The Heart of Change

The 8 Steps of Successful Change
1. INCREASE URGENCY

- **Core Challenge**: Get the people out of the bunker and ready to move.

- **What Works**: Create dynamic presentations with compelling objects that people can actually see, touch and feel; provide evidence from outside the organization that change is required; find cheap and easy ways to avoid complacency.

- **Desired New Behaviour**: People start telling each other, “Let’s go, we need to change things!”
2. BUILDING THE GUIDING TEAM

- **Core Challenge**: Get the right people in place with trust, emotional commitment, and teamwork to guide a very difficult change process.

- **What Works**: Attract key change leaders by showing enthusiasm and commitment; model the trust and teamwork needed in the group; structure meeting formats that minimize frustration and increase trust.

- **Desired New Behaviour**: A group powerful enough to guide a big change is formed and they start to work together well.
3. GETTING THE VISION RIGHT

- **Core Challenge:** Get the guiding team to create the right vision and strategies to guide action in all of the remaining stages of change. This requires moving beyond number-crunching to address the creative and emotional components of vision.

- **What Works:** Literally *seeing/visualizing* possible futures, visions that are moving, visions that are so clear they can be articulated in one minute or written up on one page; bold strategies that can be executed quickly enough to make the vision a reality.

- **Desired New Behaviour:** The guiding team develops the right vision and strategy for the change effort.
4. COMMUNICATING THE BUY-IN

• **Core Challenge:** Get as many people as possible acting to make the vision a reality.

• **What Works:** Keep communication simple and heartfelt; find out what people are really feeling and speak to anxieties, confusion, anger, and distrust; rid communication channels of junk so important messages can get through; use new technologies to help people see the vision.

• **Desired New Behaviour:** People begin to buy-into the change; and this shows in their behaviour.
5. EMPOWER ACTION

• **Core Challenge:** Remove key obstacles that stop people from acting on the vision.

• **What Works:** Bring in experienced change leaders to bolster confidence that the job can be done; create recognition and reward systems that inspire, promote optimism, and build self-confidence; give constructive feedback; help disempowering managers to powerfully experience the need for change.

• **Desired New Behaviour:** More people feel able to act, and do act, on the vision.
6. CREATE SHORT-TERM WINS

- **Core Challenge**: Produce enough short-term wins fast enough to energize the change helpers, enlighten the pessimists, defuse the cynics, and build momentum for the effort.

- **What Works**: “Cheap and easy” wins that are visible, timely, unambiguous, and meaningful to others.

- **Desired New Behaviour**: Momentum builds as people try to fulfill the vision, while fewer and fewer resist change.
7. DON’T LET UP

- **Core Challenge:** Continue with wave after wave of change, not stopping until the vision is a reality – no matter how big the obstacles.

- **What Works:** “Cheap and easy” wins that are visible, timely, unambiguous, and meaningful to others.

- **Desired New Behaviour:** Momentum builds as people try to fulfill the vision, while fewer and fewer resist change.
8. MAKE CHANGE STICK

• **Core Challenge:** Create a supporting structure that provides roots for the new ways of operating.

• **What Works:** Refuse to declare victory too soon; use new employee orientation, the promotion process, and vivid stories to visibly and compellingly reinforce the vision.

• **Desired New Behaviour:** New and winning behaviour continues despite the pull of tradition, turnover of change leaders, etc.
We See, We Feel, We Change,
The See-Feel-Change Dynamic

• **Help People to See:** Compelling, eye-catching, dramatic situations are created to help others visualize problems, solutions, or progress in solving key problems.

• **Seeing Something New Hits the Emotions:** The visualization provide useful ideas that hit people at a deeper level than surface thinking. They evoke a visceral response that reduces emotions that block change and enhances those that support it.

• **Emotionally-Charged Ideas Change Behaviour or Reinforce Changed Behaviour:** People act much less complacently. They try harder to make a good vision a reality. They don’t stop before the work is done, even if the road seems long.
Step 1: Push the Urgency Up

- Gloves on the boardroom table: A procurement manager identifies a major problem with the company’s purchasing process. He chose a single item – gloves – that all the company’s plants use, and found that there were 424 types of gloves being purchased at widely varying costs and from different suppliers.
• **See:** The manager invites all the company’s division presidents into the boardroom and instead of giving them a report on gloves, stacked the 424 pairs of gloves on the table, each tagged with the price and the factory it is being used in.

• **Feel:** First people were shocked. Mouths dropped, the people were speechless. Then their gut-level sense of complacency begins to shrink, and urgency begins to grow. They must do something now!

• **Change:** The gloves becomes a travelling road show. The purchasing process was radically changed.
STEP 2: Build the Guiding Team

- General Mollo and I were floating on water: An army officer is charged with building a team to develop a vision, strategy and implementation plan for merging the seven armies – formerly enemies – into one National Defense Force in South Africa after the collapse of the Apartheid regime.
• **See:** At their first meeting, the officer shocks the soldiers by taking risks for the common good. He openly admits that many of those in charge do not want to merge the armies but to homogenize them. He vows that he has no intention of doing so.

• **Feel:** The officer’s fiery promise (“This is wrong and I’ll not do it!”) hits the soldiers directly and emotionally. His honesty invites others to share their feelings in turn, and an environment of trust is born. Later, the officer arranges regular camping trips in which he encourages the soldiers to share emotion-packed war stories around an open fire. Members slowly get to know each other at a personal level, and trust begins to grow.

• **Change:** The members began to pull together, people began to believe and feel that change is possible, and a group of former enemies begins to act as an effective team.
STEP 3: Create the Vision and Strategies

- The plane will not move!: An aircraft plant manager must get his people to develop ambitious strategies to carry out an ambitious quality vision.
• **See:** Foregoing the standard “quality speech” the manager instead takes dramatic action. He brings the normal production process to a complete halt – forcing everyone to stare all day long at a gigantic plane stuck in the production line. At the same time he expresses a rock solid confidence in his people’s ability to do the job.

• **Feel:** People are shocked – but also strongly motivated by their boss’ complete conviction that the “impossible” can be done. Pride in the work increases as employees become determined that they will not be the reason that a plane is delayed in position. As they see others succeeding – and succeed themselves – their faith increases.

• **Change:** Employees begin all sorts of new strategies for leaping ahead in procurement, logistics, and quality control. Enthusiasm, excitement and pride spur positive action. The company is transformed; quality goes up and aircraft are on time – even early!
STEP 4: Communicate for Buy-in

• **Nuking the Executive Floor:** An executive team presents new vision of becoming a low-cost producer – yet behind the scenes the employees grouse about the irony of the company’s posh executive offices in an age of cutbacks.
• **See:** Even though it would cost more to change the architecture and decor of the executive floor to make it look less excessive, the new CEO wants to show employees that executives are serious about “walking the talk”. He “nukes” the entire floor – the personal bathrooms, the mahogany furniture, the expensive art. In its place is built a more functional, far less showy workspace.

• **Feel:** The initial announcement shocks employees in a positive way. Cynicism goes down, faith in top management goes up.

• **Change:** People begin to embrace the vision. When the new offices are complete, employees are given a constant reminder that the executive team believes in the vision – and employees too.
STEP 5: Empower Action

• **Retooling the Boss:** An “old school” manager is converted from an obstacle to change to an invaluable change leader.
• **See:** Rather than firing, demoting, or “retraining” the manager, he is “loaned” to a customer for 6 months, where he is dramatically confronted each day with the quality problems the customer is having with his products.

• **Feel:** Pushed into the job, the man is at first angry and even afraid. But after a few days in his new position, he is surprised by what he finds and is convinced that things must change.

• **Change:** He returns to his employer a manager reborn. Approaching his job in a whole new way, he helps the firm make changes that benefits customers, employees and owners.
STEP 6: Short-term Wins

- The senator owned the company: A manager addresses an issue a state Senator cares deeply about in order to win the politician’s support for a larger change effort.
• **See:** Instead of presenting the Senator with graphs and charts on the change effort’s progress, the managers set out to reduce the number of cumbersome bureaucratic forms the Senator must fill out to run his trucking company. The manager’s team spends a month redesigning the licensing process – and dramatically reduces the required paperwork from 15 forms to 1.

• **Feel:** When the Senator sees the results, he is surprised in the most positive sense. His faith in the larger change effort increases.

• **Change:** The Senator becomes one of the effort’s biggest supporters.
STEP 7: Don’t Let Up

• The Merchant of Fear: A task force is charged with fixing the company’s broken investment planning process – and top management’s behaviour is slowing down the change process.
• **See:** Instead of ducking the political barriers or sugar-coating the issue, they find a light-hearted way of getting a serious message across. They created a hilarious video with actors spoofing how people behave when they put the budget together – complete with characters like The Merchant of Fear, who increase his budget by working-off people’s fears; the Glory Hunter who chases only those initiatives that might make him look good; and the People Protector, who cares only about getting projects for his staff.

• **Feel:** Because the spoof hits the issues – and the people’s emotions – directly, the amusing, non-confrontational video gives the change leaders a much-needed tool for legitimizing new top management behaviour. People try to guess who the characters are portraying – and start wondering if it may in fact be them.

• **Change:** By exposing the types of behaviour that go against the company’s new, more shareholder-oriented vision, and the old investment game is stopped in its tracks. The video is burned – but the message lives on.
STEP 8: Make Change Stick

• The Home Mortgage: After 6 years of explosive growth, a company decides it must revisit its values so that all 40,000 employees believe deeply in – and continue to act on – the vision.
• **See:** The staff hosts a 4 hour event on a Saturday morning in which employees from around the world are hooked together via satellite. Beyond executive speeches and handouts touting company values, employees are also shown videos of customers telling stories of how the company has treated them fairly and compassionately through difficult situations. One man tells a moving story about his personal situation.

• **Feel:** Employees sit up, listen more closely, and become visibly moved by the stories customers tell. Some were in tears.

• **Change:** The inspirational first-person tales vividly show the consequence of living the company’s values – and employees become energized to continue a powerful and meaningful tradition of making a difference in the lives of others.