

Whole-Scale Change - A Brief Overview

The Whole-Scale Change Process (Dannemiller Tyson Associates, 2000) is an energy-building intervention appropriate for working with entire client organizations that focuses on "real time strategic change" (Bunker & Alban, 1997, p. 31). Its purpose is to create a preferred future with system-wide action planning to move the organization forward. The process engages each member of the organization enabling them to bring their passions into the strategic planning process. The ideal group size ranges anywhere from 64 to as many as 2,400 participants!

The process includes preliminary inquiry into the organization to understand the issues to be addressed, and then focuses the energy of the members of the organization on accelerating organizational learning and change in a uniquely crafted 3-day experience. It is custom-designed to deal with the strategic issues at hand, is highly structured and organized, and generates a common database of information that is shared with everyone in the organization.

The accelerator event itself involves "maximum mix" groups of a variety of stakeholder groups from inside (and even outside) the organization. By using small groups of 8, each voice in the room can be shared with a focus on listening deeply to one another's perspectives in order to better understand the many realities that the organization is facing. These small groups are self-managed and use pre-printed forms and documented processes with specific instructions on "what to do when."

It is possible to enhance the experience by bringing in subject matter experts, competitors (or "actors" who play the role of competitor), or other knowledge resources in order to better inform the group learning process. These special guests are placed on Q&A panels that the small groups can access in a structured forum for interaction.

As data is collected and learning is achieved at the micro level, information is posted on newsprint hung around the room. At regular intervals, participants do a "gallery walk" to review the thoughts of others, and to register their approval of ideas by marking powerful statement with small, colorful label-dots or markers.

At the end of each day, consultants and organizational senior leadership bring together all of the data that is generated during the day, and they begin to draft a strategic plan that uses the learning from the day. The next morning, the plan is distributed and re-worked by the group as a whole. At the end of the second day, the consultants and leadership team work to create a better-informed version of the plan, which again goes to the group on the following morning. By the afternoon of the final day, specific action plans are created, and commitment are made by individuals who have energy, skills and talents to make it all happen.

Follow-up meetings after the accelerator event (sometimes called 'mini-accelerators') are held every 4-6 weeks as needed to maintain forward progress and momentum. As the process unfolds, the client organization internalizes the process and progressively "owns" it, thus creating a self-sustaining system.

References

- Bunker, B. B. & Alban, B. T. (1997). *Large group interventions: Engaging the whole system for rapid change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.
- Dannemiller Tyson Associations (2000). *Whole-scale change toolkit*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.