fight for them.
- Leaders earn considerable latitude from staff – their proposals get the benefit of the doubt – when their hearts are thought to be in the right place.
Staff

- Have physical hands-on experience with the new expected behaviours
- See the coming changes up close and understand what they are getting into
- Wrestle with decisions on their own and practice unfamiliar ways of working
Effective Change Leaders

- Successfully allay irrational fears and undercut the myths that so often accompany major change efforts.
- Recognize that persuasion is the ultimate tool to create a receptive environment.
A chain for Change

- Persuasion
  - Promotes
- Understanding
  - Breeds
- Acceptance
  - Leads to
- Action
Without Persuasion

Change cannot be sustained